

## **Socio-Economic Life in The Surkhan Oasis at The Beginning of the 20th Century**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes land-water relations in the Surkhan oasis at the beginning of the 20th century, the participation of Russian businessmen in the land-water issue, and its results.

**Keywords:** Surkhan oasis, Bukhara and Khiva khanates, textile enterprises, beklik and estates, housing, water, food.

### **Introduction**

At the beginning of the 20th century, Turkestan was a colony of the Russian Empire, and the tsarist government pursued a policy based on its economic interests. The Russian government sought to develop the country's natural resources, turn it into a large raw material base, and transport material wealth as cheaply and conveniently as possible. Therefore, although capitalist relations had developed to a certain extent in Turkestan, it remained one of the backward peripheral regions of the empire. The Bukhara and Khiva khanates, which were considered vassals of Russia, lagged far behind the Samarkand, Syrdarya, and Fergana regions of Turkestan in terms of development. The reason for this was the preservation of feudal relations in agriculture and its support by tsarist Russia. It must be admitted that land ownership in Turkestan was smaller than in Russia, averaging 100-150 dessiatinas. However, due to cotton cultivation, these lands were of much greater value. Local rich people acted as intermediaries between Russian commercial and industrial enterprises and cotton farmers. Russian capital was engaged in the creation of special cotton-growing regions in Turkestan and their financing.

The terms of loans granted to cotton farmers by trading firms were extremely onerous and were intended to complicate matters. After all, after the farmers sold the cotton raw materials they had grown with their hard work to the middlemen at a low price, they were forced to pay various taxes to the state with the money they earned, and finally, to repay the loans they had received from the usurers. Loans given in the form of usury were 50% per annum or more [1.66], land was pledged, and the land of the farmer who could not repay his debt was sold [2. 59 - 60, 70].

As the demand for cotton raw materials by textile enterprises in central Russia grew, this need could not be met with the existing land reserves. To this end, they began a comprehensive study of the principality and estates, cities and villages of the Surkhan oasis. As a result, the Surkhan oasis became a large area that attracted the attention of Russian capital.

Russian business circles were especially interested in the fertile lands of the Sherabad principality. Therefore, in the summer of 1916, the Sherabad joint-stock company conducted a

comprehensive and in-depth study of the territory of the principality. According to it, the population of the Sherabad principality was 45,000 people, and it included the estates of Pattakesar, Chochkaguzar, Gilambob, Tallashkhan, Maidaariq, Saidabad and Jarkurgan [3].

According to data from the summer of 1916, 6.9% of the 7,347 families living in the Gilambob, Tallashqon, Maidaariq, Saidabad and Jarkurgan estates of the Sherabad principality were landless. They were usually people who had migrated from the Baysun principality. 900 families (12.8) were small landowners, and the remaining 80% were local farmers. The level of land ownership varied in the villages. For example, in Rabotak, 1 desyatina, in Yangiarik, 11/3 desyatina, in Azizon, 22/3 - 31/3 desyatina, in Istara and Gilambob, 62/3 desyatina, and in Sokhta, those with land ownership of more than 10 desyatina were included in the group of landowners [4].

### **Materials and methods**

As the Russian Empire's demand for cotton raw materials grew, the most effective way to satisfy it was to expand cotton fields in Turkestan. As a result, the irrigation system in the Turkestan General Governorate, Bukhara and Khiva khanates became the main objects of Russian capital investment.

On February 23, 1912, A.G. Ananyev signed a concession with the Bukhara emir Sayyid Olimkhan on the lease of 72.5 thousand desyatina of vacant land of the Sherabad bekli for 99 years. This was the first complicated agreement concluded with Russian colonialists in the history of the emirate. Clause 5 of the agreement gave Ananyev the right to create a canal by damming it from any point on the Surkhandarya [5].

According to A.G. Ananyev's plan, the construction of the canal from the Surkhandarya River was to be completed only in 1917/18, and the water supply would begin in 1920. The concession's profit was planned to be 6% in the 1925/26 financial year, 10% in 1936, 15% in 1940, and to increase accordingly in subsequent years [6].

In the fall of 1912, after fasting, in order to fulfill the terms of the concession, engineer Ananyev, with the participation of the Sherabad beylik administration and Bukhara officials, began work on expanding and deepening the Zang arik. 1-1.4 thousand people participated in digging this arik. Residents from neighboring estates were also involved in it. After 2 months of work, the Zang arik was expanded 2.5-3 times in width, reaching a width of 15 feet and a depth of 2 feet 2 inches. At the same time, the arik was further lengthened and led to Navshahr, 4 versts from Angora [7].

On November 2, 1915, the Sherobod Joint-Stock Company began its work. V.D. Ilyin was elected chairman, A.G. Ananyev, A.S. Brickelmeyer, Prince S.V. Kudashov and S.P. Maksimov were elected board members, and P.P. Lizhin and N.N. Yastrebov were nominated board members. S.P. Maksimov, a member of the board, was appointed executive director, engineer K.D. Keltser was appointed manager and head of all affairs of the Sherobod Joint-Stock Company, and B.I. Rodzevich was appointed his assistant. The authorized capital of the company amounted to 12 million rubles. The controlling stake in the Sherobod Joint-Stock Company belonged to the Russian Commercial and Industrial Bank, which was associated with English financial capital. The lands to be developed by the concession were to be used to create a new administrative and industrial city, Navshahar, and cotton ginning plants were to be built there [8].

The company was set a goal of developing 72,000 desyatina of land and harvesting 1 million poods of cotton. Of course, this was a difficult task. The reason was that it was very important to relocate tens of thousands of people to the newly developed lands, create conditions

for them, and provide them with housing, water, and food. In addition, the grace period of the concession agreement was to expire by 1920, so it was necessary to speed up the work [9].

S.P. Maksimov went to Bukhara and negotiated with Amir Olimkhan and his deputy. On March 12, 1916, Amir Olimkhan signed a new agreement. According to it, farmers living in the concession area were forced to conclude contracts with the "Sherobod" joint-stock company [10].

### **Results and discussion**

The lands of the peasants who had built the Zang arik with their own hands and received water from it, but did not enter the concession area, were to be included in the community or deprived of water. On March 23, 1916, more than a thousand peasants in Zharkurgan attacked the concessionaires who were stationed at the caravanserai. The people demanded that the concessionaires not seize their land and water. In response, the peasants who had been forcibly sent to work for the community by Sherabad Beg also went on strike. Terrified of the spread of the uprising, the Russian governor in Termez sent a punitive detachment and burned three villages to the ground. The devanbeg, who analyzed the conflict, found Sherabad Beg and his officials guilty [11.58].

In order to prevent the Sherabad residents from raising another uprising, in the spring of 1916, Leontyev, an advisor to the government of the Russian Empire, and in January 1917, Kuropatkin, the governor-general of Turkestan, arrived in Sherabad, along with Miller, the emperor's political agent in Bukhara. Thanks to their intervention, the tension was partially eased. The lands seized by the colonists were returned to their former owners [12].

The events that took place forced the concession to work very carefully. At the general meeting of shareholders held in Termez on April 5, 1916, it was noted that it was impossible to quickly develop 72,000 desyatina of land. For this reason, it was considered necessary to develop 12,000 desyatina of land and relocate the population to it in the first stage [13]. In addition, the concession made a number of proposals to win the population over to its side. In particular, it was allowed to conclude agreements with individuals as well as entire villages. It was announced that those who settled on concession lands until January 1, 1917, could use water and land. It was indicated that the use of water would be at the expense of the community, and the payment for water would be made by giving half of the harvest or paying in cash. Tenants who wanted to buy land were promised an average of 6 desyatinas of land [14].

Thus, by the beginning of 1916, the concession was partially operational. Construction in Navshahr was in full swing. On April 15, 1917, an order was placed with the E.A. Grabovsky company to bring Munger cotton pressing equipment from New York for \$ 13,700 for the factory being built there [15].

In order to train future workers, the Sherobod joint-stock company opened its own training school in Termez. In the 1916-1917 academic year, 2,760 rubles were allocated for school work. Discounts were established for those who wanted to study there, and tuition fees were reduced [16]. However, the Bolsheviks who came to power in Termez considered the Sherobod joint-stock company an organization with a colonial character. On the contrary, as a result of the aggravation of relations between the Soviets and Amir Olimkhan, a large part of the employees of the Sherobod joint-stock company left Termez and Navshahr. Having lost its managers and employees, the Concession completely ceased its activities in August 1918 under Soviet pressure. Local peasants, in turn, demolished the buildings built by the company [17.8].

### **Conclusion**

At the beginning of the 20th century, significant changes occurred in the socio-economic life of the Surkhandarya oasis. During this period, major changes occurred in the agricultural

sector, industry, trade, social structure, and culture, and these factors laid the foundation for the future development of the oasis.

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