



NEW TECHNIQUES USED IN FARMING ON THE TURKISTAN FARM

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21019752>

Abstract: This article analyzes the agrarian policy of the Russian Empire after the colonization of Turkestan, especially the measures aimed at the development of cotton cultivation. The study covers the formation of the cotton monopoly, the expansion of cotton cultivation areas, and its economic and social impact on the local farming system.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Turkestan, colonial policy, cotton cultivation, cotton monopoly, agriculture, peasant farms, tools, wooden plow, plow, new technology, American cotton, cotton firms, agrarian policy, modernization of agriculture.

After the Russian Empire colonized Turkestan, it paid special attention to cotton cultivation as a raw material for the textile industry in the central regions. During the colonial years, a separate cotton khokimiyat was formed, and sources recorded crops other than cotton as “secondary crops”. Cotton areas in Turkestan expanded year by year, and in the Fergana, Samarkand, and Syrdarya regions of the Turkestan General Governorate, 92,889 desyatinas of land were sown with cotton in 1890, while in 1915 cotton fields occupied 523,614 desyatinas. During this period, the supply of American cotton increased 10-11 times[1].

In 1880-1913, cotton areas increased by 700 percent in Fergana, 298 percent in Samarkand, and 139 percent in Syrdarya region. Fergana region became the “cotton center” of the empire, and from the end of the 19th century to 1913, cotton fields in the valley expanded from 34,668 desyatinas to 278,897 desyatinas, that is, as noted above, 7 times[2]. In 1907, 9 million 800 thousand poods of raw cotton were exported from Turkestan to Russia. Of the transported cotton fiber, 6 million 650 thousand poods came from Fergana region, and 3 million 150 thousand poods came from other regions[3].

The leading place in the activities of firms and companies from Russia and abroad was also determined by their participation in the cotton business. They were divided into 3 groups depending on their activities.

1. Firms such as “Caucasus and Mercury”, which were engaged in the shipment of cotton fiber to the center of Russia.





2. Dozens of firms and companies such as “Aka-uka Kraft”, which owned a cotton factory.

3. Many firms and companies such as “Meyyerskort” and “Kudrina”, which were engaged in various operations with cotton plantations and cotton factories[4].

The Ministry of Agriculture and State Property of the Empire, the “Cotton Committee”, and the “Technical Committee” took all appropriate measures to develop cotton growing in Turkestan and to use cotton land funds as intensively as possible. For many centuries, peasant farms growing cotton used backward tools of labor, and cotton, which was considered an annual technical crop, required hard work. The process from planting cotton to harvesting was carried out by manual labor.

Therefore, the peasant population that migrated to Turkestan was not engaged in cotton farming, but rather in grain growing and gardening, and the mainly manual farming branch of crop cultivation was leading in their economy[5]. Seeing the hard and heavy manual labor of the Turkestan people, A.F. Middendorf expressed his regret: “The benefit of the camel I rode was more for them (the local population) than for me”[6]. Local peasants have been engaged in cotton farming for centuries with simple, backward hand tools. A hoe, a rake with a wooden handle for leveling the ground, a wooden plow (with a cast iron or iron tine), and a spade were their main tools. A wooden plow was coupled to two oxen, and the farmer, pressing it into the ground by its wooden handle, followed the work animal from early morning until late at night. The oxen were specially cared for during the winter (with fodder, hay), and in the spring they were coupled to plow the land. A wooden plow with two oxen was called a double. Before starting spring work, the farmer performed the “horn oil” ceremony for the oxen that were coupled to the double so that the harvest would be abundant in the new year. During the ceremony, the oxen’s horns were anointed with cotton oil, asking the Creator to bless each farmer’s labor and harvest. The “wooden plow” plowed the land 1.5-2 vershok[7], and it was impossible to get rid of weeds from deeply plowed land and expect a fertile harvest. Usually the handles of the hoes were 2, 2.5 arshins long; (1 arshin - 71 cm) their iron parts for working the land were made in special workshops (forges), and the farmer would oil the hoe after use to prevent it from rusting. Among the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, wooden plows for plowing the land turned the land to a depth of 1-2 vershoks. Even ordinary plows were not enough for the farmers[8].





In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the average peasant farm had an area of 1.5 to 3.5 desyatinas, with a significant area allocated mainly for grain and cotton cultivation. In the early 20th century, the plow area per peasant farm in Mirzachul (Dasht Cho'l) was 1.5 to 5.5 desyatinas (1 desyatina-1.09 ha)[9]. This fact alone shows that it did not take a lot of time for a peasant to plow the land with his plow. Realizing that it was impossible to develop cotton cultivation with a wooden plow or a plow, imperial officials and administrators took measures to introduce and distribute new equipment to Turkestan. Among the displaced population, Stepenko invented an improved plow for use by Russian and local peasants at the end of the 19th century. This plow was almost 4 times more expensive than a regular plow, and while a regular plow was sold for 3 rubles in the Tashkent market, Stepenko's plow was sold for 11 rubles[10].

Starting from the 1890s, the regular plow began to be replaced by plows from the southern regions of Russia (Little Russia) and abroad. The first plows were imported by the Rezan Brothers firm and sold in the markets of Tashkent, Fergana, and Samarkand for 30-40 rubles[11].

In conclusion, the agrarian policy implemented by the Russian Empire in Turkestan was primarily aimed at meeting the raw material needs of the empire's industry, and led to the specialization of the local economy through the unilateral development of cotton growing. As a result, the area under cotton cultivation sharply expanded, the area under grain and other food crops decreased, and traditional agricultural sectors were relegated to the second level. This process accelerated the integration of Turkestan into the Russian economic system as a colonial territory supplying raw materials.

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