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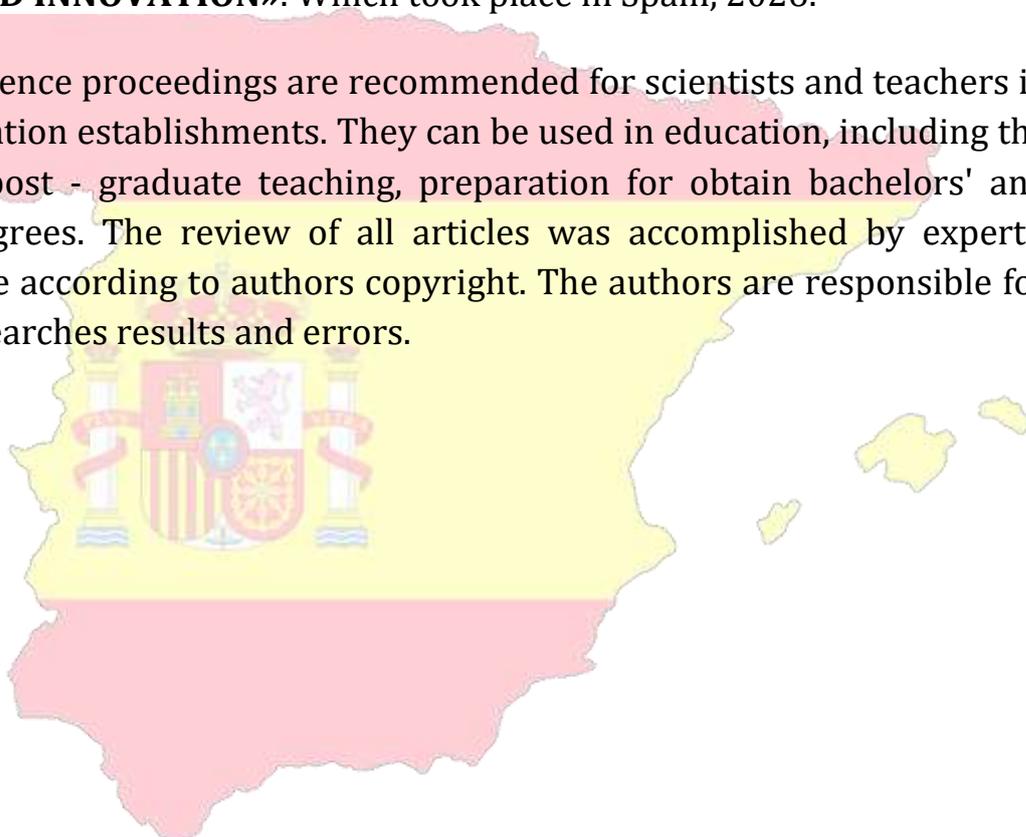


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The socio-economic life of rural Uzbekistan in the mid-20 th century (a case study of Fergana region)

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Abstract. The article examines the profound transformations in the socio-economic life of rural Uzbekistan. During the period between 1946 and 1960, the country's agrarian sector underwent a process of reconstruction. In particular, the Fergana region became one of the leading centers of economic recovery. During this time, the kolkhoz (collective farm) and sovkhoz (state farm) systems were reorganized, the level of mechanization in agriculture increased, and irrigation and land reclamation works expanded. The living standards of the population gradually improved, while social infrastructure – such as schools, medical centers, club buildings, roads, and communication networks – developed significantly. Moreover, state policies aimed at involving women in production, eradicating illiteracy, and promoting cultural life yielded effective results.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, agriculture, economic recovery, kolkhoz, sovkhoz, social life, 1946–1960.

During the period of 1946–1960, the economic and social life of rural Uzbekistan in the postwar years was primarily characterized by the dominance of agriculture, including farming, livestock breeding, cotton growing, grain cultivation, and horticulture as the main sectors. Cotton growing played a leading role in the region's economic development, serving as a key source of raw materials for the republic's textile industry. Grain cultivation was crucial in ensuring food security for the population and replenishing state reserves. Horticulture, particularly the cultivation of grapes and fruit trees, was closely linked to the development of the wine and fruit–vegetable industries. In the Fergana region, irrigation systems were expanded and modernized to support the advancement of agriculture.

New water facilities – including canals, pumping stations, reservoirs, and irrigation systems – were constructed. The expansion of this infrastructure significantly increased the area of irrigated land, boosted agricultural productivity, and created employment opportunities for rural farmers. Moreover, the development of the irrigation system contributed to improving the quality of cotton, grain, and fruit–vegetable crops, which had a positive impact on the region's overall economic stability. Thus, the prioritization of cotton growing, grain cultivation, and horticulture, along with the expansion of irrigation networks, became key factors in modernizing agriculture and improving living standards in the Fergana Valley provinces. After the end of the war, the socio-economic condition of Uzbekistan's rural areas – particularly in the Fergana Valley – began to recover under difficult circumstances. The period between 1946 and 1960 stands out in the history of Uzbekistan for its profound and significant transformations in agriculture, industry, social infrastructure, and the living standards of the population.

The post–World War II years were marked by efforts to restore the national economy, modernize production capacities, and effectively manage agricultural resources. In particular, in the Fergana region, a series of measures were implemented to develop the agrarian sector, expand irrigation systems, and improve the functioning of kolkhozes (collective farms) and sovkhozes (state farms). During this period, the growth of industrial sectors, along with the construction of new enterprises and production facilities, created opportunities for the effective employment of rural labor resources. In the field of social infrastructure, the establishment of schools, libraries, medical centers, and cultural institutions contributed to improving education and healthcare standards. The population’s living conditions, food security, housing, and public services also improved considerably. Thus, the years 1946–1960 represent not only a stage of economic development but also a crucial period of socio-cultural progress, forming a historical foundation for the modern development of Uzbekistan’s rural areas. During this period, the villages of the Fergana Valley experienced economic recovery, the reorganization of production, the emergence of new social institutions, population growth, and the mobilization of labor resources. The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that these historical processes served as an essential foundation for the socio-economic development of Uzbekistan’s rural areas today. Between 1946 and 1950, as part of postwar economic recovery programs, the kolkhoz (collective farm) and sovkhoz (state farm) systems were restored in the villages of the Fergana Valley. Agriculture was primarily focused on cotton growing, grain cultivation, and horticulture. In the Fergana region, irrigation networks were expanded, and new water facilities were constructed.

The contribution of rural laborers in these processes was invaluable, and thanks to their dedicated work, production gradually increased. By the mid-1950s, the relaxation of economic policies and the increased level of mechanization in agriculture led to higher production efficiency. Kolkhozes and sovkhozes began receiving state support in the form of credit and agricultural machinery. During this period, new tractor stations were established, and water pumping stations, reservoirs, oil mills, and poultry farms became operational. As a result, the Fergana Valley became one of the most economically stable agrarian regions in the country. Significant changes also occurred in the social sphere. From the early 1950 s, new schools, club buildings, libraries, and feldsher (rural medical) posts were built in the villages. The population’s educational level improved, and the fight against illiteracy continued. Political initiatives were implemented to involve women in the labor process and increase their activity in social life. As a result of state policies, social guarantees for rural residents expanded, including housing construction, improvement of road infrastructure, and the beginning of electrification projects. Starting from 1956, the liberalization of the Soviet economy was reflected in the Fergana Valley as well. During these years, the independence of local administrative bodies partially increased, and initiative in farm management strengthened. Living standards gradually improved, food supply stabilized, and



wages rose. Economic potential grew, new social institutions were established, and cultural life became more active. Therefore, this period can be considered in Uzbekistan's history as the initial stage of economic stability and social progress.

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