

**THE IMPACT OF THE COTTON UNIFORM GOVERNMENT ON THE
VILLAGES OF THE FERGANA VALLEY**

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ABSTRACT:

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This article contains information about the expansion of cotton cultivation areas in the Fergana Valley since the colonial period and the establishment of new farms in villages as a result of the strengthening of the cotton monopoly during the Soviet period

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American cotton, K.P von Kaufman, Alexander III, pood, uezd, Olmos, volost, Bolshevik, New livestock, Stalin, Toymas, Unity, Lenin, Kirov, collective farm

One of the main political and economic reasons for the campaigns of the Russian Empire into Central Asia was the need for raw cotton. This need became an important factor in the imperial colonial policy and significantly influenced the economic development and material wealth of the region. From the 1870s onward, the struggle for raw cotton rose to the level of state policy. If in 1890 only 8% of the cotton used in Russian light industry was supplied by Turkestan, by 1900 this figure had reached 33%, by 1910 – 43%, by 1914 – 58%, and by 1916 – 72% [1, p. 185].

Archival documents indicate that the most favorable natural conditions for cotton production, particularly for American cotton varieties, existed in the Fergana region of the Turkestan General-Governorate. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, this type of cotton began to be cultivated in the region. In particular, in the spring of 1878, K. P. von Kaufman sent 32 pounds of American cotton seeds in several boxes to the military governor of the Fergana region, A. K. Abramov, in order to promote the development of cotton cultivation in the region. General A. K. Abramov ordered that the seeds be distributed among the Namangan, Andijan, and Kokand uyezds, allocating 12 pounds to each of them and 10 pounds to additional experimental plots [2, p. 84].

The spread of the new cotton variety in the Fergana Valley and the reaction of the local population can be observed through the example of its promotion in the Namangan region. According to the written report of Captain P. Reznik, in February 1879 the seeds sent to the Namangan region were planted on seven plots of land near Chust under the direct supervision of the regional head, Colonel M. Arvanitaki.

The cotton that sprouted at the end of March began opening in large quantities by August. Despite a shortage of water that year, samples of cotton harvested through six pickings were distributed among cotton growers in the Pop, Olmos, and Akhsi-Shahand volosts. On September 20, a total of 127 poods and 11 pounds of “American” cotton were harvested from the seven plots. Subsequently, the spread of this variety expanded rapidly: in 1880 the villages mentioned above received 240 pounds of American cotton seeds, 500 pounds in 1881, 1,000 pounds in 1882, and 2,000 pounds in 1883 from the population [2, p. 85].

After the promulgation of the “New Regulations on the Administration of the Turkestan Territory”, approved by the Russian Emperor Alexander III on June 12, 1886 [3, p. 47], several developments occurred simultaneously. First, the imperial government increased its attention to the development of cotton cultivation in the Fergana, Syrdarya, and Samarkand regions. Second, the population of the region continued to grow. Third, the distribution of the most fertile lands to Russian peasants who had been resettled in the region created a particularly difficult situation for local peasants, especially in the densely populated Fergana region.

According to the Regulation of the Governor-General “On the Administration of the Turkestan Region” dated September 16, 1886, the Syrdarya, Samarkand, and Fergana regions were formally organized. In particular, the Fergana region was divided into five

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uyezds: Namangan, Kokand, Margilan, Andijan, and Osh. One of the volosts within the Namangan uyezd was Olmos volost [4, p. 1].

It was during this period, particularly from the end of the nineteenth century, that peasants from the Olmos volost, due to the shortage of arable land, were forced to move to the neighboring Syrdarya region (at that time the present-day Tashkent region was part of Syrdarya oblast) to engage in farming. Historical documents indicate that in the 1890s approximately 500 people from Olmos volost migrated annually to the Syrdarya region for agricultural work and returned to their villages in the autumn [3, p. 48].

After the 1917 revolution in the Russian Empire, political power passed to the Bolshevik Party. Although the political system changed in form, many aspects of economic policy remained similar in practice. In the village of Olmos, the agrarian reforms carried out between 1925 and 1929 allowed many poor households and peasants to acquire land. However, this process was short-lived, as from the mid-1920s rural development in Uzbekistan began to follow the Soviet model of collectivization.

As a result, in 1930–1931 seven collective farms were established in the village of Olmos: “Yangi Chorva,” “Stalin,” “Toymas,” “Birlik,” “Lenin,” “Kirov,” and “Okhunboboyev” collective farms [5, p. 3].

A strict cotton monopoly was established within these collective farms. Evidence of this can be found in the minutes of the meeting of the Olmos Village Soviet held on September 26, 1945. According to the resolution:

- The decision of the bureau of the district party committee dated September 25, 1945, regarding the cotton harvesting campaign was approved.
- All collective farm chairmen were required to ensure the fulfillment of the quotas specified in the schedule starting the following day.
- Collective farm workers who failed to fulfill their daily quotas were required to remain in the fields until the work was completed.
- Collective farm chairmen were instructed to mobilize all available resources for the cotton harvest.
- Deputy chairpersons responsible for women's affairs were tasked with organizing elderly men and women on the collective farms to assist with supporting activities.
- After harvesting, remaining cotton bolls and seeds were to be collected, cleaned, and transported to the field edge under the supervision of brigade leaders.
- The grazing of livestock on confiscated lands was strictly prohibited.

• Straw collected during the harvest was to be gathered at designated places at night and processed collectively.

• It was forbidden to distribute collected materials to individual households without official authorization [6, pp. 14, 19].

In addition, the state confiscated the property of collective farmers through taxation and compulsory financial obligations. This is reflected in the decisions of the Presidium of the Olmos Village Soviet. For example, at a meeting held on May 19, 1948, it was noted that the planned tax collection of 320,000 soums from residents had not been fulfilled, with only 22,500 soums collected. The collective farm chairmen—Comrades Mo'yinov, Sulaymonov, Akbarov, and Ibratov—were instructed to resolve this issue by March 24 [7, p. 9].

Collective farms were also required to deliver state quotas of agricultural products and participate in the purchase of government bonds. For example, in 1948 the following collective farms were assigned mandatory bond purchases:

- “Toymas” – 80,000 soums
- “Birlik” – 70,000 soums
- “Lenin” – 40,000 soums
- “Stalin” – 30,000 soums
- “Kirov” – 90,000 soums
- “Yangi Chorva” – 5,000 soums

In total, 325,000 soums were intended to be purchased on a so-called “voluntary-compulsory” basis [8, pp. 9, 10, 13].

In summary, in the post-war years the migration processes in the densely populated villages of the Fergana Valley were poorly studied and insufficiently considered by Soviet authorities. Employment opportunities were not adequately created. During this period, the cotton monopoly served primarily state interests. Attempts by villagers to engage in independent farming outside rural areas were often restricted by the state.

Moreover, passports, driver’s licenses, and military identification documents of farmers from the village of Olmos were sometimes confiscated by authorities in order to prevent them from leaving the village.

Nevertheless, many relatively prosperous peasants from Olmos migrated to various regions of Uzbekistan and to neighboring republics such as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan during the 1950s and 1960s in order to engage in farming. In practice, they

were already participating in market-oriented agricultural activities during the socialist era, as they were able to interact more freely with land resources and agricultural production.

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