
SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION SYSTEM OF THE KARAKALPAKS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19th CENTURY – THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

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Annotation.

This thesis describes the state of agriculture and irrigation system of the Karakalpaks in the second half of the 19 and early 20 centuries on the basis of the literature and the information on scientific researches on the subject.

Key words.

Karakalpaks, Amu Darya, Amudarya district, Russian Empire, agriculture, irrigation system, water-work constructions, canal, ariks.

Karakalpaks have long been a nomadic and semi-nomadic people living in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea. After the conquest of the Khiva Khanate by the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century, the lands on the right bank of the Amu Darya were directly subordinated to the Russian Empire according to the 1873 Gandhimian Peace Treaty between the Khiva Khanate and the Russian Empire [5, -p. 49]. In this area, initially the Amudarya okrug was formed and in 1874 it was transformed into the Amudarya district [3, -p.2-3]. In accordance with the "Regulations on the management of the Turkestan country" of 1886, the Amudarya district was included in the Syrdarya region of the country of Turkestan [6, -p. 1]. The administrative center of the district was in Petro-Alexandrovsk.

The Amudarya district was administratively divided into 2 precincts: Shurahon and Chimbay, with a total area of 75 900 square versts (1 verst is a measure of distance equal to 1.06 km), and the population was 192 312 [3, -p. 56]. By 1886, the boundaries of the territory of the Amudarya district were further defined. The Shurahon section consisted of 6 sections: Shurahon, Turtkul, Shabboz, Biybozor, Mingbulak, Tamdi and 24 rural communities. The territory of the Chimbay section consisted mainly of Nukus, Kungrad, Talliq, Naopir, Chimbay, Kegeyli, Ishim, Kok-Kul and Daoqara bulises and 37 rural and aul communities [4, -p. 42].

The inhabitants of the Amudarya district were mainly Karakalpaks, followed by Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and a small number of other ethnic groups. In the second half of the 19th century, Turkmens and Uzbeks settled in the area, while Karakalpaks and Kazakhs lived in a semi-nomadic state. The population was mainly engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture. The settled population lived in the Shurakhan area, and the semi-nomadic population lived in the Chimbay area [1, -p.31].

In the second half of the 19th century, Karakalpak agriculture, especially irrigated agriculture, was in a backward and difficult state. This is due to the fact that they were still using mainly tools of agriculture such as wooden plows, hoes, shovels, sickles, carts, which date back to ancient and middle ages. Ninety percent of the poor peasants, who made up the majority of the population, did not even have such tools. There was also a great need to use the power of cattle and other animals in tilling the land. However, only 1/3 of all cattle in the Amudarya district belonged to poor peasants, and most of them were sheep and goats [8, -p. 6].

Karakalpak peasants had to plow the land with their shovels and hoes due to the lack of powerful techniques for plowing the land and plows and cattle. This situation led to the inability of peasants to cultivate the land in a timely manner and the late sowing of seeds, as well as a decline in crop yields. As a

result, in order to farm locals had to rent land, labor tools and techniques. The increase in rents put the social status of peasants in a tough situation.

Meantime, we can see that in this period in the Amudarya district, there was a shortage of land available for irrigated agriculture and a lack of water resources. Researcher A. Abdulaev in his investigations claims that by this time more than 70% of the territory of the Amudarya district consisted of dry sandy desert and areas close to the Amu Darya river and its tributaries to the Aral Sea were suitable areas for wheat cultivation [2, -p. 57].

In the irrigation system of the Amudarya district, the main source of water was a large number of canals and ariks drawn from the Amu Darya. They were in a very bad condition during this period. The amount of water in the canals was controlled by simple structures built using twigs, sticks and other natural materials. Obviously, these water-work constructions had to be repaired frequently. This obligation was also borne by the poor peasants.

The level of yield in the Amudarya district depended on the rate of increase of the Amu Darya water and changes in the riverbed. In the years when the river was short of water, there was a deficiency of water on irrigated lands in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya. However, the increase in Amu Darya water was also disastrous for the lands in the Amudarya district. The water of the Amu Darya often destroyed hydraulic structures, canals, and dams. The water would in many cases flooded the hard-earned lands from the deserts and swamps. This posed a risk of disaster and starvation [7, -p.81-82].

By the end of the 19th century, when the Amudarya district was established under the rule of the Russian Empire, irrigated agriculture in the area was based on a system of two main irrigation canals. In the east, this system consisted of the Kuanish-jarma, while in the west it consists of the Kungrad River (Biyob) Taldykorgan and the Ulkandarya. The largest canal on the right bank is the Kegeyli, beginning at Kuanish-jarma. Kegeyli supplied water to about 300 large ariks. They irrigated all the arable lands in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya, numbering 175 on the right bank and 125 on the left bank [7, -p.83-84]. However, the technical condition of the most ariks was not good. The work of repairing and cleaning these ariks from mud was the responsibility of the peasants who cultivated the land.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the second half of the 19 - early 20 centuries, as a result of the backwardness and lack of labor tool in the agricultural and irrigation system of Karakalpak, tenant peasants could not cultivate the land on time. This in turn led to a decrease in productivity. Due to the poor condition of the irrigation system and insufficient attention paid to the repair of large canals, ariks and water-work constructions, irrigated agriculture was in a difficult situation. Such cases had a negative impact on the lifestyle of Karakalpak peasants as well.

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