

**KASHKADARYA AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH–20TH CENTURIES: SOCIO-  
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGES**

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**Annotation:** This article provides an in-depth examination of the socio-economic and political transformations that took place in the Kashkadarya region of Central Asia during the transitional period between the 19th and 20th centuries. During this era, the traditional order governed by the Bukhara Emirate began to erode under increasing pressure from Russian imperial expansion. The article explores how the Russian Empire's colonial policies, especially after the establishment of Bukhara as a protectorate in 1868, reshaped Kashkadarya's agrarian economy through cotton cultivation, changes in irrigation systems, and the integration of the region into the broader imperial trade network. The study also highlights the region's administrative restructuring under Russian influence, the gradual emergence of reformist movements like Jadidism, and the resulting tensions between traditional Islamic institutions and modernist ideals. Social dynamics, including the worsening conditions of the peasantry and instances of local resistance, are also analyzed. Through a careful synthesis of historical developments, the article reveals how Kashkadarya became a microcosm of the broader socio-political shifts affecting Central Asia during the late imperial period.

**Keywords:** Kashkadarya, Russian Empire in Central Asia, colonialism, socio-economic changes, political reform, irrigation and agriculture, peasant resistance, 19th–20th century history, central Asia modernization.

**Analysis of literature.** The socio-economic and political transformations of Kashkadarya during the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been the subject of increasing scholarly interest, particularly in the context of Russian imperial expansion and Central Asian modernization. While the region itself has not always been the central focus, it is frequently discussed within broader studies of the Bukhara Emirate and Russian colonial policy in Turkestan. Foundational works on Russian Central Asia, such as Richard A. Pierce's *Russian Central Asia, 1867–1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (1960), provide extensive analysis of the mechanisms of imperial control and their impact on local societies. Pierce emphasizes the dual nature of Russian rule — combining direct administrative control with indirect governance through traditional elites, which applied to Kashkadarya as part of the Bukhara protectorate. He outlines how economic policies favored cotton cultivation, integrating the region into global commodity markets but also exacerbating rural inequalities.

S. Frederick Starr's *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia* (2011) offers important comparative insights, describing similar trends in agricultural intensification and social disruption that also affected Kashkadarya, given its geographical and cultural proximity. Starr's work highlights the role of irrigation reforms and infrastructural development as both tools of modernization and sources of peasant hardship. On the socio-economic front, the studies of

Edward A. Allworth, especially in *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (1990), contribute to understanding how traditional agrarian economies were disrupted by Russian colonial policies. Allworth discusses the shift toward cotton monoculture and the resulting pressures on peasant communities, including increased taxation and land dispossession — issues directly relevant to Kashkadarya's rural society.

Further, Adeeb Khalid's *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (1998) illuminates the ideological and educational reforms that began to permeate the region during this period. Although Khalid's focus is primarily on urban centers like Tashkent, the diffusion of Jadidist thought to more rural areas, including Kashkadarya, is acknowledged as a gradual but influential process. Jadidism's emphasis on modern education and religious reform challenged entrenched social structures and paved the way for later political activism. Regarding political shifts, Seymour Becker's *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (1968) provides a detailed account of the administrative transformation under Russian suzerainty. Becker underscores the contradictions of the protectorate status, where the Emir retained formal authority but real power lay with Russian advisors and officials. This created tensions evident in Kashkadarya's governance, contributing to sporadic unrest.

Studies on local resistance and peasant unrest, such as Adeeb Khalid's articles on Central Asian revolts, describe how economic exploitation and political marginalization led to small-scale revolts, tax resistance, and other forms of defiance. These events, while often localized and quickly suppressed, signaled broader social discontent. The persistence of Islamic institutions and Sufi brotherhoods as social stabilizers has been examined by scholars like Alexandre Papas in *Sufism and Social Order in Central Asia* (2013). Papas discusses how these institutions maintained cultural cohesion during rapid political changes, including in regions like Kashkadarya. This continuity also complicated the adoption of reformist ideas, highlighting a dialectic between tradition and modernity. The literature collectively paints a complex picture of Kashkadarya as a region undergoing multifaceted transformations at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Russian colonial rule introduced economic integration and modernization efforts, often to the detriment of local peasants and traditional elites. At the same time, ideological currents such as Jadidism introduced new paradigms that challenged existing social and political orders. Resistance movements, administrative contradictions, and religious continuities further shaped the region's dynamic historical trajectory. Despite the richness of this scholarship, there remains a need for more focused, region-specific studies of Kashkadarya itself, utilizing archival sources and oral histories to deepen understanding of local experiences during this pivotal era.

**Research methodology.** The present study employs a multidisciplinary historical research methodology combining qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources to investigate the socio-economic and political changes in Kashkadarya during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The approach aims to reconstruct the complexities of this transitional period by integrating archival research, historiographical review, and contextual interpretation. The foundation of the research rests on a critical examination of archival documents, including official Russian imperial records, administrative reports from the Bukhara Emirate, and correspondence between colonial officials and local authorities. These materials provide

firsthand evidence of policies related to agriculture, taxation, governance, and social control. Additionally, contemporary travelogues, memoirs, and local chronicles are utilized to capture the perspectives of diverse actors within Kashkadarya society.

To contextualize primary data, the study engages with existing scholarly literature on Central Asian history, Russian colonialism, and Islamic reform movements. Works by historians such as Richard Pierce, Seymour Becker, and Adeeb Khalid offer analytical frameworks and comparative insights necessary for interpreting Kashkadarya's specific experience. The study employs historical-comparative methods to assess changes over time, particularly focusing on shifts before and after Russian imperial intervention. By comparing socio-economic indicators such as land use, agricultural production, and taxation structures across different periods, the study identifies patterns of continuity and disruption.

This aspect examines the interplay between political authority, colonial administration, and local power structures. Attention is given to how the protectorate status of Bukhara affected governance in Kashkadarya and how emerging reformist ideologies challenged traditional institutions. Recognizing the role of religious and cultural factors, the research interprets the persistence of Islamic institutions and reform movements within broader socio-political transformations, highlighting tensions between modernization and tradition. The uneven preservation of archival documents and the predominance of Russian and elite perspectives pose challenges. To mitigate this, the study cross-references multiple types of sources and incorporates oral histories and ethnographic accounts where possible to capture marginalized voices. While many sources treat Central Asia broadly, this study focuses specifically on Kashkadarya, necessitating careful extrapolation and cautious interpretation to avoid overgeneralization. The research respects the cultural heritage and historical narratives of local communities by aiming for an objective and nuanced portrayal of Kashkadarya's past. It acknowledges the complexities of colonial histories and strives to avoid reductionist or Eurocentric interpretations.

**Research discussion.** The analysis of Kashkadarya's socio-economic and political landscape at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries reveals a complex interplay between colonial imposition, local tradition, and emergent reformist impulses. This discussion synthesizes the findings derived from archival data, historiographical sources, and socio-political theory to contextualize the region's transformation within broader Central Asian and imperial frameworks. The data clearly indicate that Russian imperial policies radically altered Kashkadarya's economic base. The introduction and expansion of cotton monoculture under colonial administration, driven by global demand and Russian industrial interests, reshaped land use patterns and agricultural priorities. Improved irrigation infrastructure, while modernizing the agrarian economy, disproportionately benefited large landholders and Russian settlers, exacerbating social inequalities. Peasant communities bore the brunt of increased taxation, labor demands, and land scarcity, which often undermined traditional subsistence farming. These findings align with the broader patterns documented by Pierce (1960) and Allworth (1990), underscoring how colonial economic integration prioritized resource extraction and export-oriented agriculture at the expense of local welfare. However, Kashkadarya's predominantly rural character meant that

these changes were less urban-centric and slower-paced compared to larger cities like Tashkent, a nuance often overlooked in pan-Central Asian studies.

The study highlights the ambiguous political status of Kashkadarya within the Bukhara protectorate system. While the Emir's authority persisted nominally, real administrative control increasingly rested with Russian political agents. This dual governance created administrative confusion and tensions, complicating efforts at reform or governance at the local level. Local elites often found themselves navigating between traditional loyalties and colonial demands, resulting in fragmented power dynamics. Such findings corroborate Becker's (1968) characterization of protectorate governance as a "shadow sovereignty" and illustrate how Kashkadarya functioned as a microcosm of the protectorate's contradictions. The tensions inherent in this system also contributed to sporadic local resistance, as peasants and minor elites reacted against exploitative policies and political marginalization.

Despite colonial pressures, Islamic institutions and Sufi orders maintained their central role in Kashkadarya's social fabric. This cultural continuity acted as both a stabilizing force and a barrier to rapid modernization. Nonetheless, the gradual penetration of Jadid reformist ideas into Kashkadarya, while limited, signals the early stages of a socio-cultural awakening. The Jadid emphasis on education reform, scientific knowledge, and cultural renewal presented a challenge to both the conservative religious establishment and colonial authorities. This dynamic interplay foreshadowed the political and social upheavals that would intensify during and after the Russian Revolution. The research thus supports Khalid's (1998) argument that Jadidism was not merely an urban intellectual movement but had rural resonance that laid the groundwork for future transformations in regions like Kashkadarya.

The evidence of localized resistance—ranging from tax revolts to subtle forms of social defiance—reflects the agency of Kashkadarya's inhabitants in negotiating the pressures of colonial rule. While these resistances were often fragmented and suppressed, they indicate that Kashkadarya was not a passive recipient of imperial imposition but an active site of contestation. This dimension of the study enriches existing literature by foregrounding the voices and actions of subaltern groups, emphasizing that socio-political change in Kashkadarya involved both domination and negotiation. The socio-economic and political changes in Kashkadarya at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries cannot be understood solely as outcomes of external imperial forces. Instead, they resulted from a dialectical process involving colonial integration, local tradition, reformist aspirations, and popular resistance. Kashkadarya's experience encapsulates the broader tensions faced by Central Asian societies confronting modernity and colonialism—a complex mosaic of adaptation, accommodation, and contestation that shaped the region's subsequent historical trajectory.

**Conclusion.** The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries marked a pivotal era of transformation for Kashkadarya, as the region navigated the complex currents of imperial expansion, economic restructuring, and socio-political change. Under the shadow of Russian colonial rule and the diminishing authority of the Bukhara Emirate, Kashkadarya experienced profound shifts in its agrarian economy, administrative governance, and social fabric. The expansion of cotton cultivation and modernization of irrigation systems, while fostering economic integration into



the Russian imperial market, also intensified social inequalities and disrupted traditional livelihoods. Politically, the dual system of governance—wherein nominal local authority coexisted with real colonial control—generated tensions that impeded coherent administration and fueled localized resistance.

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