

As cotton and cotton cloth of local manufacture are articles of export towards the Khanates through Khokand, and to the Russian settlement through Almati (Vernoe), it may not be uninteresting to give some account of the growth of cotton.

Throughout the entire kingdom cotton is grown for home consumption, cleaned and woven into cloth for the family use in the household of each cultivator, and for sale, as cloth, thread, or raw cotton, at the weekly bazaar.

The best cotton is unquestionably produced in the district of Kanarik, to the south-east of Kashghar.

There are three different qualities of cotton.

*1st.—Olderum or Aksakál.* The seed of this plant is said to have been originally imported from Khokand, for which reason the cotton it yields is called Andijani cotton.

The plant grows to a height of about three feet; the pod is larger than with the other two kinds, and by comparison the yield of cotton is greater, and of seed less.

This description is not grown in very large quantities, owing to the fact that the seed is not so easily obtained as that of the other cottons; its cultivation too requires special care, and the soil in which it is grown needs to be more richly manured than is usual with other crops. The first description of cotton cloth, known as Chákman, is prepared from this cotton. Chákman sells at from 1 rupee to 1-4 rupee per Thán, the length of which varies from 14 to 16 yards, and which is 11 inches wide.

*2nd.—Kara Kiwaz* is the cotton usually met with: the plant is a low one, not growing much above two feet in height; the pod is smaller than that of the Aksakál cotton, and the proportion of seed to cotton in the yield much greater. A medium description of cloth, known as Kám, is prepared from this; a Thán of Kám, 6 yards long and 18 inches broad, sells for from 6 to 8 annas.

*3rd.—Mella or Kizzil (red) Kiwaz*, so called from the coloring of the cotton which has a reddish tinge. This is a low plant like the previous one, and the proportion of cotton and seed in the yield is similar. The Kám prepared from this retains the reddish color spoken of, and is rarely dyed.

The usual price in the market of cleaned cotton is 3 rupees the charak of 20lbs. It occasionally rises higher, but there is really very little fluctuation, and the cottons from the three plants abovementioned obtain the same price when cleaned and exposed for sale. Where large families exist, it is more profitable to sell the cotton prepared, as thread or as Kám, than in its raw state.

Although at the present moment Chákman and Kám are readily purchased in the bazaars by the Agents of traders who export to Khokand and Almati, and Mr. Shaw refers to these descriptions of cloth as being regularly sold in the bazaars at Leh, the capital of Ladakh, it would nevertheless be a mistake to consider the districts of Kashghar as favourable to the production of cotton.

The seed is sown in April, and the crop is gathered in October and the beginning of November, there being only two pluckings at an interval of about fifteen days.

There appears to be great waste in the expenditure of seed, the plants being allowed to come up too close together, and there being no thinning of the crop.

Cotton, moreover, is rarely grown for two years running on the same land. A few years back the Chinese appear to have made an effort to encourage the further growth of cotton, but without success.

The peculiar requirements of each family necessitate the growth of a sufficient quantity on each holding to supply, as far as possible, the immediate wants of its members; but the difficulties encountered in the growth of cotton make it an unpopular crop.

The fact is that the surplus cloth and cotton of each establishment is all that finds its way into the market, whence it is collected through numerous agents for export. The producers are ignorant of the laws which should raise the price of their production, which realizes an even price, though the demand is practically unlimited.