

TASHKENT'S INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND URBAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOVIET ERA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON R. AMINOVA'S RESEARCH

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Abstract

This article examines the industrial and socio-economic transformation of Tashkent during the mid-twentieth century, drawing on Rakhima Aminova's monograph *History of Socialist Tashkent* (Vol. 2, 1966). The study traces Tashkent's evolution from a predominantly agrarian and raw-material-oriented city into one of the Soviet Union's major industrial and scientific centers. Special attention is given to the structural changes brought about by Soviet industrialization policy, the evacuation and relocation of enterprises during the Second World War, and the rapid expansion of manufacturing branches in the post-war decades.

Keywords: Tashkent, Soviet industrialization, history of Central Asia, Rakhima Aminova, industrial transformation, post-war reconstruction, cotton industry.

Introduction

The years of the Second World War and the post-war period represented one of the pivotal turning points in the history of the city of Tashkent. During those years, the city began to take shape not only as the administrative center of Uzbekistan, but also as an important industrial, scientific, and cultural hub across all of Central Asia. In particular, the relocation of evacuated industrial enterprises during the war, the sharp increase in population, and the expansion of economic infrastructure had a powerful impact on Tashkent's development. In the post-war years, rebuilding the city, developing new industrial sectors, and improving the living conditions of the population became one of the key directions of state policy.

The second volume of *History of Socialist Tashkent*¹, authored by Rakhima Aminova, is devoted precisely to the social, economic, and cultural transformations that took place in the city of Tashkent during the years 1941–1965. The author attempts to analyze, stage by stage, the process by which Tashkent became a major industrial and scientific center within a short period of time. The work particularly highlights the significant changes that took place in the life of the city during the war years and the period that followed — the construction of new factories and plants, and the expansion of industrial sectors — presenting these as processes of great importance.

As emphasized in the work, the first half and middle of the twentieth century represented a period of sharp economic and structural transformation in the history of Tashkent's industry. During these years, the city gradually evolved from an agrarian and raw-material-oriented region into a major industrial center. In particular, as a result of the industrialization policy implemented during the Soviet period, new branches of production took shape in Tashkent, and the city's economic character began to change fundamentally. The author links this process not only to the growth in the volume of industrial output, but also to the renewal of the composition of production and its technologies.

¹ Aminova R. *History of Socialist Tashkent*. Vol. 2. Tashkent: Fan, 1966. — 354 pp.

R. Aminova portrays Tashkent, up to the middle of the twentieth century, as a city embodying the contradictions between past and present. In her view, the city had, on the one hand, preserved the Eastern environment that had formed over the course of centuries, while on the other hand, it was a region that had fallen behind economically and socially as a result of colonial policy². In particular, the division of Tashkent into "old" and "new" sections during the era of the Russian Empire made the inequalities and disparities in city life all the more starkly apparent. The "old city" remained a traditional environment inhabited by the local population, while the "new city" became an administrative and military center built for the European population. Between these two worlds, the divide was deeply felt — not only in terms of architecture, but in cultural and social terms as well.

As the author emphasizes, the old part of Tashkent in those times consisted of narrow, winding streets that twisted and tangled into one another. The low-built houses standing behind high earthen walls seemed cut off from the outside world. Since the windows of the houses faced not the streets but the inner courtyards, signs of life were rarely felt along the lanes, and the city was cloaked in silence and a somewhat melancholy atmosphere. With the coming of evening, entire neighborhoods were plunged into darkness due to the absence of any lighting system. This scene vividly reflected the city's difficult social conditions and living circumstances. Foreign travelers described Tashkent as an endless landscape of yellowish mud-brick houses. Only the lush gardens scattered here and there, and the minarets stretching toward the sky, breathed life into this quiet and slightly sorrowful environment. The minarets of mosques and mausoleums appeared as spiritual and historical symbols of the city, preserving Tashkent's Eastern character as it had formed over the course of centuries³.

In the author's view, the reconstruction works begun during the Soviet era opened a new chapter in the history of Tashkent. The construction of wide, modern streets and the rise of new buildings in place of the old neighborhoods fundamentally transformed the city's appearance. The laying of broad thoroughfares such as Navoi, Hamza, and Shota Rustaveli directly through the old mud-brick quarters signified that the city was turning toward a new way of life. The author regards this process not merely as an architectural transformation, but also as a symbolic turning point in Tashkent's historical development.

As noted in the study, in 1913 the industry of Tashkent was relatively underdeveloped, with mainly small enterprises operating in the city. Only a few thousand workers were employed across these enterprises in total, whereas by 1965 the volume of industrial output had grown several tens of times compared to the pre-1917 period. During this time, hundreds of industrial enterprises were established in the city, encompassing various branches of production. Prior to the October Revolution, Tashkent's industry had been specialized primarily in the initial processing of agricultural products. In particular, cotton-ginning, wine-making, and the production of spirits and beer occupied the central place in the economy. This demonstrates that the economy of Turkestan was oriented mainly toward the supply of raw materials. The fact that cotton had become the primary export commodity for the Russian market was especially indicative of the colonial character of the region's economy⁴.

² Rakhima Khodieвна Aminova / compiled by D. B. Babadzhanova, I. D. Fok; edited by A. A. Askarov. Tashkent: Fan, 1995. — P. 27. (Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Institute of History.)

³ Aminova R. History of Socialist Tashkent. Vol. 2. Tashkent: Fan, 1966. — P. 18.

⁴ Aminova R. History of Socialist Tashkent. Vol. 2. Tashkent: Fan, 1966. — P. 19.

During the Soviet period, however, fundamental structural changes took place in Tashkent's industry. As the author emphasizes, the city gradually shed its status as a raw material base and transformed into a multi-branch industrial center — a point she underscores with particular attention. As a result of the development of new branches of both heavy and light industry, machine-building, electrical engineering, chemical production, and the manufacture of construction materials were all established in the city. These changes also altered the place of the republic's economy within the all-union division of labor.

As recorded in the work, the industrialization process created the capacity to manufacture high-technology products in Tashkent. Among these were agricultural machinery, textile equipment, mining industry machinery, electrical apparatus, cables, and various technical devices. In certain categories of output, Tashkent became one of the important centers of production not only in Uzbekistan, but across the entire Soviet Union. The author also gives particular attention to the development of the light industry sector. Enterprises in the fields of textiles, garment-making, knitwear, leather and footwear, confectionery, and tobacco industry developed at a rapid pace in Tashkent. This process served to provide employment for the city's population, meet the needs of the domestic market, and increase export potential.

By the 1950s and 1960s, Tashkent had come to be recognized not only as the administrative center of Uzbekistan, but as one of the most important industrial cities in the entire Soviet Union. During this period, the products manufactured at Tashkent's factories and plants stood out for their complexity, technical novelty, and practical significance. As R. Aminova emphasizes, the rise of Tashkent's industry clearly demonstrated the city's transformation from a simple raw material center into a high-technology production region. The machinery produced for the cotton-growing sector was considered one of the most significant achievements of Tashkent's industry. Cotton-ginning equipment, gin batteries, fiber-separation mechanisms, and cotton-harvesting machines manufactured in the city were widely used not only in the fields of Uzbekistan, but also in Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and other cotton-growing regions. This machinery played an important role in easing labor in agriculture and increasing work efficiency. The modernized cotton-picking machines in particular were regarded as a striking example of the technological progress of that era⁵.

The textile equipment manufactured in Tashkent was also of great significance on a Union-wide scale. High-speed automatic looms, spinning machines, and specialized textile apparatus gave vivid expression to the city's industrial might. These products not only met the needs of local enterprises, but were also supplied to other republics. In the authors' view, Tashkent's standing in the field of textile machine-building made it one of the leading industrial centers in Central Asia⁶.

At the same time, various mechanisms for the mining industry, electrical equipment, and hydrometeorological instruments were also produced in the city. In particular, major enterprises such as "Tashselmash," "Tashtextilmash," and "Tashkhlopkomash" manufactured products of strategic importance not only for the republic's economy, but for the industry of the entire Union. The machinery produced at these factories was also exported to foreign countries. R. Aminova speaks with pride of Tashkent's scientific potential as well. For instance, the nuclear reactor established at the Institute of

⁵ Aminova R. History of Socialist Tashkent. Vol. 2. Tashkent: Fan, 1966. — P. 151.

⁶ Central Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Collection 54, Inventory 1, File 907, Folio 105; File 908, Folio 13.

Nuclear Physics in Tashkent was one of the only such scientific facilities in the Central and Middle East region. Its operation demonstrated that the city had become an important center not only in industry, but in the field of scientific research as well⁷.

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⁷ Aminova R. *History of Socialist Tashkent*. Vol. 2. Tashkent: Fan, 1966. — P. 20.