

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT: ECHOES FROM ANDIJAN, KOKAND, AND TASHKENT

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Abstract: This article explores the spatial and ideological geography of the Central Asian independence movement in the early 20th century, focusing on the key urban centers of **Andijan, Kokand, and Tashkent**. Each city played a distinct yet interconnected role in shaping resistance to Russian imperial and later Soviet rule. By tracing intellectual, spiritual, and political activities across these centers, the study highlights the regional character of the Turkestan liberation struggle and how it reflected a shared vision for sovereignty, cultural renewal, and national identity.

Keywords: independence movement, Central Asia, Kokand Autonomy, Andijan uprising, Jadidism, colonial resistance, Turkestan.

Introduction

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the emergence of vibrant political and intellectual movements across Central Asia in response to Russian imperial domination. Among the various regions of Turkestan, **Andijan, Kokand, and Tashkent** emerged as critical centers for resistance. Each carried its own voice—militant, reformist, or strategic—but collectively they echoed the same call: **freedom**.

These cities were not only geographical locations but symbolic hubs of awakening. From Andijan's early armed resistance in 1898 to Kokand's brief experiment with autonomy in 1917–1918 and Tashkent's role as a modernizing, political, and cultural nerve center, the geography of the independence movement reveals a landscape charged with memory, sacrifice, and revolutionary thought.

This paper aims to trace the political, cultural, and ideological significance of these three cities within the broader independence movement of Turkestan, showing how geography shaped the contours of resistance.

Methodology

This study employs:

- **Historical-analytical approach:** to reconstruct major events and socio-political developments in Andijan, Kokand, and Tashkent.
- **Comparative urban analysis:** to examine the differences and commonalities in resistance strategies across the three cities.

- **Archival research:** including the use of Russian imperial reports, Jadid newspapers, and Turkestani reformers' memoirs.
- **Thematic mapping:** to visualize how revolutionary ideas and uprisings spread geographically.

Primary sources include articles from Sadoi Turkiston, Taraqqiy, memoirs by Jadid leaders, and Russian military documentation. Secondary literature consists of modern Central Asian historiography and post-colonial theory.

Results

The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

Andijan (1898): The Spark of Armed Resistance

The 1898 **Andijan Uprising**, led by Muhammad Ali Madali, was one of the first open confrontations against Russian rule.

Though the rebellion was quickly crushed, it symbolized an early attempt to revive the Islamic-political unity of the region and showed that resistance extended beyond intellectual circles.

The uprising's failure led to intensified surveillance and repression but also awakened political consciousness among religious and rural communities.

Kokand (1917–1918): Political Vision Turned to Tragedy

The **Kokand Autonomy**, declared in late 1917, was the first political experiment in Turkestan advocating for local governance, democracy, and inclusion.

Leaders such as **Mustafa Chokayev** and **Muhammad Şiddiqbekhoja** envisioned a federal republic within Russia that would protect Turkestani rights.

The autonomy lasted only a few months before it was violently suppressed by Bolshevik forces in early 1918—an event that remains a national trauma and symbol of unfulfilled independence.

Tashkent: Center of Modernity and Intellectual Resistance

As the administrative capital of Russian Turkestan, **Tashkent** became the hub of both colonial governance and anti-colonial strategy.

Home to printing presses, schools, and Jadid circles, Tashkent nurtured the region's leading intellectuals such as **Avloniy**, **Behbudi**, and **Fitrat**.

Newspapers, theater, and educational reform radiated outward from Tashkent, shaping national consciousness in surrounding regions.

The independence movement in Turkestan was not centralized—it was **geographically dispersed but ideologically unified**. The diversity of strategies and centers enriched the overall cause. Andijan embodied the spirit of resistance through action; Kokand through political structuring; and Tashkent through intellectual and cultural reform.

This spatial diversity also explains why the movement endured despite brutal suppression. When arms failed in Andijan, ideas took hold in Tashkent. When autonomy failed in Kokand, cultural revival continued. The interplay between these centers illustrates that independence was not seen only as territorial freedom, but as **freedom of thought, identity, and education**.

The suppression of each movement, whether in the form of military defeat, censorship, or political assassination, did not extinguish their legacy. Instead, these cities came to symbolize different aspects of national pride: **Andijan as sacrifice, Kokand as sovereignty, and Tashkent as intellect**.

Conclusion

The geography of the Turkestan independence movement reveals a dynamic and multidimensional struggle for national dignity. The echoes from Andijan, Kokand, and Tashkent continue to resonate, not just in historical memory but in the national identity of modern Uzbekistan and Central Asia as a whole.

Understanding these regional stories helps to decode the broader history of colonial resistance and illuminates how space, city, and society interact in the making of national liberation. These cities were—and remain—more than locations. They are **living symbols** of a people's enduring desire for freedom, justice, and cultural self-determination.

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