



PROCESSES OF THE FORMATION OF CIVIL AVIATION IN CENTRAL ASIA IN 1930-1945

Tukhtabaev Azamjon Sharipkhojaevich

Doctor of Philosophy in History (PhD)

Namangan State University

toxtabayev09051981@gmail.com

Abstract. This article analyzes the formation and institutional development of civil aviation in Central Asia during 1930–1945. Using an institutional and historical-comparative approach, the study examines the transformation of aviation from a military-administrative tool into an independent civil transport institution. The research highlights the role of civil aviation in economic modernization, territorial integration, and the enhancement of social mobility in the region. Special attention is paid to the activities of civil aviation during World War II, when it became an integral part of the military-logistical system and ensured the stability of the rear economy. The article concludes that the organizational, кадров, and infrastructural foundations established in this period played a crucial role in the sustainable development of civil aviation in Central Asia in subsequent decades.

Keywords: Central Asia, civil aviation, transport history, institutional development, Aeroflot, World War II, economic modernization.

Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, aviation transport began to acquire strategic importance within the global transportation system. Especially in Central Asia, a region characterized by vast territories and complex natural and geographical conditions, aviation became a crucial means of ensuring economic, administrative, and social connectivity. Under these circumstances, aviation emerged not merely as a technical mode of transport, but as an integral component of state governance and economic planning systems.

The period from 1930 to 1945 represents a qualitatively new stage in the history of Central Asian aviation, marked by the advancement of civil aviation. During these years, aviation moved beyond the framework of military and administrative tasks and developed into an independent institution of civil transport. At the same time, aviation exerted a significant influence on the region's economic development, social mobility, and processes of territorial integration.

Review of the Relevant Literature

Existing scholarly research on the history of aviation in Central Asia has predominantly been conducted within the context of all-Union transportation policy or military aviation issues. These studies have primarily focused on aviation technology, military strategy, and administrative management. However, the formation of civil aviation as a social and economic institution has received relatively limited attention. Although some works have noted the importance of aviation in accelerating the region's economic connections, its institutional transformation has not been systematically analyzed. Therefore, this article aims to fill an



existing gap in scholarship by examining the subject from the perspective of transport history and an institutional approach.

Research Methodology

The research is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and consistency. An institutional approach was selected as the primary methodological framework, enabling an analysis of the interrelated development of civil aviation with state governance and economic planning systems. In addition, the historical-comparative method was employed to compare different stages of aviation development. Systemic analysis served to comprehensively evaluate aviation as an independent transport institution. The source studies method was applied in the analysis of archival documents and statistical data.

Analysis and Results

The period from 1930 to 1945 is characterized in the history of Central Asian aviation as a stage during which the institutional transformation of civil aviation was carried out. During this time, aviation evolved not merely as a separate element of the transport sector, but as an integral component of state administration, economic planning, and the system of social modernization. From a theoretical perspective, this process can be explained by the formation of the aviation institution and the expansion of its functional roles.

Between 1930 and 1945, the history of civil aviation in the four Central Asian republics was marked by phases of formation, centralization, and adaptation to military-strategic tasks under wartime conditions. Vast geographic space, mountainous and desert terrain, and the limited development of ground transport infrastructure transformed aviation into a decisive means of transportation and communication for these republics. In all four republics, civil aviation operated within the unified aviation system of the USSR under Aeroflot. Alma-Ata, Frunze, Stalinabad, and Ashgabat emerged as major aviation centers. Aviation was governed through a strictly centralized state control system.

Civil aviation was widely used for the transportation of mail and state cargo, the provision of interregional connectivity through local passenger flights, sanitary aviation services (transporting doctors, medicines, and wounded individuals), geological exploration, and agricultural operations.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the activities of civil aviation were fully subordinated to the needs of the front and the rear. Passenger transportation was sharply reduced, and aviation was redirected toward strategic objectives. Central Asian airfields formed a vital aviation logistics chain linking Siberia, the Urals, and frontline regions, thereby ensuring the stable functioning of the wartime economy.

The development of the aviation institution was closely intertwined with the region's processes of economic modernization. Industrial growth, the expansion of administrative governance, and the increasing complexity of territorial economic relations significantly intensified the demand for fast and reliable transport. Under these conditions, civil aviation emerged as a strategic instrument capable of reducing time and distance constraints.

In the context of Central Asia, the institutional development of civil aviation was closely connected with issues of regional integration. The vast territory and natural-geographical barriers made aviation the primary means of ensuring administrative, economic, and social connectivity between central authorities and peripheral areas.



From a social perspective, the institutionalization of aviation contributed to increased population mobility, the expansion of official travel, and the intensification of economic and cultural exchanges. This process unfolded in parallel with broader societal modernization.

Tashkent Airport is considered one of the oldest and largest aviation centers in Central Asia. The opening of the Tashkent–Moscow air route in 1932 significantly enhanced its regional importance. During the years of the Second World War, the airport gained strategic significance as a hub for military cargo transportation and evacuation flights.

The period from 1930 to 1945 represents a crucial stage in the history of aviation in Kazakhstan, characterized by formation and militarization. In the 1930s, within the framework of the Soviet Union, the civil aviation system began to take shape in the territory of Kazakhstan. The vastness of the republic and the great distances between settlements elevated aviation to a strategically important mode of transport. During this period, airfields were constructed and air routes were opened in cities such as Alma-Ata, Karaganda, Semey, Aktobe, and Petropavl. Aviation was primarily used for mail delivery, cargo and passenger transportation, as well as agricultural operations (agricultural aviation). Aircraft of the An-2 type were widely employed. Between 1941 and 1945, during the Second World War, Kazakhstan's aviation was adapted to military needs. The republic functioned as a rear-area region. Aviation factories, educational institutions, and military aviation units were evacuated there. Kazakhstani airfields served as important bases for preparing, repairing, and maintaining aircraft for the front, as well as for training flight personnel. Thousands of pilots, technicians, and specialists trained in Kazakhstan joined the ranks of the Red Army Air Force, further reinforcing the republic's role in strengthening national defense capabilities.

Almaty International Airport (formerly Alma-Ata Airport) began operations in 1935. It served as the northern air hub of Kazakhstan and the entire Central Asian region. During the Soviet period, the airport became a key transit point linking Siberia, Moscow, and European destinations. The region's mountainous natural-geographical conditions prompted the early introduction of advanced navigation technologies at the airport.

The years 1930–1945 represent the initial formation and wartime adaptation period in the history of aviation in Kyrgyzstan. During these years, Kyrgyzstan was part of the Soviet Union, and aviation development was carried out within the framework of centralized state policy. The mountainous terrain and dispersed settlement pattern made aviation an essential mode of transport. In the 1930s, the first airfields were constructed in Frunze (present-day Bishkek), Osh, and Jalal-Abad. Aviation was mainly used for mail delivery, medical assistance, administrative services, and passenger transport. Low-capacity aircraft proved especially suitable for operations in mountainous areas.

During the Second World War (1941–1945), Kyrgyz aviation was redirected toward military needs. The republic functioned as a rear-area region, hosting aviation training units, military formations, and evacuated specialists. Kyrgyz airfields played a vital role in receiving, repairing, and maintaining military aircraft, as well as in training flight and technical personnel. Aviation specialists trained in Kyrgyzstan participated in combat operations as part of the Red Army Air Forces, making aviation an integral component of the wartime defense system.

Manas International Airport, located in Bishkek, was established as an airfield in the late 1930s. It became the principal center of civil aviation in Kyrgyzstan, ensuring transport links between mountainous regions and the capital. During the war years, it also functioned as a military training and reserve airfield.



The development of civil aviation in Tajikistan began on September 3, 1924, with the first flight of a “U-13” aircraft from Bukhara to Dushanbe. The first airplane appeared in the capital two years before automobiles and five years before rail transport. The Stalinabad aviation hub was established, and new air routes crossing the Pamir mountain ranges were introduced. In 1930, a first-class airport was constructed in Dushanbe. One year later, airfields were built in Kulob, Gharm, Pyanj, and Danghara, and regular flights from Dushanbe to these destinations were launched.

Tajik aviation developed rapidly, with its aircraft fleet undergoing continuous renewal. Air transport became one of the most important sectors of the republic’s national economy. Tajik aviation provided regular transport connections between the capital and all high-altitude settlements located in remote mountainous valleys such as Vanj, Rushon, Shughnon, Bartang, and Yaghnob. This dramatically reduced travel time by dozens or even hundreds of times for residents of the Pamirs, the Karategin mountains, and the fertile valleys of Vakhsh and Hisor. In March 1937, the Territorial Administration of the Tajik Civil Air Fleet was established. By the 1940s, Dushanbe Airport began to develop actively, playing a crucial role in maintaining connections with mountainous and hard-to-reach areas. Mail delivery, sanitary aviation, and administrative flights occupied a leading place in its early operations.

The history of civil aviation in Turkmenistan dates back to 1927. In that year, the first air route was opened connecting the city of Chardjou (present-day Turkmenabat) with Tashauz (Dashoguz) via Turtkul and New Urgench. On this route, the Chardjou aviation enterprise operated four-seat German-manufactured Junkers U-13 passenger aircraft, as well as Soviet-produced K-4 aircraft. A total of eight aircraft were in service. In 1932, the Turkmen civil air fleet was expanded with new Soviet passenger aircraft, including the six-seat K-5 and the twelve-seat ANT-9. Based on these aircraft, an aviation unit was established at Chardjou Airport in the same year. This unit began operating direct flights on the Chardjou–Tashauz route without intermediate airfields. Ashgabat Airport became the central link in Turkmenistan’s aviation infrastructure. Established in the 1930s, the airport served as an important transit hub for routes along the Caspian Sea and toward Iran. During the Soviet period, it simultaneously performed both military and civil aviation functions.

During the years of the Second World War, civil aviation was actively incorporated into the military logistics system. Evacuation operations, the relocation of industrial enterprises, and the transportation of military cargo and specialists significantly increased the strategic importance of aviation. The organizational and operational experience accumulated during this period served as a crucial historical foundation for post-war reconstruction and development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the period from 1930 to 1945 in Central Asia is characterized by the institutional establishment and functional expansion of civil aviation. Civil aviation became deeply integrated into the region’s economic and social systems and, during the war years, evolved into an indispensable component of the military-logistical framework. The organizational, personnel, and infrastructural foundations formed during this period provided a solid historical basis that ensured the stable development of the aviation sector in subsequent decades.

References

1. Даиров Р.Д. История становления и развития. – Бишкек, 2016.
2. Фалилеев М. Развития авиации Таджикистана. – Душанбе, 1975.



3. Тухтабаев А.Ш. История воздушного сообщения в Центральной Азии. CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HISTORY. VOLUME: 04 ISSUE: 6 | JUNE 2023 (ISSN: 2660-6836) S-pp 132-135;
4. Tukhtabaev AS. Air transport: Structure, activity, shape. Article. Academicia: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal. 2020, Volume: 10, Issue: 6 pp. 288-291. DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2020.00590.X;
5. <https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/node/271761>
6. https://gundogar-news.com/index.php?category_id=2&news_id=2317