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# "THE CHOLERA REVOLT, OR THE TOSHOTAR INCIDENT"

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**Abstract:** This article examines the historical causes and development of the 1892 cholera uprising (the Toshotar Incident) that took place in the city of Tashkent. During the cholera epidemic, sanitary measures imposed by the Russian Empire, including mandatory quarantine and the inspection of dead bodies, contradicted the religious beliefs and traditional customs of the local population, leading to strong public discontent. As a result, an uprising broke out among the people and quickly spread throughout the city. The article scientifically analyzes the socio-political causes of the event, the course of the uprising, and its historical consequences.

**Keywords:** Cholera Uprising, Toshotar Incident, Russian Empire, Turkestan, epidemic, popular uprising, sanitary measures, colonial policy.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Turkestan experienced severe social, economic, and political conditions under the colonial policy of the Russian Empire. During this period, infectious diseases, particularly the cholera epidemic, spread widely and posed a serious threat to the lives of the population. The "Cholera Uprising" or the "Toshotar Incident," which took place in the city of Tashkent in 1892, entered history as a result of this complex situation. This event is significant not only as a struggle against disease, but also as a social protest movement that emerged from the clash between the colonial administration's sanitary measures and the local population's traditions and religious beliefs. This article analyzes the causes, course, and consequences of the 1892 cholera uprising in Tashkent based on historical sources.

According to historical data, cholera frequently spread in the countries of Central Asia and caused the deaths of thousands of people. In Tashkent, in 1872, as a result of a cholera outbreak, 3,978 people were infected, of whom 2,215 died. During the years of rule by the Russian Empire, no effective measures were taken to prevent this disease, especially in rural areas. In urban areas as well, doctors were not provided with accurate information about how many people were infected or how many had died. Due to the shortage of medical personnel in those years, there was little effective effort to prevent the spread of cholera[4.50]. In 1872, some of the preventive measures taken by the city administration also caused dissatisfaction among the population of Tashkent. Following these events, cholera once again spread in the region, leading to public unrest. One of the major popular movements in the region was the 1892 uprising in Tashkent, known as the "Cholera Uprising." This uprising is described in many historical works as a reaction against the measures taken by tsarist officials to prevent the spread of cholera in the region. However, in reality, the rebellion arose from the harsh exploitation of urban workers, the abuse of power by tsarist officials, and growing dissatisfaction caused by continuously rising prices. The measures taken by the colonial authorities in response to the cholera epidemic, which claimed the lives of more than 2,000 people, were merely a pretext.

On June 2, 1892, an issue of the Turkestanskiye Vedomosti reported alarming news that the deadly cholera bacterium was once again approaching Tashkent. The article expressed an optimistic tone, stating: "Fortunately, the research of Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch on microorganisms, including cholera, gives hope" [1.94].

After reports in March about the spread of cholera in Afghanistan, an emergency meeting of the Public Health Committee of Syr Darya Region was held, and the regional doctor Okolov was instructed to prepare an intervention plan based on Koch's theories. Okolov ordered the cleaning of all canals in both the Russian and local (Asian) parts of Tashkent and the establishment of strict control over the water supply system.

Disinfection solutions were prepared. Sanitary workers were placed on standby to monitor designated areas in both the Russian and native (Asian) parts of the cities; it was planned to establish separate cholera barracks for each district. One of the most important tasks was to ensure that the bodies of the sick or deceased did not come into contact with irrigation water or groundwater sources. The newspaper emphasized that such measures would only be effective if "society itself fully understands their importance and works in cooperation with the administration." The population of Tashkent was urged to read the "Notes on Cholera," distributed in both Russian and "native" languages. In this way, both the administration and the population were expected to "await the arrival of cholera with hope in God's mercy, faith in science, and courage not to surrender to the enemy." [1.95].

In 1892, cholera that had spread in Afghanistan reached Tashkent by June 7 of the same year. The officials of the Russian Empire introduced anti-cholera measures without taking into account the national and religious traditions of the local population. Due to the spread of the disease, entry to and exit from the city were prohibited. Twelve cemeteries in the city were closed, and instead of the promised four cemeteries, only one was opened. Bodies buried without permission from the epidemic station were exhumed from graves and transported to other locations. Because the city became overcrowded with corpses, people had to wait three to four days to obtain permission for burial. This did not correspond with Islamic funeral customs. Discontented with these measures of the Russian Empire, the city population gathered on June 20 near the Khonakhona Mosque in Tashkent and elected a delegation of three representatives to draft a petition and deliver it to the city administration.

On June 19, such a post was also opened in the Old City part of Tashkent. At first, due to the fact that the local population hid the sick, it was impossible to determine the exact number of patients. More often, only outsiders or people without relatives were taken to hospitals. Meanwhile, the local population frequently carried out burials secretly. According to the data provided by Dobrosmyslov, during the peak of the epidemic, 1,879 people were infected in the city, of whom 1,657 died and only 227 recovered [4.60].

According to the newspaper Turkestanskiye Vedomosti, 43 patients from the local population were admitted to the Tashkent hospital. Of these, 10 recovered and 33 died. The number of patients treated at home was 1,462, of whom 28 recovered and 1,423 died. Thus, it was reported that a total of 1,505 members of the local population became infected during the epidemic, 38 recovered, and 1,456 died. In the New City, 262 patients were admitted to the hospital. Of these, 123 recovered and 139 died. The number of patients treated at home was 357, of whom 190 died and 167 recovered. Thus, in the Russian-populated part of the city, a total of 619 people were infected, 290 recovered, and 329 died [4.61].

These figures indicate that even in the treatment of cholera patients, a chauvinistic policy prevailed, as healthcare institutions primarily focused on treating those infected among the Russian population.

Discontented with the measures of the Russian Empire, the city residents gathered on June 20 near the Khonakhona Mosque in Tashkent and elected a delegation of three representatives to draft a petition and submit it to the city authorities.

Led by some of the city's most prominent figures, including Azizyor Eshon, Abulqosimkhoja, the market elder Ziyomuhammad, and others, nearly a thousand people marched toward the office of the city head on June 24. They were met by the city chief—polkovnik S. R. Putinsev—and the old city elder Muhammad Yoqub.

The elder, swinging his whip, instead of listening to the people's words and grievances, began to threaten them. In response, the crowd started throwing stones at him. Thus began the famous "Toshotar" (Stone-Throwing) incident. The elder dismounted from his horse and took refuge inside the governor's office. Polkovnik Putinsev, having brought his loyal subordinate under protection, attempted to calm the crowd. The people demanded that the elder be handed over to them. Instead of negotiations, Putinsev chose to use force; he drew his pistol from its holster and began issuing threats.

Having reached the limit of their patience, the crowd did not hesitate and launched an attack on the governor. Putinsev and his policemen were beaten, and the crowd also turned the administrative office upside down.

According to the newspaper Turkestanskiye Vedomosti, around 10 a.m. the military governor, Lieutenant General Grodekov, arrived at the scene of the unrest with approximately 80 armed soldiers of the 1st rifle battalion. Shortly afterward, the head of the district staff, Lieutenant General Razgonov, the commander of the rifle brigade, Lieutenant General Levashin, and Major General Kurshov also arrived with infantry units. Several unarmed soldiers from the military music unit were also present. During the unrest, Russian residents who had been hiding in their homes also began gathering around the administration building, armed with sticks and other objects.

The arrival of soldiers from the Turkestan rifle battalion caused panic among the rebels. They began to disperse without offering any resistance. They did not even attempt to defend themselves or fight back using the pieces of wood lying on the ground [4.75–76].

When armed soldiers arrived, the crowd was fired upon without mercy. Forced into a desperate situation, many people threw themselves into the Anhor canal, where a large number of them died or were injured. There are no exact records of the number of dead and wounded, as bodies and injured persons were removed by the local population.In the following days, the number of bodies recovered from the Anhor reached 80. The tsarist authorities took severe reprisals against the participants of the uprising. Of the 60 people arrested, 8 were exiled to Siberia, 15 were sent to penal battalions for a period of two years, and 2 were sentenced to six months of imprisonment.

According to later reports, among those arrested and beaten without any clear reason were So'fi Bobojov, Abdunazar Botirov, Sa'diboy Shamsiboev, Normat Ismoilov, Nazir Qutliqov, Rasul Muhammad, Abdusalom Eshnazarboyev, Alimboy Salimbaev, and others.

According to information provided by the city police chief Kryuchkov, Russians who came to the O'rda bazaar driven by a desire for revenge began pulling "Sarts" out of shops. They even broke into locked stores, beating and arresting those who were hiding inside. Lieutenant Levkovich of the 2nd Turkestan rifle battalion also confirmed these acts, referring to those involved in such criminal actions as "unknown persons." According to the testimony of Vasiliy Starstov, a civilian (meshchanin), soldiers also entered teahouses and began arresting people who were sitting inside. Anyone who tried to escape was also considered guilty, and this alone became grounds for arrest and imprisonment. According to rifleman Filipp Lukin, "Sarts" were also being caught and beaten in the streets. No one even investigated why such brutality was being carried out. It is known that Colonel Putinsev, who was reported to have "two broken ribs," also participated in these acts of violence [4.78].

The entry of Lieutenant General Grodekov into the Old City with 80 soldiers was described in the Russian press as a great act of heroism. It was portrayed as if he had confronted a crowd of 10,000 people with a small military detachment. In reality, however, he faced unarmed people who were not trained in combat and who were simply demanding respect for their rights, national traditions, and religious values. According to documents compiled by the administration of the Russian Empire at the time, General Grodekov supposedly went into the Old City with peaceful intentions, namely to explain the situation to the population.

According to General Grodekov's account, when Russian soldiers were entering the Old City, the gathered crowd would sometimes disperse and at other times reappear in front of the troops, which further escalated the situation. The general demanded that the crowd disperse and issued orders to arrest those who did not comply. According to a report given to the general by Lieutenant Fyodorov, the crowd that had gathered behind the soldiers began throwing stones at them.

Lieutenant Fyodorov reported that the crowd had blocked the road, making further advance impossible, after which Grodekov ordered the troops to halt. Grodekov himself went to the rear ranks of the soldiers and "observed" that the crowd in the side streets was throwing stones at them.According to the reports of the tsarist authorities, the crowd behaved in an enraged manner, blocking the road, while some individuals stepped forward, exposed their chests, and shouted "shoot me."

According to the testimony of Qosim Khoja Aliboyev, a member of the city administration who had some knowledge of Russian, Grodekov addressed the gathered crowd, asking them to disperse. He promised that if there were complaints, Muhammad Yoqub would be removed and a new elder would be appointed in his place. His words were translated into Uzbek by Putinsev. However, the crowd did not disperse.At that moment, the leaders of the uprising also began to stand out. Among them were Azim boyvachcha, Usmon the butcher (qassob), and the shoemaker Iskandarbek Chuqurbekov.

When the city head Putinsev again approached the crowd and urgently asked them to disperse peacefully, one man stepped forward and said: "How can we disperse when we are being poisoned?"

At that moment, Putinsev recognized him and immediately ordered his arrest as one of those who had stormed the city administration. Shortly afterward, General Grodekov gave the order to open fire. Without any warning, shots were fired at the protesters. As a result, 5–8 people were killed and several others were wounded.

When the soldiers approached the large bazaar, another man came out from the crowd and, on behalf of the population, requested an end to the unjust actions. He was also immediately arrested.

At the same time, a Cossack regiment arrived in the Old City and dispersed the crowd without opening fire. Although it was not necessary, four infantry companies and more than 200 Cossacks were left in the Old City bazaar area. Three companies were kept in barracks in combat readiness. All expenses for feeding these troops and maintaining their horses were imposed on the population of the Old City.

According to archival documents studied, among those who took part in the uprising were Kyrgyz (Kazakhs) and Tatars as well. Kurumbek Shoyakhin, who was of Kazakh nationality, according to information provided by inspector Nikolay Nikulshin, was among the rebels during the disturbances at the O'rda bazaar and threw stones at Russian soldiers. He was arrested by the police during the unrest near the Jami Mosque in the Old City. Tatar Muhammadjon Raynuddinov was also arrested in the courtyard of the city head's administration building. Pristav Ezerskiy identified him as one of the active participants in the uprising. According to the testimony of

witness Muso-Muhammad Rustamboev, Muhammadjon G‘aynuddinov was among those who had beaten Colonel Putinsev.

Following the suppression of the uprising, on July 2, 1892, Order No. 209 of the Governor-General of Turkestan was issued. It stated: “In the disturbances that took place on June 24, the soldiers acted in a commendable manner. The command, having received the order to open fire, fired upon the crowd. I express my gratitude to all commanders, especially First Lieutenant Fyodorov of the Turkestan rifle unit and other subordinates.” During the suppression of the uprising, hundreds of local people were killed and injured, yet the Russian authorities began to exaggerate the “losses” they themselves had suffered. No one investigated who among the local population had been killed or what condition their families and children were left in [4.81–82].

All the leaders of the uprising were brought to trial and sentenced to various forms of punishment. The local elders (oqsoqols), judges (qozis), and police officials (mirshabs) were also removed from their positions. In their place, individuals from among the Russians were appointed. In this way, the local population was completely excluded from the system of governance.

In conclusion, the 1892 cholera uprising in Tashkent—known as the “Toshotar Incident”—is one of the significant events in history that emerged as a sharp reaction of the people to difficult social conditions, compulsory sanitary measures, and the colonial policy of the Russian administration. During the cholera epidemic, the disregard for the population’s traditional customs and religious beliefs, as well as the increasing administrative pressure, further intensified public anger.

As a result of the suppression of this uprising, many people lost their lives, but the event also exposed the weaknesses of the colonial system. The Toshotar Incident clearly demonstrated the people’s demand for justice and respect, as well as their spirit of resistance against oppressive policies. This event also served as a moral inspiration for later popular movements.

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