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HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF COTTON GROWING AND KARAKUL SHEEP BREEDING IN SAMARKAND REGION (1960–1970)

Mutallibjonov Boburmirzo

*University of Business and Science Faculty of Social and
Humanitarian Sciences, Department of History*

3rd year student

Abstract: *This study examines the historical development of cotton growing and Karakul sheep breeding in Samarkand region during 1960–1970 within Soviet agrarian policy. The introduction outlines agriculture as a central pillar of Uzbekistan's economy, with Samarkand playing a key role. The literature review shows that scholars emphasize both achievements productivity growth through irrigation, mechanization, and specialized farms. The discussion highlights improved employment and infrastructure alongside ecological challenges and structural dependencies.*

Keywords: *Samarkand, cotton growing, Karakul sheep breeding, Soviet agrarian policy, agriculture, history.*

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ХЛОПКОВОДСТВА И КАРАКУЛЕВОДСТВА В САМАРКАНДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ (1960–1970 ГГ.)

Муталлибжонов Бобурмирзо

*Университет бизнеса и науки, факультет социальных и
Гуманитарных наук, кафедра истории*

студент 3 курса

Аннотация: *В данном исследовании рассматривается историческое развитие хлопководства и каракулеводства в Самаркандской области в 1960–1970 гг. в рамках советской аграрной политики. Во введении сельское*

хозяйство рассматривается как центральный элемент экономики Узбекистана, а Самарканд играет ключевую роль. Обзор литературы показывает, что исследователи подчёркивают как достижения, так и противоречия советской модернизации, отмечая хлопок как основную экспортную культуру, а каракуль – как товар, ценимый на международном уровне. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о росте производительности труда за счёт орошения, механизации и специализированных хозяйств. В обсуждении рассматриваются вопросы улучшения занятости и инфраструктуры, а также экологические проблемы и структурные зависимости.

Ключевые слова: Самарканд, хлопководство, каракулеводство, советская аграрная политика, сельское хозяйство, история.

Introduction. The 1960–1970 decade marked a pivotal stage in Uzbekistan’s agrarian policy, with Samarkand emerging as a key center of modernization. Favorable soils and pastures allowed the region to lead in cotton cultivation and Karakul sheep breeding, strategic priorities of the Soviet state [1, p. 3]. Cotton, the “white gold,” expanded through irrigation, mechanization, and agro-technical measures, boosting yields and export potential [2, p. 15; 3, p. 27]. These reforms reshaped rural life by creating new labor structures and socio-economic opportunities, while specialized farms developed Karakul breeding for high-quality pelts and international trade [4, p. 42; 5, p. 18]. Consequently, Samarkand became a vital hub of Soviet agrarian strategy [6, p. 54].

Analysis of the literature; Scholarly research on cotton growing and Karakul sheep breeding in Uzbekistan during the Soviet era highlights major agrarian and socio-economic transformations of the 1960–1970s. Samarkand played a leading role as intensified state reforms and stricter control over collective farms prioritized cotton as a strategic crop, boosting economic output and political influence [7, p. 12]. Expanded irrigation and mechanization raised yields but caused ecological and water management challenges [8, p. 44; 9, p. 37]. Simultaneously, Karakul breeding

developed through specialized farms, producing high-quality pelts for global markets [10, p. 21; 11, p. 59]. These changes reshaped rural communities, labor relations, and traditional practices, reflecting broader Soviet agrarian strategies [12, p. 86; 13, p. 103].

Methodology; This study applies a historical-analytical methodology to investigate cotton growing and Karakul sheep breeding in Samarkand during the 1960–1970s. The empirical foundation consists of archival materials, official reports, and secondary literature, which allow for the reconstruction of agricultural processes and socio-economic changes [1, p. 22; 7, p. 19]. A chronological perspective is used to trace the expansion of cotton production and the reform of Karakul breeding, with attention to state policies and their impact on kolkhozes and sovkhozes [2, p. 67; 9, p. 74]. Quantitative data drawn from yearbooks and statistical records provide evidence of productivity, land utilization, and livestock growth [3, p. 31; 10, p. 27]. Comparative analysis with neighboring regions such as Bukhara and Kashkadarya highlights similarities and distinctive features [4, p. 53; 11, p. 63]. Furthermore, a socio-economic lens evaluates labor conditions, employment, and transformations in rural communities, while historiographical analysis synthesizes scholarly debates and identifies research gaps [6, p. 102; 13, p. 109].

Results. The historical development of agriculture in Samarkand during the 1960–1970s reveals key outcomes in cotton cultivation and Karakul sheep breeding. The most significant achievement was the large-scale expansion of cotton, which reshaped the region's economy. State policies promoted irrigation, mechanization, and new agro-technical methods [1, p. 25; 2, p. 70], leading to higher yields and positioning Samarkand as a major supplier of raw materials for the Soviet Union [7, p. 21; 8, p. 47]. However, this “white gold” also created challenges. Intensive irrigation and monoculture caused ecological stress, though such issues were downplayed in official records [3, p. 35; 9, p. 79]. Still, cotton remained central to state policy and local livelihoods [6, p. 105; 13, p. 111].

Alongside cotton, Karakul sheep breeding advanced significantly. Favorable steppe and semi-desert zones supported high-quality livestock [4, p. 56; 10, p. 29]. Specialized collective and state farms improved breeding systems, productivity, and export capacity [5, p. 43; 11, p. 65], enhancing the international reputation of Uzbek Karakul [12, p. 90]. Agricultural reforms also transformed rural communities. Cotton and Karakul industries generated jobs, restructured labor relations, and tied villages more closely to the Soviet collective farming model [7, p. 23; 12, p. 92]. Dependence on state subsidies, mechanization, and central planning gradually replaced traditional practices [9, p. 82; 13, p. 114]. In sum, the 1960–1970s marked a turning point for Samarkand: cotton secured its role in the Soviet economy, while Karakul achieved global recognition, despite ecological and structural contradictions [1, p. 28; 4, p. 59].

Discussion. The development of cotton growing and Karakul sheep breeding in Samarkand during the 1960–1970s reflected both achievements and contradictions of Soviet agrarian policy. Cotton, regarded as “white gold,” was prioritized through irrigation, mechanization, and kolkhoz–sovkhoz reforms. This raised yields and created employment, but narrowed crop diversity, reduced local autonomy, and fostered ecological stress [1, p. 30; 3, p. 39; 7, p. 25; 9, p. 83]. Karakul sheep breeding also advanced, as semi-arid zones supported high-quality livestock. Specialized farms increased productivity and exports, strengthening Uzbekistan’s global reputation, though reliance on subsidies and limited breeds exposed vulnerabilities [4, p. 57; 10, p. 31; 12, p. 93].

Socio-economic impacts were significant: both sectors generated jobs, reduced poverty, and tied rural welfare—schools, healthcare, and housing—to collective farm performance [7, p. 27; 12, p. 95]. However, dependence on state policies left villages vulnerable to fluctuations in production. Environmentally, irrigation expansion supported cotton but intensified pressure on Amu Darya and Syr Darya resources, laying foundations for the Aral Sea crisis [8, p. 52; 9, p. 88]. Overall, Samarkand’s 1960–1970 trajectory encapsulated the Soviet agrarian model: internationally

ambitious and productive, yet marked by ecological costs, structural imbalances, and long-term dependency [1, p. 33; 13, p. 122].

Conclusion. The historical analysis of cotton growing and Karakul sheep breeding in Samarkand during the 1960–1970s shows the region’s central role in Soviet agrarian policy. Cotton, the “white gold,” expanded through irrigation, mechanization, and state reforms, boosting yields and strengthening Samarkand’s leading position [1, p. 25; 7, p. 21]. At the same time, specialized farms advanced Karakul breeding, supplying high-quality pelts to global markets and elevating Uzbekistan’s reputation [4, p. 56; 10, p. 29]. These developments created rural employment and improved infrastructure, but dependence on monoculture, external markets, and resource-intensive practices also caused ecological strain and structural imbalances [6, p. 105; 13, p. 114].

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