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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COTTON GINNING INDUSTRY IN THE SURKHANDARYA OKRUG (FROM THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY TO THE 1940s)

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Abstract

This article examines the formation and development of the cotton ginning industry in the Surkhandarya region based on historical sources. It analyzes the construction of the first cotton ginning plant in Termiz in the early twentieth century, the role of local entrepreneurs—the Matchinboyev brothers—in its establishment, and the influence of the economic policy of the Russian Empire on the agriculture of the region. The study also highlights the establishment of cotton ginning plants in Denov, Sherobod, and Khazarbog, the construction of railways, and the expansion of the cotton ginning industry as a result of Soviet policies aimed at developing cotton cultivation. In addition, the article examines economic and organizational changes that occurred in the cotton sector during the 1920s–1940s.

Keywords: Surkhandarya, cotton growing, cotton ginning plant, Termiz plant, Matchinboyevs, Denov cotton plant, Khazarbog, Sherobod, railway, cotton industry, Soviet period, agriculture.

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Introduction

Cotton cultivation is one of the most important sectors of agriculture in Uzbekistan and occupies a significant place in the country's economic development. In particular, the Surkhandarya region has long been known as one of the territories with favorable natural and climatic conditions for cotton cultivation and is considered one of the leading cotton-producing regions of the republic. Along with the development of cotton growing in this area, the industry for processing raw cotton gradually emerged and developed.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the expansion of cotton cultivation in the Surkhan oasis created the need for the construction of cotton ginning plants. In particular, the first cotton ginning plant built in the city of Termiz played an important role in the formation and development of industry in the region. This process was closely connected with the economic policy implemented during the period of the Russian Empire, the initiatives of local entrepreneurs, and the increasing volume of cotton production in the region.

Later, after the establishment of Soviet power, the development of cotton cultivation became one of the priority directions of state policy. As a result, cotton-growing areas in the Surkhandarya region were expanded, new cotton ginning plants were built, and existing industrial enterprises were reconstructed. In addition, the construction of railway networks significantly accelerated the transportation and processing of cotton products.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the stages of formation and development of the cotton ginning industry in the Surkhandarya region on the basis of historical sources and to reveal the impact of this process on the development of the region's economy and agricultural system.

Literature Review and Methodology

The Surkhandarya region is one of the leading cotton-producing regions of Uzbekistan. Wherever cotton cultivation exists, there are also regions specialized in its production. Cotton cultivation first appeared in the Surkhan oasis at the

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beginning of the twentieth century. The cotton ginning industry of Surkhandarya has its own unique historical background.

The first cotton ginning plant in the region was the Termiz cotton ginning plant, whose construction history is associated with the period of the Russian Empire. At that time, agriculture in Surkhandarya was also subordinated to the interests of Tsarist Russia. The export of cotton through Termiz increased from year to year. If 17,000 poods (272 tons) of cotton were transported in 1903, this figure reached 34,000 poods (544 tons) by 1910.

Taking into account the continuous growth of cotton cultivation in the oasis, the Russian imperial administration began to pay attention to the construction of small cotton processing plants in the Surkhandarya region. Wealthy local landowners were encouraged to build cotton ginning plants. Among such wealthy individuals were the Matchinboyev brothers, who invested part of their wealth in the construction of the Termiz cotton ginning plant.

In 1996, historians from Surkhandarya, Z. Mirzayev and E. Qobulov, published a brochure entitled “Cotton Growing in Surkhandarya and the History of the Termiz Cotton Ginning Plant.” In this publication, the history of the Termiz cotton ginning plant is described on the basis of various historical sources and data.

According to the recollections of one of the elderly workers of the plant, Boymurod Jorayev, the authors write:

“The construction of the plant began in 1905. However, due to the lack of skilled builders, the construction lasted for a long time.”

Discussion

In order to accelerate the construction of the plant, the Matchinboyev brothers used all available resources, and by 1909 the construction work was almost completed. Afanasy Skokov, who personally participated in the construction of the plant, recalled:

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“In 1907 I came from Russia to Kerki. There we began building a cotton ginning plant for the Matchinboyev brothers, who were Khiva Turkmens. Together with several workers we built a luxurious house for Abdulla Matchinboyev. One of Abdulla’s brothers lived in Termiz. After completing the house, at the end of 1909 we went to Termiz and began constructing the Matchinboyev brothers’ cotton ginning plant. Most of the workers involved in the construction were Uzbeks and Tajiks, while only six were Russian workers, including Ivan Sumskiy, Sergey Frodov, and Andrey Anishchevskiy. Russians, Uzbeks, and Tajiks lived together in friendship. Ivan Sumskiy and I installed a steam engine with a capacity of 60 horsepower. In addition, the plant had a diesel engine with a capacity of 50 horsepower.”

“The construction of the plant was completed in 1910 and it was put into operation.”

According to B. Sodiqov’s article titled “Wealthy People of Termiz” published in the newspaper “Xalq Yo‘li” on September 28, 2001:

“Matchinboyev developed the idea of building a cotton plant and in 1905 he traveled to Saint Petersburg, where he met Russian engineers and searched for partners. He found such partners and purchased six gin machines for processing cotton. He also hired specialists capable of operating these machines and quickly began construction. However, due to the lack of highly qualified specialists, construction was delayed. Later, Matchinboyev gathered skilled craftsmen around him and construction accelerated. In 1909 the cotton ginning plant was completed. The launch of this plant caused great excitement among farmers, who came from villages asking the plant to accept their cotton harvest. Thus, the first industrial enterprise in the Surkhan oasis began operating in Termiz. However, there were serious difficulties in transporting the finished products, since cotton fiber had to be delivered by camels and horse carts.”

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Results

In fact, in 1905 the Matchinboyev brothers purchased six “Cotton” gin machines with 70 saws each for 6,000 rubles from Saint Petersburg, along with a steam engine with a capacity of 60 horsepower and a diesel engine with a capacity of 50 horsepower. These machines were transported from Saint Petersburg to Termiz with great difficulty.

However, there were no specialists capable of installing and operating the machinery. No engineers were willing to travel the long distance from Russia to Termiz. For this reason, the construction of the Termiz cotton ginning plant lasted nearly five years.

The launch of the Termiz cotton ginning plant in 1910 and the processing of 14,400 kilograms of cotton in the same year, which was sold to Russia, was considered a great achievement for the people of the region. The significance of this achievement was twofold: first, the cotton ginning industry entered the Surkhan oasis; second, the export of locally processed industrial products began. However, transporting the produced fiber to Russia required delivering it by camels and horses to the Kogon railway, which caused serious difficulties. Moreover, the road to Kogon passed through the rugged Boysun mountains, making transportation extremely challenging.

If we consider that the first cotton ginning plant in the Surkhan oasis began construction in 1905 and was launched in 1910, it means that industrial development came to the region nearly 120 years ago. The launch of the first cotton plant significantly encouraged local farmers to cultivate cotton, and as a result cotton fields in the region expanded year by year.

The continuous expansion of cotton cultivation in Surkhandarya created a need for additional cotton ginning plants. As a result, new plants were built by the Matchinboyev brothers, followed by cotton plants established by A. Ananyev and Abduvosiboy (Abduvosi Halimov).

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In 1915, construction began on the 620-kilometer Kogon–Termiz railway line (Kogon–Karshi–Tallimarjon–Amu Darya–Kelif–Termiz), which was put into operation after 1917.

The arrival of the railway and the launch of cotton plants accelerated the development of the region and contributed to the growth of public awareness and worldview among the local population.

On September 2, 1920, the Emirate of Bukhara was officially overthrown. After that, Soviet power spread to the districts of Sherobod, Denov, and Boysun, and national liberation movements began. During this period, cotton cultivation and processing in the region almost stopped.

During this turbulent time, the cotton plants belonging to the Matchinboyev brothers, A. Ananyev, and A. Halimov were transferred to Soviet control. Since cotton cultivation had sharply declined in the region, the Matchinboyev plant continued operating, while the plants of Ananyev and Halimov were closed and merged into a single cotton ginning plant.

Beginning in 1924, the Kogon–Samsonov–Termiz railway was rapidly repaired, and by 1925 the reconstruction work was completed. In the same year, construction began on the 248-kilometer Termiz–Dushanbe railway, which was completed in 1931.

The expansion of collectivization, the enlargement of cotton fields, and the growth of cotton production required the development, expansion, and centralization of the cotton ginning industry. Despite the difficult conditions of 1925–1935, farmers in the Surkhan oasis continued to cultivate land mainly with primitive tools such as wooden plows. Agricultural equipment such as plows, harrows, cultivators, and ridgers were extremely scarce. Irrigation canals and ditches were poorly developed, water was scarce, and most work was carried out manually.

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Farmers cultivated cotton partly to sustain their daily livelihoods and partly out of fear of state policies. The cotton harvested by farmers was processed in cotton ginning plants and then sent to various industrial regions of the country.

Conclusion

The cotton ginning industry in the Surkhandarya region began to form in the early twentieth century with the construction of the Termiz cotton ginning plant. This process was closely connected with the initiatives of local entrepreneurs and the economic interests of the Russian Empire. Later, during the Soviet period, new cotton ginning plants were built and existing enterprises were modernized as part of policies aimed at expanding cotton cultivation. The construction of railway networks expanded opportunities for transporting and exporting cotton products. As a result, the Surkhandarya region became one of the key regions of the republic for cotton production and processing. These historical processes played an important role in the development of industry and the formation of the agricultural system in the region.

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