

**R. Abdykulova** 

Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University Faculty of Letters,  
Chief of Distance Education Centre, Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek,  
e-mail: rozazere3@gmail.com

## ANALYSIS OF URKUN IN KYRGYZ HISTORY

One of the most important events in Kyrgyz history is Urkun. Urkun is the most important part of the Turkestan revolt in 1916. It is the most influential factor in forming the destiny of Kyrgyz people especially in Zhetysu region. The historiography of the rebellion was investigated before the Soviet Union, during it and after the collapse. Generally, the subject is put together historically according to the events that the people described in their own words, rather than by the archives provided by the government documents of those times.

Currently, Urkun is still one of the most researched history topics. Although there are many opinions about how the rebellion should be interpreted in naming, the name of Urkun continues to be used more widely in Kyrgyz history. The historical phenomenon of Urkun is going to be analyzed in the article presented below.

**Key words:** Urkun, Kyrgyz, Zhetysu, rebellion.

Р. Абдыкулова

Манас кыргыз-түрік университеті,  
Қашықтықтан оқыту орталығының директоры, Қырғызстан, Бішкек қ.,  
e-mail: rozazere3@gmail.com

### Қырғыз тарихындағы Уркун көтерілісіне талдау

Қырғыз тарихының маңызды оқиғаларының бірі Уркун көтерілісі болып табылады. Уркун 1916 жылғы Түркістандағы көтерілістердің ең маңызды бөліктерінің бірі болды. Бұл қырғыздардың тағдырына әсер еткен негізгі факторлардың біріне айналды, әсіресе Жетісу облысында. Көтерілістің тарихнамасы революцияға дейінгі, кеңес және посткеңестік кезеңде зерттелді. Бұл тақырыптың негізгі дереккөзі бұл оқиғаны тікелей бастан кешкен адамдар, олардың ішінде мемлекет қайраткерлері, сондай-ақ алғашқы қырғыз зерттеушілері. Бүгінгі таңда бұл тақырып өзекті мәселелердің бірі болып отыр. Ғылыми қоғамдастықта көтерілістің атауы жөнінде көптеген пікірлер бар екеніне қарамастан, Уркун Қырғызстандағы Түркістан көтерілісінің белгісі ретінде бұрынғысынша кеңінен қолданылады, оны осы мақалада талдауға тырысамыз.

**Түйін сөздер:** уркун, қырғыздар, Жетісу, көтеріліс.

Р. Абдыкулова

Кыргызско-Турецкий университет Манас,  
Директор Центра дистанционного образования, Кыргызстан, г. Бишкек,  
e-mail: rozazere3@gmail.com

### Анализ восстания Уркун в кыргызской истории

Одним из значимых событий в истории кыргызов является Уркун, как самая важная часть восстания в Туркестане в 1916 году. Это один из факторов, влияющих на судьбу кыргызов, особенно в регионе Джетисуу. Историография восстания была исследована еще в дореволюционный, советский и постсоветский периоды. Источниками данной темы являются люди, непосредственно пережившие это событие, среди которых были и государственные деятели, а также первые кыргызские исследователи истории. На сегодняшний день эта тема остается одной из самых актуальных. Несмотря на то, что в научном сообществе существует множество мнений по поводу названия восстания, Уркун по-прежнему широко используется в качестве обозначения туркестанского восстания в Кыргызстане, анализ которого попытаемся сделать в данной статье.

**Ключевые слова:** уркун, кыргызы, Джетисуу, восстание.

## Introduction

There are two events in the history of Kyrgyz in which Kyrgyz people had losses in man. The first one is Kalmak's (Oyrat) invasion in the XVI-XVII centuries and another one is Turkestan's rebellion in 1916 (Urkun). These events had been told by people for a long and even they had influence on literature. The events about Kalmak were reflected in the epics like *Manas* and *Kurmanbek*, the rebellion in 1916 was reflected in literature (*Ajar*, *Uzak Jol*), poetry (*Kairan El*, *Kakshaaldan Kat*), novels (*Kanduu Jyl-dar*) and other types. Besides, the rebellion has been under consideration up to days and historically, it has become topical theme. Especially the rebellion of Turkestan in 1916 regarded as a Genocide and it has been considered as a result of the most severe colonialism that reached its peak in the History of Central Asian States.

## Analysis of Urkun

There were researchers who had different views on characters, causes, outputs of Turkestan's rebellion in 1916. Also, we have some namings over characters of Turkestan's rebellion. These namings such as national struggle, against colonialism, against imperialism, feudalism and even against the operation, genocide, Urkun, national campaigns, the red slaughter, anti-tsarist movement took place in scientific studies. Furthermore, this is the event that known with names of the regions where it exist in spite of the fact that the rebellion spreaded through all Turkestan. The rebellion was rather violent in Yedisu that involves some part present-day Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Therefore, 1916 is called as a rebellion in *Zhetysu* or *Urkun*.

It is possible to interpreted Turkestan's rebellion in 1916 to be a culmination of the struggle against colonialism of the Russian Empire. The causes for this rebellion are strengthening of Russian colonialism, bereaving local people of land, *Russification* and the increasing taxes and impoverishment of the people. The rebellion, which broke out on July 4, 1916 in Hojend, the province of Samarqand (after the invasion of Turkestan by Tsarist Russia, the management was divided into several provinces, one of them was Samarqand) against the decree of Nicholas II Emperor of Russia, spread to Central Asia and Kazakhstan (the western part of Turkestan occupied by the Russian Empire) on June 25 in 1916.

Inhabitants of Turkestan did not want to obey to the decree. Although the reason of rebellion rise

was the decree of the Emperor of Russia, the main causes lied in the basis of versatile colonialism, which started earlier. The rebellion started in Hojent city involved about Fergana and regions of Sirderya (Seyhun) within a short time. Gradually, spreading to all Turkestan, the rebellion was much more severe in the northern part of today's Kyrgyzstan. The place where the rebellion intensified and reached its climax was region Zhetysu (mostly the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh as well as only a few the Dungan and the Uygur lived here). The process forming an important part of revolt is named as an *Urkun*. Because this region's rebels and some of the indigenous people were forced to immigrate to China.

The Kyrgyzs living in regions of Zhetysu such as Cumgal, Koçkor, Şarkiratma, Şayli, Sayak, Çoro, Çerik and other local peoples went against the Russian Empire openly in August 9, 1916. As a result, the rebellion in 1916 turned into an international bloody fight. Punitive squad from Imperial were going to destroy people in order to suppress the rebels.

Tsarist Russia committed genocide the Kyrgyz along with the indigenous people in its colonization in Turkestan. The Kyrgyz people from Issyk-Kol fled to Kashgar by the October of 1916. As a consequence, thirty-eight thousand Kyrgyz family (one hundred and fifty thousand people in total) passed the border of China. Their fate that resulted very badly was mentioned in written sources told by people who took part into revolt later (Mahmutbekova, 1996). Therefore, the Kyrgyz gives the name mass migration *Urkun* (which means "scare") and it is regarded as the most tragic event in the nation's history.

The Russian soldiers burnt eight hundred boz uys (tents) in the village Sirt of Isyk-Kol in Zhetysu that was related to Turkestan's rebellion called as *Urkun*. These soldiers expressed these kinds of behaviors as heroic activities in their reports to empire. Such situations were almost in every village in Zhetysu. According to statistical information, forty-two percent of the Kyrgyz are said to be died in the rebellion. According to other information, thirty percent of the Zhetysu people lost one-third (Togan, 1981:341). Demographic numbers in terms of indigenous people in Turkestan has decreased incredibly during the rebellion covering the months from July to October.

After the Edict of Russian Tsarist about conscription of men aged 19-43 in 1916 in Turkestan, making list started everywhere relating to the accident in Turkestan. Some children of the top social stratas like *manaps* and *riches* tried to bribe in order not to be included in the list. While realizing this edict,

some activities had to be stopped such as closing madrasas, removing *ishans* from Turkestan, stopping *kadies* and *biys* (both of whom were in charge of the same task such as religious judging), closing Tuzem schools. When rebellion started, they arrested people so as to stop the rebellion within a short period of time. When punishing, stringing up and killing by shooting were thought to be the most brutal punishment and arresting was considered to be the slightest penalty.

Turkestan's rebellion was not only actual subject as it had influence on literature and researches (historical, ethnographic, anthropological and literary areas) but also it attracted the attention of all political leaders of Turkestan these days. According to Zhusup Abdrahmanov (The First Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) colonialism and seizing land and locating Russian natives weren't so severe in other regions of Turkestan as it was in Zhetysu. The rebellion began on 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the Kyrgyz living in the south of today's Kyrgyzstan (Osh and Fergana) rebelled from the 10<sup>th</sup> of July to the end of this month. In August, the rebellion continued in the north of Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz people living in Isyk-Kol in Zhetysu rebelled from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of August.

Among the leaders of the rebellion besides little known people those days there were *biys* and *manaps*, who were the upper social stratum coming from some regions. Among them were Shabdan's son Mokush Bahadir from tribe Sarybagysh, Shamen's son Sopurbek from the region Burana, Ibike's son Kanat from tribes Abayilda in Pishpek, and Soltono's son Belek from tribes Atake and others.

The rebellion was against not only Tsarist Russia but also it was against the policy with which Russian nationals migrating to the territory of Turkestan overthrew the ingenious villagers. This led to international fight. For instance, 94 village were destroyed and 5873 houses were burnt during the accident between Pishpek and Prejevalsk, which were regions in Zhetysu. Rebel's narratives were recorded by Mistegul Mahmutbekova, also the second source written on time was the work called Five Turks in Asia was written in Ottoman Turkish language. The writer of this work with four Turks took part in the rebellion as well as the Kyrgyz people in 1916 in Zhetysu. The work belongs to Adil Hikmet Bey (Adil Hikmet Bey, 1999) who was one of five Turks and this work is about the role of five Turks coming from the Ottoman Empire and taking part into the

rebellion in 1916.

Five Turks participation in national independence movement and Shabdan Baatyr's son Nizamidin's (Isamidin in Kyrgyz) making Five Turks an offer about emigration of Kyrgyz people who were exiled to China as refugees to Anadolu (nowadays Turkey) attracts attention as a new information. The author of the book Adil Hikmet Bey tells about participation in the rebellion in Zhetysu in detail. The archival documents about five Ottoman Turks coming from the Ottoman Government to Central Asia in 1914 and taking an active part in rebellion of Zhetysu need to be under consideration again. Here they told us about going up to China as well as participations in the rebellion (Karasa uulu, 1993:211). Kyrgyz philologist, linguist Huseyin Karasaev also fled China in 1916 with his parents, returned to Kyrgyzstan, to Isyk-Kol again. He told that while fleeing to China he had come across with Ottoman Turks called Samiybek and five Turks lead the rebellion as well as the Kyrgyz and he was impressed by Samiybek among the others and as a result, Kyrgyz boys born that year were given names Samiybek (Karasa uulu, 1993:211). Kyrgyz people taking part in the rebellion from Zhetysu or other native people told about them in their stories. Aside from these, known as one of the first historian of the Kyrgyz and the rebel Belek Soltonoev, in his work (Kyzyl Kyrgyz Taryhy) points, that about four and five Turks from Istanbul with their leader, called Samiybek met Uighurs called Musabaev in Kulca and they intended to take part in the rebellion along with the Kyrgyz fleeing to China.

Governor of province of the Zhetysu-Folbaum and General Governor of the Turkestan-Kuropatkin caused to genocide insurgents along with indigenous people who were not rebel. Soldiers of the Russian Empire had balls in their hands while indigenous had sticks and spears in the hands. According to Zhusup Abdahmanov, without sorting rebels out non-rebels soldiers of the Russian Empire executed all indigenous people by shooting as partridge (Urkun, 1993:42). The main lack of rebellion is there was not management attached to the center.

In Turkestan's rebellion, region Zhetysu in terms of land was foreground in colonizm. According to Broydo, the rebellion leading to genocide people planned to set land free from them (Broydo, 1993:97). According to Bayalı İsakeev, Tsarist Russia had three aims in depriving people of land: first one was to equip the Russian farmers with soil; second one was to take advantage of the underground wealth of Turkestan, and the third one was to make a colonial

policy (Mahmutbekova, 1996).

### Conclusion

The Turkestan's rebellion that lasted long and was severe in region Yedisu in 1916. This rebellion is known called as Urkun. Because they experienced desperation being obliged to migrate China leaving their homeland when the genocide began against the inhabitants because of their rebellion.

In connection with 100th Anniversary of Turkestan's rebellion in 2016, theme has been under consideration again in Bishkek (the capital of Ky-

rgyzstan), and so each year, as the actual subject matter is taken up, and continued recalling. The people of Turkestan rose against colonial politics of the Russian Tsar in 1898. Because the rebellion began in the city Andijan, in history it is known as Andijan Rebellion. The Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tajiks from Fergana took part in the rebellion. However, the Russian Empire suppressed their revolt before long. This was the first step against the rebellion, to smooth the way for revolt, which was supposed to be in 1916. This period was the result of colonialism lasted about thirty to forty years after the Russian

invasion to Turkestan.

### References

- Aaly Tokombaev. (1935). *Kanduu Jyldar*. Frunze.
- Abdrasul Toktomushev. (1937). *Kakshaaldan Kat*. Frunze.
- Adil Hikmet Bey. (1999). *Asyada Besh Turk*, Akt. Yusuf Gedikli, Ötüken Neshriyat, İstanbul.
- Bayalı İsaev. (1993). *1916-cıl. Urkun. 1916. Tarihıy-Darektuu Oçerk*. Bishkek.
- Cusup Abdrahmanov. (1993). *Kırgızdardın 1916-cıldagı Kötörülüşü Cönündö. Urkun. 1916. Tarihıy-Darektüü Oçerk*. Bishkek.
- Grigoriy Broydo. (1993). *1916-cıldagı Kırgız KötörülüşününTarihına Materialdar. Urkun. 1916. Tarihıy-Darektüü Oçerk*. Bishkek.
- Husein Karasa uulu. (1993). *1916-cıldagı kötörülüş cönündö. Ürkün. 1916. Tarihıy-Darektüü Oçerk*. Bishkek.
- Kasymaly Baialinov. (1928). *Ajar*. Frunze.
- Kushbek Usenbaev. (1997). *1916: Geroicheskiye I Tragicheskiye Stranisy*. Bishkek.
- Mistegul Mahmutbekova. (1996). *Kırgızstandagı Uluttuk-Boştonduk Kötörülüş*. Bishkek.
- Mukay Elebaev. (1936). *Uzak Jol*. Frunze.
- Roza Abdykulova. (2015). *Turkestan Handyktary menen Osmon Mamleketinin Bailanyshtary Sultandyk Arhiv Dokumentterinde. (XIX kylymdyn ekinchi jarymy-XX kylymdyn bashy)*. Kyrgyz-Turk Manas Universytety Basymlary:182. Bishkek.
- Roza Abdykulova. (2016). "1916 Türkistan İsyanı'nın Kırgız Edebiyatına Yansıması: Ürkün". *Ahmed Yesevi Üniversitesi, Bilig Dergisi*. Kış. s. 159-177.
- Ysak Shaibekov. (1975). *Kairan El*. Frunze.
- Zeki Velidi Togan. (1981). *Bugünkü Türkili Türkistan ve Yakın Tarihi*. İstanbul.