ISSUES OF THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN THE GUZAR BEKDOM AND THE ROLE OF AFGHANISTAN IN IT

Ramshod Rakhmatov
Doctoral Researcher, Karshi State University
E-mail: raxmatovramshod@gmail.com

Abstract

This article analyses the political, social, and religious relations of the Guzar Bekdom with the Emirate of Bukhara and the Russian Empire. The paper provides detailed information on the struggle of the population of Guzar against colonial domination, as well as on activities related to Turkey and Afghanistan. Through archival materials, the study examines the insurgent movements that emerged in Guzar during the period of the First World War, the individuals involved in these movements, and their connections with Afghanistan. The article also highlights the circulation of the newspaper *"Siroj ul-Akhbor"* in Guzar and emphasises the significance of its anti-colonial propaganda activities.

Keywords: Guzar, Emirate of Bukhara, Eastern Bukhara, colony, Russian Empire, First World War, Muslims, Turkey, Ottomans, Afghanistan, uprising, political agency, archival documents, *Siroj ul-Akhbor*, geopolitical significance, colonialism, religious fanaticism, human values.

Introduction

Guzar, at the beginning of the twentieth century, existed as a separate **bekdom** belonging to the territory of Eastern Bukhara within the Emirate of Bukhara. Due to its geopolitical position, it bordered the Samarkand region of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship. For this reason, the population of this bekdom was well aware of the serious interference of the Russian Empire in the lives of Muslims and in the internal

affairs of the Emirate of Bukhara. As a result, it became one of the centres of popular resistance against colonial oppression.

It is known that with the outbreak of the **First World War in 1914**, the economic dependence of the Emirate of Bukhara on the Russian Empire intensified even further. At the same time, dissatisfaction among the local Muslim population with the existing colonial order and Russian policy grew stronger, and relations with progressive and enlightenment-oriented groups in the Muslim states of the East expanded. One of the Muslim states drawn into the war on the side of the **Triple Alliance**, Turkey (the Ottoman Empire), received practical financial support from these circles.

Research Methods and Materials

At that time, individuals who supported Turkey were placed under strict and constant surveillance. Archival documents belonging to the political intelligence department of the Emirate of Bukhara, preserved in the **Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan**, contain information indicating that anti-colonial sentiments intensified particularly during the First World War in the Guzar and Shahrisabz bekdoms. These documents also mention the arrival of numerous Turkish emissaries to these regions.

In a secret letter sent on the **17th of November 1917** by the Chancellery of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship to the Russian Political Agency in Bukhara, the following inquiry was made:

“The military governor of the Samarkand region has warned us about mullahs sent by the Turkish Sultan for propaganda purposes, who have reportedly entered Guzar and Shahrisabz. What measures have you and the Bukhara government taken in this regard?”

In addition, archival sources report that preparations for an uprising were underway in the Guzar Bekdom. The leader of these activities was reportedly the **Bek of Guzar**. According to the documents, the Bek had begun accumulating a reserve of

firearms one year earlier, not only to arm the forces of the bekdom but also the local population. Some of these weapons were stored in the Bek's fortress, while others were kept in a madrasa.

Furthermore, the Bek was said to be maintaining correspondence with **Pan-Islamists** in Afghanistan, Bukhara, and Russian Turkestan regarding the possibility of launching a simultaneous uprising. Around the **20th of March 1914**, he sent his close associate, **Mullah Abdullah**, to the court of the Afghan Emir in order to negotiate cooperation in a joint struggle.

Apparently, the secret service of the Russian imperial colonial administration operated extremely efficiently, as it managed to identify in detail **twenty individuals** living in various parts of the Turkestan region who were expected to lead and participate in the planned uprising, including their names, positions, roles, and levels of involvement.

Results and Discussion

Archival documents also provide information about individuals who secretly travelled to Afghanistan through Guzar and later returned. Below we present a list of such individuals as recorded in the sources:

1. **Mullah Qambar** – assistant to the zakat collector. He constantly attempts to criticise and condemn Russians.
2. **Mirzo Sharif Hoji Muhammad Sharif** – secretary of the *Devonbegi*, elder brother of Shohimardon, and a close associate of the Devonbegi.
3. **Farroshboshi** – head of food and kitchen supplies for the servants. He maintains constant contact with Eshon Uroq and the Devonbegi.
4. **Mullah Abdusamad** – officially considered a *mullabachcha* (student of religious sciences). A student at the madrasa located in front of the market. He frequently meets with the wealthy Eshon Uroq and the Devonbegi. On the **5th of April 1915**, he travelled to Afghanistan on the order of the prince.

5. **Mullah Abdullah** – chief *mudarris* (senior teacher) of Madrasa-i Kalon. Originally from Shahrisabz but permanently residing in Guzar. Around the **20th of March**, he departed for Afghanistan on the prince's orders to negotiate cooperation in the struggle against the Russians.

6. **Mullah Ziyod** – assistant to Mullah Abdullah. He assumed Abdullah's duties when the latter left for Afghanistan.

7. **Abdusamadbek Jebachi** (equivalent to the rank of the **first military officer**) is described as a fanatic who strongly hates Russians and considers them the worst people in the world.

8. **Mullah Maulyak** – a shopkeeper acquainted with Shohimardon and frequently visits his residence.

9. **Mirgyand** – an official responsible for the weapons depot and hunting affairs; he knows some Russian. He reportedly claimed to have shot Russians several times at the Omonkuton Pass (the border between Bukhara and Samarkand).

10. **Shotora Aksakal** – village elder of Batosh village (located about 30 kilometres from Guzar). A few days earlier, he had been a guest at Shohimardon's house and was aware of preparations for the uprising.

11. **Mirzoqobil** – secretary of Shohimardon.

12. **Said Usmonkhan** – a mullabachcha from Osh living in the Masjid-i Jome neighbourhood. In mid-March, he brought money and weapons loaded on three horses from Osh residents to support the uprising.

13. **Ahmadjon Hoji** – companion of Said Usmonkhan, also from Osh, living near the madrasa of Olimbek Dodhoh.

14. **Muhammad Solih** – a glazier from Tashkent residing in the Qatorterak neighbourhood of the Shaykhontahur district. He arrived in Guzar on the **13th of April** carrying **14,000 rubles in credit notes** to Afghanistan. The money was obtained from

Abdulmalik Hoji, Siroj Hoji, Muhsinkhon Makhsum, and Mansurkhon (booksellers) at Muhsinkhon's house.

In our opinion, the newspaper **"Siroj ul-Akhbor al-Afghaniya"** ("The Illuminator of Afghan News"), published in Afghanistan between **1909 and 1919** under the editorship of **Mahmudbek Tarzi (1868–1943)**, leader of the Young Afghan movement, was distributed through the Guzar Bekdom to the territories of the Emirate of Bukhara and the provinces of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship. This newspaper played an important role in awakening national consciousness.

The imperial administration closely monitored this publication and demanded that new issues be regularly sent to the Russian political intelligence office. The newspaper reportedly had **120 subscribers within the Emirate of Bukhara**.

One archival document states:

Despite the prohibition, the issues of *Siroj ul-Akhbor* entering Bukhara through the Guzar Bekdom (principality) are not being sent to the agency as required. It is demanded that they be forwarded on time."

Another document notes:

"The Germanophile-oriented newspaper *Siroj ul-Akhbor al-Afghoniya* is prohibited from entering Bukhara. Surveillance by the Guzar political intelligence and the Turkestan District Security Department must be strengthened."

Conclusion

During the period of the Emirate of Bukhara, the **Guzar Bekdom** was a settlement of considerable **geostrategic importance** in relations with neighbouring Afghanistan. It also held a special position as a region where the spirit of Islam prevailed and where there was a strong inclination toward motives of struggle for freedom.

Among the insurgents, one can observe not religious fanaticism but rather a

tendency toward **humanistic values**, a movement away from religious extremism, and clear evidence of financial support being provided to Turkey.

References

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