



Events In The Fergana Valley During The 1920s–1930s: Famine and Its Socio-Economic Significance

Nizomiddinov Odiljon Baxodirovich

Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

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*Correspondence: Nizomiddinov Odiljon Baxodirovich

Email: nursux.111@mail.ru

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Abstract: In the 1920s and 1930s, the famine and socio-cultural changes in the Fergana Valley were the result of large-scale political and economic transformations. This article examines the causes and consequences of the famine and its impact on society and cultural life. The Soviet reforms, including collectivization policies, state centralization of food resources, and their effects on the socio-economic life of the region, are explored. The famine's influence on people's way of life, local customs, and the government's political decisions in this regard are thoroughly analyzed. Based on archival documents and academic literature, conclusions are drawn about how the famine exacerbated the economic crisis in the Fergana Valley, sparked widespread discontent, and influenced the local social culture.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, Famine, Socio-Cultural Changes, Collectivization, Agrarian Reforms, Food Monopoly, Repressive Policies, Economic Poverty, Food Dictatorship, Grain Resources, State Governance, Class Rations, Social Crisis.

Introduction

In the 1920s-1930s, the Fergana Valley was not only the center of political and economic changes but also a region that faced social tragedies, including famine. This period is recognized as the result of Soviet reforms and the collectivization policy that began throughout Central Asia. At the same time, the agrarian characteristics of the Fergana Valley and the economic life of its population also changed significantly, exerting a strong influence on socio-cultural processes. In particular, the famine situation in the region further underscores the complexity of that period.

Famine was a widespread problem in the Fergana Valley in the late 1920s and early 1930s, brought about by several factors. The policy of collectivization, climatic conditions, and the export of grain products by the central authorities led to a food shortage in the region. This famine caused devastating consequences for the economy and society of all of Central Asia and the Fergana Valley, which, in turn, subjected the population to poverty and hunger. Since the majority of the population depended on agriculture, there were protests against state enforcement measures and mass exoduses.

However, the famine of this period was not limited to economic factors but also had a serious impact on the social and cultural life of the people. The food shortage and the

state's policy against it altered the spiritual world, traditional values, and customs of the people. Many families were forced to leave their homelands and migrate to other regions due to famine, which led to the fragmentation of local culture.

This article aims to conduct a deeper study of the causes and consequences of the famine in the Fergana Valley and its role in people's lives by illuminating its historical, social, and cultural aspects.

Methodology

The issue of famine in the Fergana Valley during the 1920s-1930s has been repeatedly analyzed in the works of Soviet historians. Most Soviet studies tend to portray this period through the achievements of political reforms, while complex social phenomena such as famine are often overlooked.

Foreign authors have studied the famine of this period with a more critical approach. In particular, the renowned American scholar Professor Adeeb Khalid, in his work "The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia," emphasizes the cultural and social changes that took place in the Fergana Valley in the 1920s-1930s. Although the author focused more on analyzing social and cultural processes, he attempted to link famine with social factors.

Marianne Kamp, Associate Professor of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University, notes in her scientific work that famine was widespread in Uzbekistan in the 1930s. However, she specifically emphasizes that collective farmers did not go hungry. In her research, she presents the idea that well-off people provided significant help to those who were starving [1:237]. The scholar has been conducting her research since 1991 and has traveled extensively in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. Due to her knowledge of the Uzbek language, she conducts interviews to study oral history, and uses Russian for other research. As a result, this study differs from others in its unique approaches and research methods. In particular, her article "Hunger and Potatoes" and her research work "Famine and the Transformation of Trade Routes in Uzbekistan in 1933" can serve as examples of this. In this study, the author, using methods of oral history, statistical analysis, and critical and comparative analysis, conducted a comparative and critical analysis of statistical and archival materials based on the oral accounts of people who witnessed the socio-political processes of the 1930s. The research was conducted in collaboration with several prominent scientists in the Namangan, Fergana, Tashkent, Navoi, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, and Khorezm regions. Local researchers have also studied the famine in the Fergana Valley through various approaches. Their works serve as an important source for shedding light on the impact of historical events on the local population.

One of the most critical issues in the Turkestan ASSR during the 1920s-1930s was the food problem. During this period, the Bolsheviks began implementing stringent measures to confiscate grain and food products from the local population. To legitimize the measures being implemented and to safeguard their authority, the Soviet government

established the Food Department under the Turkestan Council of People's Commissars in January 1918 [2:569].

On May 9, 1918, a food dictatorship was introduced in the RSFSR (O'zbekiston MDA). Shortly after, a food directorate was also established in Turkestan. However, numerous errors were observed in the directorate's activities. Notably, only the Russian population was provided with food supplies. The local Muslim population, having been removed from power, was left without bread. This famine intensified after 1921.

This is confirmed by Nazir Turakulov's article "Fergana Problem" ("Ферганская проблема") published under the pseudonym "Darvish" in the 2nd issue of the journal "Военная мысль" in 1921 [4:108-118]. In this article, the author analyzed the difficult situation in the Fergana Valley and highlighted the serious mistakes of Soviet authorities in food policy. He also scientifically demonstrated the severe impact of this policy on the lives of the local population, revealing the economic difficulties and social problems in the region. He expressed his opinion about the deplorable situation that arose as a result of the mismanagement of the Soviet regime and the long-term negative impact of these processes on local society.

Numerous articles about these situations can also be found in periodicals. For example, the pages of the newspaper "Turkiston" provide important information about the general situation in the Fergana region in 1922-1923, in which the majority of the region's population died from infectious diseases (typhoid fever, fever, malaria) in 1920-1922 [5]. It is also worth noting that the local population, even in death, did not tell anyone (blaming fate for every disaster). With the approach of winter and the onset of cold weather, neglected children began to die of starvation, which was another great tragedy for the people of Fergana.

In his monograph "History of the Cities of the Fergana Valley (1917-1924)," U. Mansurov notes that on July 26, 1921, the "Commission for the Aid of the Hungry" [6:94], headed by Krivoruchkin, began its activities in the Fergana region, and throughout its activities, the commission, in order to help the hungry, performed performances and charitable works, and purchased food with the proceeds. If we supplement the information presented in the monograph based on archival sources, on January 1, 1922, the "Famine Tax" was introduced in Turkestan [7:246]. Shortly after, additional taxes were introduced in Fergana, the largest point of famine. In particular, in accordance with Resolution No. 4 of January 9, 1922, of the Council of People's Commissars of the Turkestan Republic, a number of additions were introduced to various payments to the local transport department of the Fergana Regional Revolutionary Committee in order to assist the state in the work of rescuing the population from hunger, called the "Famine Tax." For example, it was emphasized that when local transport departments issue invoices for services rendered by local transport to institutions and individuals, they should calculate a 10% "Famine Tax" and, upon collection of these funds, transfer them to the financiers of the Fund of the Main Commission for Salvation from Famine. Also, all institutions and individuals must pay the specified tax without justification when using local transport services, all institutions, organizations, officials and private individuals

must strictly comply with this mandatory decision and not allow evading the "Hunger Tax." It was emphasized that audit bodies must strictly monitor its implementation and hold those responsible for violations accountable (ФВДА. 435-фонд. 1-руйхат. 3-йишма жилд. 26-27 варақлар).

Unfortunately, this tax was introduced without taking into account the material situation of the impoverished rural and urban population. As a result, the scourge of famine exacerbated the suffering of the masses.

When studying the files of the 121st fund of the Fergana Regional State Archive, one can find a lot of information about people suffering from hunger in the cities and villages of the Fergana Valley in 1924.

Also, the documents of this period, stored in the archive's fund No. 435, serve for a deeper study of the causes of the famine, deepening scientific analysis of the government's policy and its impact on the lives of the population.

A deeper analysis of this situation shows that the famine was caused not only by natural disasters, but also by a combination of political and economic factors. Therefore, the study of this period is of scientific importance and requires further research based on various archival materials.

The famine of 1933 in Fergana created extremely difficult socio-economic conditions for its time. In the memoirs of this period, it is noted that the grasses growing on the ground were harvested before they were fully ripe and consumed as food. Respondent Ahmadjon Mamatkulov recalled that the famine was so severe at its level that it was called "mass death." Many parents, due to difficult economic circumstances, were deprived of the opportunity to feed their children and, as a result, were forced to place their children in "Hungry Children's Homes" opened by the state. This situation indicates a severe economic and social crisis at the national level (Dala yozuvlari).

Historically and socially, this famine may have arisen in the country under the influence of the agrarian economy and political changes of its time. Parents' inability to adequately feed their children and being forced to place children in special institutions can be seen not only as a result of the deterioration of the economic situation of families, but also as a result of state policy of that period.

Result and Discussion

The famine and socio-cultural changes that occurred in the Fergana Valley in the 1920s-1930s were formed as a result of political and economic reforms in the country. The processes of collectivization and changes in agrarian policy in Central Asia are one of the main reasons for these events, and this period can be associated with economic poverty, food shortages, and a social crisis. During the study, the main factors that caused the famine, its consequences, and the impact of this situation on the life of society were analyzed.

As mentioned above, after the introduction of the food dictatorship in the country, the Soviet government and the Bolsheviks adopted decrees "On Grain Monopoly" and "On Class Bread Rations" (Ўзбекистон МДА). Although these decrees were assessed as

adopted to strengthen the agrarian policy of the Soviet government and solve the food shortage in the country, they were actually aimed at introducing centralized state control over grain and grain resources. This has led to a number of social and economic consequences. The Chairman of the Muslim Bureau of the Turkestan Krai, T. Ryskulov, also stated that this policy was incorrect and that grain should be purchased from the population at a free price (Ўзбекистон МДА). Also, the sale of products to the state was mandatory - the prices set by the state were very low. The peasants, unable to receive payment for their labor, found themselves in a difficult economic situation. This, in turn, led to a greater impoverishment of the population. Furthermore, the decree divided the population into various social groups and established a system for distributing food based on their class affiliation. This system further exacerbated the differences between classes, as food rations directly depended on the class affiliation of people.

Professor K.Rajabov, in the first part of his work "History of Uzbekistan (1917-1991)," describing the famine in the Fergana region, writes: "In 1921-1923, the famine in the Fergana Valley reached its peak. Many children perished as a result of the famine. The streets of villages and cities were filled with the corpses of dozens and hundreds of people who died of starvation every day, creating a terrifying picture" (Ўзбекистон МДА). The population, suffering from famine, was forced to live on various herbs and the roots of plants. As a result, diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera, and typhoid spread among the population, and a large part of the population perished. In such difficult situations, it is noteworthy that, in addition to orphanages opened in the Fergana region, local wealthy people traditionally cooked food in cauldrons at their own expense in front of mosques and distributed it to the hungry.

According to the newspaper "Turkiston" No. 10 of 1923, starting from 1922, the Fergana Regional Commission for Combating Famine (FCC) carried out work to provide limited assistance to the population suffering from hunger. Special boarding schools were organized for hungry children, primarily young children. The Fergana Regional Sanitary Doctor Bogomolova, in her report on the work of boarding schools in Kokand, noted that by 1926, there were 6 boarding schools in Kokand (ФВДА. 436-фонд. 1-руйхат. 4-йиғма жилд. 35-варақ).

Conclusion

However, the Soviet government could not allocate sufficient funds to eliminate hunger in the region, restore agriculture, repair water facilities, and provide farmers with seeds and working livestock. Therefore, in order to alleviate economic problems, the government tried to provide assistance by creating small "debt societies" and cooperatives. In addition, "Fergana Hilol-Okhmar" (Fergana Red Crescent) societies were established to provide assistance to orphans and orphans.

The Soviet government implemented the necessary funds for solving existing problems mainly through the use of internal resources. In order to reduce the famine and food shortage in the Fergana region, the Turkestan government tasked the regions of

Samarkand and Turkmenistan with providing assistance to the Fergana region, without waiting for assistance from the central regions.

Also, a large part of the Fergana region was forced to cultivate cotton while protecting itself from hunger, feeding others, or producing bread for consumption.

Thanks to the "efforts" of the Soviet government, the assistance provided to the Fergana region was mainly carried out at the expense of internal resources. For this reason, the people of Fergana, known for their rich nature and hardworking population, experienced a difficult situation during 1917–1923.

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