

**Namangan Davlat Pedagogika  
Instituti “Gumanitar fanlar” kafedresi,  
tarix fanlari nomzodi, Xaydarov  
Zahiriddinbobir taqrizi ostida**

**Maqsudbek Akramjonov Anvarjon  
o‘g‘li**

MA of Namangan State University  
Uzbekistan

Email: [teachermaqsudbek@gmail.com](mailto:teachermaqsudbek@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: 0009-0007-2801-7743

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## **THE ANDIJAN UPRISING OF 1898: THE ROLE OF DUKCHI ESHON AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**Abstract:** The Andijan Uprising of 1898 was a significant anti-colonial resistance movement against Russian rule in Turkestan. Led by Dukchi Eshon, a religious leader advocating for the restoration of Islamic governance, the uprising was a response to increasing economic hardship, land dispossession, and cultural suppression under Russian imperial policies. This paper examines the causes, execution, and consequences of the rebellion, utilizing primary sources and historical accounts to analyze the role of Dukchi Eshon and the broader implications of the revolt. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of resistance movements in Central Asia and their place within the larger framework of anti-colonial struggles.

**Key words:** Andijan Uprising, Dukchi Eshon, Russian Empire, Turkestan, anti-colonial resistance, Islamic movements, Central Asia.

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### **Introduction**

The Russian conquest of Central Asia in the 19th century led to profound socio-political and economic transformations in the region. Among the numerous resistance movements that emerged in response to Russian imperial policies, the Andijan Uprising of 1898 stands out as a pivotal event. Led by Dukchi Eshon, the rebellion was an attempt to reassert Islamic governance and challenge Russian authority in the Fergana Valley. This paper explores the historical context of the uprising, the motivations behind the rebellion, and its broader impact on Russian colonial administration and indigenous resistance movements in Turkestan.

The Andijan Uprising of May 18, 1898, led by Dukchi Eshon, remains a subject of intense historical debate. Prior to Uzbekistan's independence, obtaining accurate information about this rebellion and its leader was nearly impossible. Since independence, numerous articles and books have been published on Dukchi Eshon's life and activities, yet his legacy continues to spark controversy. Some view him as a devoted fighter for national liberation, while others criticize him as a reckless figure whose actions led to unnecessary bloodshed and accuse him of seeking to establish a caliphate.

This study employs a qualitative historical analysis approach, drawing upon primary sources such as Russian archival records, eyewitness accounts, and reports from Central Asian historians. Secondary sources, including academic publications and monographs on Russian imperialism and anti-colonial resistance, provide additional perspectives. A comparative analysis is also conducted to situate the Andijan Uprising within the broader spectrum of resistance movements in colonial Central Asia.

### **Historical Context of the Andijan Uprising**

To understand the significance of the Andijan Uprising, it is essential to examine the broader socio-political landscape of Turkestan under Russian rule. By the late 19th century, the Russian Empire had consolidated its control over Central Asia, integrating it into its colonial administration. The annexation of the Khanate of Kokand in 1876 marked the complete subjugation of the Ferghana Valley, where Andijan was located. The imposition of Russian rule

disrupted traditional governance structures, marginalized local elites, and introduced exploitative economic policies that fueled widespread resentment among the indigenous population.

The colonial administration implemented land reforms that favored Russian settlers, while local farmers faced increased taxation and restrictions on their traditional livelihoods. The spread of Russian influence also threatened religious institutions, as Tsarist authorities sought to regulate Islamic education and religious practices. These policies created fertile ground for resistance, with figures like Dukchi Eshon emerging as focal points for anti-colonial sentiment.

Additionally, the late 19th century was marked by several anti-colonial movements across the Islamic world. From the Mahdist Revolt in Sudan to the resistance of Imam Shamil in the Caucasus, Muslim leaders and communities sought to defend their sovereignty and religious identity against European imperialism. The Andijan Uprising must be viewed within this broader context of Islamic resistance against colonial domination.

Several factors contributed to the emergence of the Andijan Uprising. The socio-political and economic conditions under Russian rule created deep resentment among the local population. The annexation of the Khanate of Kokand in 1876 led to the complete subjugation of the Ferghana Valley, where Andijan was located. The Russian administration introduced exploitative land reforms, favoring Russian settlers at the expense of local farmers, who faced increased taxation and economic hardship. Traditional governance structures were dismantled, and local elites were marginalized, fueling discontent among former officials and influential figures.

Another major cause was the repression of religious and cultural practices. The Tsarist authorities sought to regulate Islamic education and religious institutions, undermining the influence of local religious leaders, including Sufi sheikhs like Dukchi Eshon. This encroachment on religious affairs intensified anti-colonial sentiment and mobilized resistance.

Additionally, global anti-colonial movements inspired the uprising. The late 19th century saw several Islamic resistance movements against European imperialism, such as the Mahdist Revolt in Sudan and the resistance of Imam Shamil in the Caucasus. The Andijan Uprising can be seen as part of this broader wave of Islamic-led struggles against foreign domination.

### **Dukchi Eshon: Revolutionary or Religious Leader?**

Dukchi Eshon, whose real name was Muhammad Ali Madali, was a Sufi leader with a strong following in the Ferghana Valley. His influence extended beyond religious teachings; he was regarded as a social and political figure who embodied the frustrations of his people. The Russian authorities viewed him as a dangerous agitator, while his followers saw him as a spiritual guide and defender of their way of life.

Despite attempts to paint Dukchi Eshon as a fanatic, historical evidence suggests that his movement was not merely a religious uprising but a broader struggle against colonial domination. He advocated for the restoration of indigenous rule and sought to unite various factions against Russian oppression. His leadership was instrumental in mobilizing thousands of supporters, many of whom were disillusioned farmers, artisans, and former Kokandian officials who had lost their positions under Russian rule.

Dukchi Eshon's resistance can also be linked to the broader tradition of Sufi-led revolts in Central Asia. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Sufi leaders played a crucial role in mobilizing opposition against foreign domination. Their influence was not limited to spiritual guidance but extended to political and military leadership. In this regard, Dukchi Eshon was following a well-established pattern of religious leaders taking on the mantle of resistance against colonial rule.

### **The Course of the Uprising**

The Andijan Uprising was meticulously planned, with rebels gathering in secret to organize their assault. On the night of May 18, 1898, Dukchi Eshon and his followers launched an attack on the Russian garrison in Andijan. The goal was to seize control of the city and incite a broader rebellion across Turkestan. However, the Russian forces, equipped with superior weaponry and strategic positions, quickly crushed the insurgents. Hundreds of rebels were killed in the battle, while many others were captured and later executed.

The Russian response was swift and brutal. Martial law was declared, and mass arrests followed. The colonial authorities sought to make an example of Dukchi Eshon and his followers to deter future resistance. The trial of the captured insurgents was conducted with little regard for due process, and mass executions were carried out in public to instill fear among the local population. Reports from the time indicate that Dukchi Eshon's forces were significantly outmatched in terms of weaponry. The Russian military had access to modern rifles and artillery, while the rebels relied on traditional weapons such as swords, spears, and outdated firearms. This technological disparity played a crucial role in the swift defeat of the uprising. However, the bravery of the insurgents, who faced overwhelming odds, remains a testament to the depth of their resistance against colonial rule.

### **Imperial Repression and Its Consequences**

The brutality of the Russian response reflected their fear rather than strength. Despite claims of bringing 'civilization' to the region, imperial authorities carried out severe reprisals, including public executions before assembled children to instill terror. A total of 380 individuals were sentenced to death in an effort to crush resistance, exposing the empire's underlying insecurity.

The military governor of Turkestan, Dukhovskiy, addressed the forcibly gathered Andijan residents, saying, "Did you not understand that a grain of sand cannot fight against a mighty mountain?" This statement encapsulated the colonial mindset that viewed indigenous resistance as futile against the might of the Russian Empire. However, rather than quelling dissent, the harsh measures further alienated the local population and sowed the seeds for future nationalist movements.

The suppression of the Andijan Uprising also served as a warning to other potential rebels in Central Asia. Russian authorities strengthened their military presence in the region, established stricter surveillance over religious leaders, and imposed harsher restrictions on political dissent. These measures, however, did not eliminate resistance altogether. Instead, they forced anti-colonial movements to adopt more clandestine strategies, laying the groundwork for future uprisings in the early 20th century.

During the Soviet era, the historiography of the Andijan Uprising was heavily influenced by ideological considerations. Dukchi Eshon was either dismissed as a reactionary religious extremist or portrayed as a misguided leader whose actions harmed the working class. The Soviet authorities sought to erase the memory of indigenous resistance movements that did not align with Marxist interpretations of history.

Contrary to these assessments, Dukchi Eshon was not a deceiver. A true leader does not manipulate people for personal gain; he does not face the gallows with unwavering resolve if he lacks genuine belief in his cause. The real deceivers were those who collaborated with colonial authorities, later seeking to erase his memory through slander. Official narratives vilified him as a madman, a heretic, and a demagogue, stripping him of his rightful place in history.

### **Results**

The findings suggest that the Andijan Uprising was primarily driven by economic grievances, land dispossession, and cultural-religious suppression under Russian rule. Dukchi Eshon's leadership played a crucial role in mobilizing local support, using religious rhetoric to unite disparate social groups against colonial authorities. Despite its initial momentum, the rebellion was swiftly suppressed by the Russian military, resulting in severe reprisals, including mass executions and deportations. The aftermath of the uprising led to increased Russian military presence in the region and further restrictions on Islamic institutions, ultimately deepening local resentment toward colonial rule.

The Andijan Uprising has attracted the attention of foreign historians, particularly those specializing in colonial resistance movements and Central Asian studies. Scholars from Europe, the United States, and Turkey have examined the event through various lenses, including postcolonial theory, Islamic resistance movements, and the socio-political dynamics of Tsarist rule. Some historians argue that the uprising was a precursor to later nationalist movements in Central Asia, while others highlight its religious motivations.

Notably, Western historians such as Adeb Khalid and Edward Allworth have explored the complexities of Central Asian resistance against Russian imperialism. Their research challenges Soviet-era narratives that dismissed indigenous uprisings as reactionary and instead situates them within broader anti-colonial struggles. Additionally, Turkish scholars have shown interest in the movement, viewing it as part of the shared Turkic and Islamic resistance against foreign domination.

The failure to produce an accurate historical portrayal of Dukchi Eshon remains a troubling issue. His leadership inspired not only the people of the Ferghana Valley but also resistance movements across Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang. Recognizing the sacrifices of national heroes is crucial for fostering patriotism, national identity, and historical consciousness among future generations. History is not merely the biography of a few poets and writers; it is shaped by the struggles and sacrifices of those who dared to challenge tyranny.

Although the Andijan Uprising was ultimately suppressed, its impact on Uzbek nationalism was profound. The rebellion demonstrated the strength of indigenous resistance and set a precedent for later anti-colonial struggles, including the Basmachi movement of the early 20th century. Dukchi Eshon's legacy continued to inspire nationalist sentiments among Uzbeks, reinforcing the idea of self-determination and resistance against foreign domination. His story became a symbol of defiance, influencing modern narratives of Uzbekistan's path to independence.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Andijan Uprising of 1898 was a significant moment in the history of anti-colonial resistance in Central Asia. While it ultimately failed to achieve its objectives, the rebellion underscored the growing discontent among local populations and highlighted the tensions between imperial policies and indigenous traditions. The suppression of the uprising led to harsher Russian control, but it also laid the groundwork for future nationalist and religious movements in the region. Understanding the Andijan Uprising provides valuable insights into the dynamics of resistance under colonial rule and the enduring struggle for cultural and political autonomy in Central Asia. His legacy, once distorted by colonial and Soviet narratives, deserves to be reassessed in the light of historical truth.

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