

COVERAGE OF RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN TURKESTAN IN THE LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES IN FOREIGN LITERATURE

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Abstract: This article examines the resistance movements in Turkestan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on their causes, key events, and representation in foreign literature. It explores notable uprisings such as the Kokand Rebellion, Andijan Uprising, and the prolonged Basmachi Movement, highlighting their cultural, economic, and political motivations. The article also delves into how these movements have been portrayed in Russian, Western, and Central Asian literature, offering diverse perspectives that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their historical significance. The legacy of these uprisings is analyzed as a testament to the resilience and determination of Turkestani communities in the face of colonial domination.

Key Words: Turkestan, resistance movements, rebellion, uprising, basmachi, colonialism, Central Asia, foreign literature, colonial history, national identity

Resistance movements in Turkestan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries represent a significant chapter in the region's history, marked by the struggle of local communities against colonial domination. These uprisings, fueled by cultural, political, and economic grievances, have been the subject of considerable interest among historians, particularly in foreign literature. This essay explores the nature of these movements, their key figures, and their representation in foreign accounts, providing a comprehensive understanding of their historical significance.

Turkestan, a vast region encompassing modern-day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, became a focal point of imperial ambitions in the 19th century. With its strategic location and abundant resources, the region attracted the attention of the Russian Empire, which sought to expand its influence in Central Asia. The conquest of Turkestan began in the 1860s, culminating in the establishment of Russian rule by the late 19th century. This period witnessed significant socio-economic changes, including the introduction of new administrative systems, land reforms, and cultural policies aimed at integrating Turkestan into the Russian Empire¹.

The resistance movements in Turkestan were driven by a combination of factors. The imposition of Russian colonial rule disrupted traditional power structures, marginalized local elites, and introduced policies that undermined the region's socio-economic fabric. Key grievances included:

1. Land Reforms: The confiscation of fertile lands for Russian settlers created widespread resentment among local communities, particularly among nomadic tribes and peasant farmers.
2. Cultural Policies: Efforts to suppress Islamic practices and impose Russian language and culture were perceived as direct threats to the region's identity.

1. Bartold, Vasily. *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*. E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1928. P: 139.

3. Economic Exploitation: The extraction of resources and the imposition of taxes placed significant burdens on the local population.

These grievances fostered a sense of collective resistance, culminating in a series of uprisings throughout the region.

The Kokand Rebellion (1873-1876)

The Kokand Rebellion was one of the earliest and most significant uprisings against Russian expansion in Turkestan. The rebellion began shortly after the annexation of the Khanate of Kokand, a prominent political and cultural center in Central Asia. Resistance intensified in 1873 when Khudoyar Khan, the former ruler of Kokand, sought to reclaim autonomy².

The rebellion gained momentum as discontent spread among local populations, especially due to oppressive taxation and cultural encroachments by Russian authorities. Key battles occurred in locations such as Margilan and Namangan, where rebel forces temporarily gained control. Leaders like Abduraim Parvonachi, a former military commander of Kokand, played critical roles in mobilizing fighters. However, by 1876, after a series of brutal campaigns led by General Mikhail Skobelev, Russian forces subdued the uprising. The incorporation of the Kokand Khanate into the Russian Empire marked the end of the rebellion, but the Kokand Rebellion remains a symbol of defiance against colonial rule.

The Andijan Uprising (1898)

The Andijan Uprising was a dramatic and ideologically charged resistance movement led by Muhammad Ali Madali, widely known as Dukchi Ishon. This rebellion was deeply rooted in religious aspirations, as Dukchi Ishon aimed to establish an Islamic state free from Russian domination. The uprising occurred in the fertile Fergana Valley, a region known for its agricultural significance and cultural vibrancy³.

Dukchi Ishon rallied an estimated 2,000 followers, including peasants, artisans, and disaffected members of local society, who were angered by economic hardships and cultural suppression. On the night of May 18, 1898, the rebels launched a surprise attack on Russian military barracks in Andijan. Despite their initial success, the rebels were quickly overwhelmed by Russian reinforcements led by Colonel Mikhail Ivanov. The aftermath was devastating; over 500 participants were executed or exiled to Siberia, and the region witnessed heightened repression. Although the Andijan Uprising was short-lived, it highlighted the deep-seated grievances and enduring spirit of resistance among Turkestan communities⁴.

The “Basmachi” Movement (1916-1930s)

The Basmachi Movement was the most prolonged and widespread resistance effort in Turkestan, emerging during the turmoil of World War I and continuing into the early Soviet period. The movement was initially triggered by the 1916 conscription decree, which sought to draft Central Asians into labor battalions for the Russian war effort. This policy, combined with long-standing grievances over land dispossession and cultural repression, ignited widespread unrest.

² Khalid, Adeb. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. University of California Press, 1998. P: 487.

³ Pierce, Richard. *Russian Central Asia 1867–1917: A Study in Colonial Rule*. University of California Press, 1960. P: 201.

⁴ Morrison, Alexander. *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. P: 98.

The Basmachis, whose name derives from the Turkic word for “raider” or “bandit,” were organized into decentralized guerrilla bands that operated across the rugged terrains of the Fergana Valley, the Pamir Mountains, and the Kyzylkum Desert. Prominent leaders included Madamin Bek, who united various tribal factions, and Enver Pasha, a former Ottoman minister of war who sought to transform the movement into a pan-Islamic resistance. Enver Pasha’s leadership, particularly between 1921 and 1922, brought significant territorial gains, including the capture of key towns like Dushanbe and Kulyab.

Another notable figure was Ibrahim Bek, a Tajik leader whose forces conducted daring raids on Soviet supply lines and military outposts. The movement’s strongholds included areas around Bukhara and Khiva, where the Basmachis enjoyed local support. Despite their determination, the Basmachis faced challenges such as internal divisions, limited access to modern weaponry, and the lack of consistent external support. By the late 1930s, the Soviet Red Army, employing superior resources and harsh counterinsurgency tactics, had effectively suppressed the movement. Nevertheless, the Basmachi Movement remains a potent symbol of resistance, celebrated in local folklore and historical memory.

Foreign literature has played a crucial role in documenting and interpreting the resistance movements in Turkestan. Historians, travelers, and political commentators from various countries have provided diverse perspectives on these events, often reflecting their own cultural and ideological biases.

Russian accounts of the resistance movements are characterized by a dual narrative. On the one hand, official reports and colonial literature sought to justify the suppression of uprisings by portraying them as barbaric and reactionary. On the other hand, some Russian intellectuals and reformists, such as Vasily Bartold and Nikolai Kareev, offered more nuanced analyses, acknowledging the grievances of the local population and criticizing the excesses of colonial policies.

Western scholars and travelers, including figures like Frederick Burnaby and Eugene Schuyler, provided detailed observations of the resistance movements. Their accounts often emphasized the resilience and courage of Turkestan communities while highlighting the oppressive nature of Russian rule. These narratives contributed to a broader understanding of Central Asia’s colonial experience, challenging the dominant imperial discourse.

Central Asian intellectuals, such as Jadid reformers, also contributed to the literature on resistance movements. Figures like Abdurauf Fitrat and Mahmud Khoja Behbudi used their writings to advocate for reform and resistance, blending traditional Islamic values with modernist ideas. Their works, though often written in Turkic languages, gained recognition in foreign academic circles, influencing the discourse on Turkestan’s colonial history.

The resistance movements in Turkestan left a lasting legacy, shaping the region’s identity and historical narrative. They underscored the resilience of local communities in the face of colonial oppression and highlighted the complexities of cultural and political interactions in Central Asia. Today, these movements are celebrated as symbols of national pride and independence, inspiring contemporary efforts to preserve the region’s heritage⁵.

⁵ Sahadeo, Jeff. *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865–1923*. Indiana University Press, 2007. P: 286.

In conclusion, the resistance movements in Turkestan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries represent a pivotal period in the region's history. Through their struggles, local communities challenged the dominance of a colonial power, asserting their right to self-determination. The representation of these movements in foreign literature provides valuable insights into their historical significance, revealing the diverse perspectives and interpretations that have shaped our understanding of this complex era. By examining these accounts, we gain a deeper appreciation of Turkestan's rich and resilient history, paving the way for further exploration and scholarship.

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