Published: August 30, 2024 | Pages: 323-326

THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COTTON FARMING IN THE KARSHI STEPPE (1960-1980S)

Asror Rakhimov

Researcher of the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT: This study examines the historical development of cotton farming in the Karshi Steppe during the Soviet era, focusing on its profound and far-reaching consequences for other sectors of agriculture. The analysis highlights how the prioritisation of cotton production, driven by state policies and centralised planning, led to the marginalisation of alternative crops, reduced agricultural diversity, and caused significant environmental degradation in the region. The study also explores the socio-economic implications of these changes, including the impact on local livelihoods, water resource management, and soil fertility. By providing a comprehensive overview of the agricultural policies implemented during this period, the research underscores the long-term challenges faced by the Karshi Steppe due to an overemphasis on monoculture farming and the neglect of sustainable agricultural practices.

KEYWORDS: Amudarya, desert, water, cotton, history, economy, project.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that a region's natural geographic location is one of the main factors influencing its socio-economic development. Studying the history of the Karshi Steppe, its economic traditions, and its development can provide an opportunity to devise and implement effective strategies to prevent or address potential socio-economic problems that may arise in this region in the future.

Methods and Level of Study

In preparing this thesis, key methodologies of scientific research in the field of history were employed, including scientific rigor, historicity, impartial evaluation of historical processes, continuity of events, comparative analysis of facts, and logical reasoning in drawing conclusions. These methods were used to investigate the reasons behind and the significance of the development of the Karshi Steppe during the Soviet era. Additionally, archival sources were effectively utilized in the study.

Research Results

At the December 1962 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, it was specifically emphasized that one of the priority tasks in the agricultural sector was the development of new lands in the Karshi Steppe. The Plenum's resolution set the goal of completing the preparation of irrigation projects for the first phase of the Karshi Steppe by 1963

Published: August 30, 2024 | Pages: 323-326

[1, p. 4]. This marked the initiation of a major effort to create another Soviet cotton-growing region in the Karshi Steppe.

The cultivation of fine-fiber cotton in the Karshi Steppe began in 1969. That year, a total of 4,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton was harvested in the Kashkadarya region [2, p. 61], signaling a significant milestone in the production of this new variety of cotton in the Karshi Steppe.

The unirrigated lands of the Karshi Steppe played a crucial role in increasing cotton production in Uzbekistan. It was planned to develop 1 million hectares of land in the Karshi Steppe, with 65% of this area designated for cotton cultivation [2, p. 43], although this goal was not fully achieved.

According to the USSR's 1966–1970 national economic development plan, Uzbekistan was to produce 110,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton in 1968, 120,000 tons in 1969, and 130,000 tons in 1970 [2, p. 5].

In 1979, 5.72 million tons of cotton were produced in the Republic, including 320,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton [5, p. 1]. In 1964, 201,000 tons of cotton were produced in Kashkadarya region, and by 1989, this figure had increased to 530,000 tons. Overall, the total amount of cotton grown in the steppe reached 2 million tons [6, p. 2]. In 1981, nearly 200,000 tons of cotton were produced on the state farms of the reclaimed lands in the Karshi Steppe, accounting for 35% of the total cotton produced in the region. Compared to the cotton raw materials produced in Kashkadarya region in 1964, the reclaimed state farms in the Karshi Steppe alone produced an equivalent amount of cotton in 1981 [7, p. 2].

The fine-fiber cotton variety "Karshi-8" was developed at the Kashkadarya research base of the G.S. Zaytsev Selection and Seed Research Institute and was acclimatized in 1992 [8, p. 53]. In 1982, the state farms in the Karshi Steppe supplied 245,000 tons of raw cotton materials to the state, of which 91,000 tons were fine-fibre cotton [9, pp. 50–51].

The Nishon and Usmon Yusupov districts, established during the development of the Karshi Steppe, were primarily specialized in fine-fiber cotton production. In 1990, Kashkadarya region delivered 65,900 tons of fine-fiber cotton to the state [10, p. 189]. In 1983, Uzbekistan produced 591,100 tons of fine-fiber cotton [11, p. 3], and in the same year, Kashkadarya region harvested 621,000 tons of cotton, 123,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton. In 1984, out of the 404,000 tons of cotton produced in the region, more than 139,000 tons were fine-fiber cotton [12, p. 68].

In the 1980s, the production of fine-fiber cotton was intensified on the state farms in the Karshi Steppe. However, these years saw the highest use of chemical inputs in Kashkadarya region, particularly in the cotton farms of the Karshi Steppe that specialized in fine-fiber cotton production.

In 1986, the crop rotation indicators for cotton in Kashkadarya region were below the national average [13, p. 55]. This demonstrates that the anticipated benefits of introducing a cotton-alfalfa crop rotation system during the development of the Karshi Steppe did not materialize in practice. For instance, in 1987, the total cultivated area in Kashkadarya region was 632,200 hectares [14, p. 99], of which irrigated land accounted for 402,200 hectares, or 63.6%. Technical crops of this irrigated land were grown on 247,600 hectares, including 247,300 hectares of cotton [14, p. 112], representing 61.4% of the irrigated land. In comparison, in the same year, the total cultivated area in Fergana region was 324,000 hectares [14, p. 99], with irrigated land comprising 302,800

Published: August 30, 2024 | Pages: 323-326

hectares. Technical crops were planted on 194,000 hectares of irrigated land, including 193,900 hectares of cotton [14, p. 112], accounting for 64% of the irrigated land.

Cotton farming in Kashkadarya region expanded extensively rather than intensively. For example, in 1987, Kashkadarya region delivered over 400,000 tons of cotton to the state, while Fergana region delivered 506,000 tons [14, p. 112]. The growth of cotton farming in Kashkadarya during the 1980s was largely driven by the reclamation of new lands in the Karshi Steppe and the excessive use of chemical inputs. It is also important to note that instances of data falsification in cotton farming, common across other sectors during the Soviet era, cannot be ruled out.

The development of cotton farming in the Karshi Steppe during the Soviet years negatively impacted the region's traditional economic sectors. Alongside crop farming, livestock husbandry was a significant activity in the Karshi Steppe, often holding a more prominent position. According to the 1963 economic indicators for Karshi Steppe farms, income from livestock farming exceeded that of cotton farming [15, p. 17]. Nevertheless, the government pursued the rapid expansion of cotton farming in the Karshi Steppe without considering the long-term consequences for the region's economy and traditional practices.

In Kashkadarya region, the total number of pedigree sheep and goats was recorded at 1,020.7 thousand in 1951, increasing to 1,529.8 thousand in 1956, and 1,544.1 thousand in 1959 [16, pp. 169–170]. By 1961, the number had reached 1,601.1 thousand, but it declined to 1,204.7 thousand in 1966 and rose slightly to 1,289.3 thousand in 1967 [17, pp. 125–127]. In 1971, the total number of pedigree sheep and goats in Kashkadarya region was 1,271.6 thousand, decreasing to 1,267.5 thousand in 1976 before rising again to 1,452.3 thousand in 1981 [18, p. 117]. By 1986, the number had fallen to 1,390.2 thousand; in 1989, it was recorded at 1,219.8 thousand [19, p. 261].

Although the total number of sheep and goats in Uzbekistan increased by 765.9 thousand in 1989 compared to 1966, the number in Kashkadarya region decreased by 250 thousand compared to 1956. Statistical analysis indicates that the growth rates of sheep and goat farming in Kashkadarya region had already stagnated by the early 1960s, coinciding with the initiation of the main phase of the Karshi Steppe development.

As a result of the reclamation of the Karshi Steppe, the primary focus in Kashkadarya region shifted to the development of cotton farming. Between the 1960s and 1980s, the agricultural dynamics of the Karshi Steppe underwent a fundamental transformation, with traditional livestock farming losing prominence in favor of cotton cultivation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the Soviet government's one-sided policy in developing Uzbekistan's agriculture was fully manifested during the reclamation of the Karshi Steppe, leading to significant ecological problems in the region.

It can be argued that the Soviet oppressive policies turned the deserts of Central Asia into an agricultural laboratory. The large-scale irrigation projects implemented in Central Asia were essentially grand experimental ventures of the colonial system, exerting control over both nature and people. In this context, the Mirzachul served as the initial "laboratory," while the Karshi Steppe became its final "experiment."

Published: August 30, 2024 | Pages: 323-326

REFERENCES

1. Шадиев С. Из истории орошения и освоения земель Каршинской степи: Автореферат дис. на соискание ученой степени кандидата исторических наук / АН УзССР. Ин-т истории и археологии. – Ташкент: 1968.
2. Муродов Б. Қарши чўли шароитида пахта етиштириш. – Тошкент, Меҳнат. 1990.
3. Джаббаров Н. Каршинская степь и перспективы ее освоения // Общественные науки в Узбекистане научные сообщения. –№ 1. 1966.
4. Очилдиев Р. Ингичка толали ғўзанинг қалинлиги // Ўзбекистон қишлоқ хўжалиги. –№ 4. Апрель, 1968.
5. Бош саҳифа // Ўзбекистон қишлоқ хўжалиги. –№ 1. Январь, 1980.
6. Ашуров Б. Ушалган орзу // Чўл ўлкаси. –№1. 1 январь 1990.
7. Ғуломов М. Қардошларча дўстлик рамзи // Ўзбекистон қишлоқ хўжалиги. –№ 5. Май, 1982.
8. Мадраҳимов А.С. Бош муҳаррир // Эртапишар ва мўл пахта етиштириш бўйича тавсиялар. – Тошкент. Меҳнат, 1994.
9. Жалолов Э. Яшнаётган воҳа // Ўзбекистон қишлоқ хўжалиги. –№ 8. Август, 1983.
10. Асанов Г., Набихонов М., Сафаров И. Ўзбекистоннинг иқтисодий ва ижтимоий жўғрофияси. – Тошкент. Ўқитувчи, 1994.
11. Қўчқоров Б. Ингичка толали пахта етиштириш экономикаси. – Тошкент. Меҳнат, 1985.
12. Абдураҳмонов Ў. Етим қолган қирғоқлар // Ёшлик. – №3. Март, 1990.
13. Ҳасанжонов Қ., Тошматов А. Пахта етиштиришнинг интенсив технологиялари. – Тошкент. Меҳнат, 1987.
14. Народное хозяйство Узбекской ССР в 1987 г. Стат.ежегод.- Ташкент. Узбекистан, 1988.
15. O‘zMA, R.2743-jamg‘arma, 1-ro‘yxat, 493-yig‘majild, 17-varaq.
16. Народное хозяйство Узбекской ССР в 1965 г. Стат.ежегод. – Ташкент. Узбекистан, 1966.
17. Народное хозяйство Узбекской ССР в 1967 г. Стат.ежегод. – Ташкент. Узбекистан, 1968.
18. Народное хозяйство Узбекской ССР в 1982 г. Стат.ежегод. – Ташкент. Узбекистан, 1983.
19. Народное хозяйство Узбекской ССР в 1990 г. Стат.ежегод. – Ташкент. Узбекистан, 1991.