



THE CONQUEST OF TASHKENT BY GENERAL CHERNYAYEV

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Abstract

This article examines the conquest of Tashkent by the Russian imperial commander General Chernyayev in 1865 and analyzes the military and political processes that accompanied this event. The study highlights the strategic importance of Tashkent within the Kokand Khanate and considers the preparatory stages of the Russian campaign, including the capture of the Niyazbek Fortress, the disruption of the city's water supply, and the use of local collaborators and intelligence networks. Particular attention is given to the military actions, the role of Alimquli Amir-lashkar, and the participation of the local population in the defense of the city.

The article also evaluates the internal political instability of the Kokand Khanate, emphasizing how leadership conflicts, lack of coordination, and internal betrayal contributed to the fall of Tashkent. In addition, it discusses the consequences of the conquest, including civilian losses, destruction of infrastructure, and the establishment of Russian colonial control. The study concludes that the capture of Tashkent was not only the result of military superiority but also a consequence of internal fragmentation and political weakness within the khanate.

Keywords: Kokand Khanate, Tashkent, Niyazbek Fortress, General Chernyayev, Russian imperial expansion, Alimquli Amir-lashkar, military campaign, colonial conquest, Central Asia, internal political conflict, espionage, 19th century history.



Introduction

Tashkent, considered one of the political, economic, and cultural centers of the Kokand Khanate, played a crucial role in the battles fought against Russian troops in the territories of present-day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The Russian Empire now began its direct efforts to conquer Tashkent. However, the Russian state approached the conquest of the Uzbek khanates with caution to avoid straining international relations, particularly with Britain. On the other hand, the Russian borders had extended over two thousand kilometers away from its military and material resource hubs in Orenburg and Western Siberia. It was no longer possible to supply new military campaigns immediately. Therefore, representatives of the Russian government cautioned military commanders against acting prematurely in launching military campaigns.

However, the ambitious Chernyayev began to seize Tashkent with haste. Furthermore, Tsar Alexander II had forbidden the capture of Tashkent. [1] Without waiting for the Tsar's authorization, on September 27, 1864, Chernyayev set out toward Tashkent with 9 companies of soldiers and 12 cannons. On April 28, 1865, General Chernyayev arrived at the Niyozbek fortress, located on the left bank of the Chirchik River, 25 kilometers from Tashkent. The fortress was surrounded on all four sides by 3-meter-high thick walls and moats filled with water. Chernyayev sent an envoy to the commander of the fortress, headed by the traitor Abdurakhmonbek, demanding surrender. Upon receiving a refusal, on the morning of April 29, soldiers led by General Kachalov began shelling the fortress with cannons. The attack continued, and on May 9, the Niyozbek fortress was captured. 370 soldiers were taken prisoner, and 6 cannons and 315 firearms were seized by the enemy.

Acting on the advice of Abdurakhmonbek Shodmon ugli, a native of Shahrissabz, Chernyayev destroyed the dam of the Kaykavus canal, diverted it into the Chirchik River, and left the population of Tashkent without water. Abdurakhmonbek resided in the Chuvalachi mahalla of Tashkent and provided critical information to Chernyayev. After Sultan Saidxon and Olimqul returned to Tashkent following the Battle of Ikan, a person carrying a letter written by Abdurakhmonbek to Chimkent was captured. The content of the letter revealed his collusion with the Russians. Together with the person who was captured,



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Abdurakhmonbek fled through the Teshikqapqa gate to Chimkent and entered Chernyayev's service. Upon learning of this, Olimqul confiscated Abdurakhmonbek's property and set fire to his house.

In addition to Abdurakhmonbek, among the traitors who sold themselves to the enemy was a man named Muhammad Soatboy, one of the wealthiest people in the city. He conducted trade with Russian cities such as Petropavlovsk and Troitsk and established contacts with trade circles in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod. He spoke Russian well. As the leader of a group of traitors in the city, he provided key intelligence to Chernyayev. Furthermore, a man named Mulla Said, born in a place called Sinjiqlik, also entered the service of the Russians. Saidazimboy Muhammad ugli also acted in the interest of the enemy. He stood out among the people for his wealth. During the khanate period, he was an advisor in the court, but was expelled for attempting to seize power through intrigue.

Chernyayev positioned his soldiers 2 *farsakhs* from Niyozbek and 3 *farsakhs* from Tashkent on a hill in the Sho'rtepa area (one of the localities in the Shaykhontohur district), behind the village of Do'rmoncha, and prepared for the attack. Upon learning of this, the city governor, Qo'sh farmonchi, held a council and sent Eshon bobo khoja amin from the Oqmasjid mahalla to Kokand to request assistance. According to Muhammad Solih, on May 15, 1865, Alimquli amirlashkar set out for help with the khanate's artillery led by Jamador topxonaboshi (chief of artillery) Hindustani and Hindubacha ponsadboshi (commander of five hundred), as well as troops consisting of warriors from Qurama, Andijan, Uratepa, Namangan, Khujand, and Margilan. They arrived and positioned themselves at the Mingurik orchard on the Afrasiyob hill via To'ytepa. Soon, Sultan Saidxon also arrived in Tashkent. At the state council held on Afrasiyob hill, Siddiqtora Kenisari ugli was appointed commander-in-chief, and his brother Arslontora was appointed *sipoxsalor* (military leader).

Soon after, it became known that the invaders had split into two divisions, moving from Sho'rtepa to Oltintepa, passing through the fort of Nazrbek qorboshi, and dividing into cavalry and infantry, stopping at the bank of the Salor canal. By order of Alimquli amirlashkar, initially, the artillerymen led by Jamador topxonaboshi engaged with 36 cannons, followed by others entering the battle. Defensive cavalry was brought to the bank of the Tarxonsayyod canal against the



Russian soldiers standing on the bank of the Salor canal. Once the Russians began the attack, the defenders' cavalry and infantry moved quickly from three sides, passing the Nazrbek qorboshi fort, then the Olimchek road, and Oltintepa, and surrounded Sho'rtepa. Left helpless, Chernyayev was forced to retreat with his soldiers. [2]

On the same day, at a council held on the bank of the Salor canal, the Tashkent residents and the surrounding tribes suggested that, taking advantage of the success, the army led by Siddiqtora and Arslontora should first strike toward Chimkent, then divide into two parts: one moving in the direction of Turkistan to Oqmasjid, and the other toward Avliyoota, To'qmoq, Ashfara, Almaty, and Ghulja. However, the Kokand officials did not agree to this. Muhammad Solih describes the battle that took place the following Sunday, the day after the council on the Salor canal: "Passing through the fort, we reached the ranks of the fighters. Russian soldiers were positioned on three sides of that place. The group in the first line attacked the Christians and reached the Olimchek road north of the city, then, circling from that road, they arrived at the village of Do'rmoncha. At the beginning of the road there, Hayrmuhammad Afgoni positioned 12 cannons, in the middle of the Do'rmoncha road Jamador Hindustani was placed with 12 cannons, and in the third area, Hindubacha ponsadboshi was placed with 12 cannons. They placed devoted *sarboz* (soldiers) with black-handled muskets between them. The Russian group moved in three divisions from the height near Sho'rtepa east of Tashkent toward the Muslim fighters positioned in the lowlands; one of them was a cavalry division. The Christians emerged from within Do'rmoncha and faced the Hindubacha group. They resisted each other so fiercely that the air darkened from the smoke of muskets and cannons."

The city population also actively participated in the battles. However, the well-armed Russian soldiers intensified the attack and reached the Salor canal. Alimquli amirlashkar ordered the warriors to remain at their posts and commanded the townspeople on the battlefield to return inside the fort. At this time, the enemy also attacked from Do'rmoncha. Seeing that the invaders had broken through the defense of the Sebzor residents, the Kokand warriors lost hope for victory, took whatever they could lay their hands on, crossed the Chirchik, and headed for Kokand. At the same moment, Alimquli amirlashkar being



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wounded and taken from the battlefield to the governor's palace led to the defenders' moral collapse and disorganized movement. After the death of Alimquli amirlashkar, Mirzo Ahmad qushbegi, Bekmuhammad qushbegi, and Qush farmonchi left Tashkent with approximately 6,000–7,000 soldiers from Fergana. In reality, their goal was to seize power in Kokand [3].

Taking advantage of this, the invaders arrived at the Oqqo‘rg‘on land and continued the attack with the help of cannons. Officials led by Otabek sharbatdor wanted to take Sultan Saidxon to Kokand, fearing that Khudoyorkhan would occupy the Kokand throne. However, through the efforts of Solihbek dodkhokh, Bobojonbiy ponsadboshi, Siddiqtora, Arslontora, and others, Sultan Saidxon was placed on a white felt carpet in Tashkent and re-enthroned as the khan. Alimquli amirlashkar, who died from severe wounds received in battle, was temporarily buried at the shrine of Sheikh Hovand Tahur, under a plane tree to the north of the Langar pond. Muhammad Solihkhoja, who participated in the burial ceremony, left this written record: "A little later, Abdullabek threw a shroud over the corpse, and Mulla Salom, the son of Dodaboy ogalik, and four people from the Qiyot mahalla carried the coffin from all four sides. I also carried one side of the coffin and began to cry. Others also went outside the Shaykhontohur district with wailing. We placed the coffin to the north of Langar pond, under a plane tree. (Sunday, May 21, 1865). That plane tree still exists today and is located to the south of the grave."

Additionally, there are reports that when Alimquli was wounded, the bullet hit the left side of his back, in the lower part of his waist, and exited through the upper part of his right side. Shortly after the death of Alimquli, a Chinese or Abyssinian slave named Mulla Qanbar went to Chernyayev and claimed, "I killed Alimquli amirlashkar." His father was executed for abandoning the defense of Avliyoota. Usman Ali, the son of Niyoz Ali ponsadboshi, went to Kokand to see Khudayorkhan and spread rumors that he had shot and killed Alimquli amirlashkar. Muhammad Solihkhoja, who witnessed these events, states that both claims were slanderous. According to Russian sources, two years later, the bones of Alimquli amirlashkar were secretly moved by his relatives and taken to his homeland.



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According to the agreement at the council held on May 28, 1865, letters and envoys were sent to three parties to ask for help: the Emir of Bukhara, Khudoyorkhan, and Qush farmonchi and Mirzo Ahmad qushbegi, who were in the Tashkent region. The group led by Otabek sharbatdor decided to take the young khan to Bukhara. The second group, consisting of Mirzo Ahmad, Qush farmonchi, and other officials, summoned Sultan Saidxon to their presence, intending to take the government in Kokand into their own hands. At this time, the invaders continued the attack, positioning their infantry and cavalry in the Kuvaidtepa area, the Boghkucha area of the Mirobod district, the ancient Great Kokand road next to the Afrasiyob hill, and the land of Azizberdi oqsoqol in the Khoja Darvoza area, and began firing from cannons at a distance of 3000 paces from the fortress.

The Tashkent residents maintained their defense by installing cannons against them on the Qirilmos hill and its gate, the cannon batteries of the Sherdor and Kokand gates, and the Hindubacha cannon battery at the end of Qosim mingboshi street. Meanwhile, Otabek sharbatdor persuaded Sultan Saidxon to go to Samarkand through various means, and at a council held in June 1865, the proposal for the emir to send the young khan to Samarkand was accepted. Sultan Saidxon left for Samarkand on June 21, 1865, with 200 people led by Eshonbek. After this, the decisive attack of the invaders on Tashkent began on the morning of July 5, 1865, with the main focus on the Xiyobon gate in the southwest of the city. Furthermore, cannons were installed on the hill of Azizberdi oqsoqol and Salimsoqbiy. The fact that only Otabek sharbatdor led the army caused dissatisfaction among the defenders and led them not to engage in the battle wholeheartedly.

Initially, the narrow path near the Qirilmos gate was occupied by the invaders after people named Qorabadal Qiyotiy and Jontoy Qiyotiy abandoned their posts and fled, opening a path to the city. Soon after, the Sherdor gate was also lost. Russian soldiers entered the Old Ark (Kuhna ark) and split into groups, and the population also began to resist them in small groups. Abu Ubaydullah also wrote about the resistance of the townspeople in the streets, noting that there were 20, 40, or 50 people in these groups. Despite his advanced age, he himself participated in the battles on Kamalon street. Against the Russian soldiers who



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entered through the Xiyobon and Beshyogoch gates, a group of Beshyogoch residents fought, while the group of Siddiqtora and Arslontora fought in the ravine at the Qirilmos hill and at the Qirilmos gate. According to the information, the defenders were aware of the movements of the Russian soldiers and built barricades by blocking the streets in their path with carts. However, Chernyayev, who was exploiting the decisive opportunity, had prepared thoroughly for the attack. Moreover, he understood the military tactics of the Tashkent residents and moved his soldiers accordingly. At the same time, due to despair, the departure of Siddiqtora and Arslontora to the Emir's presence, and Muhammad Sharif otalig and others to Kokand, left the defenders leaderless. The townspeople acted based on the instructions of Solihbek dodkhokh and Hakimkhoja qozikalon. The population suffered heavy losses; many women, children, and the elderly abandoned their homes and left the city. The buildings around the Kokand gate, the Old Ark, the Anhor bridge, and many shops caught fire, and the flames began to spread. Muhammad Solihkhoja mentions that his teenage students, Otakhoja and the son of Mulla Sodiq daftardor, were killed in these battles.

Ultimately, the city elders gathered at the home of Solihbek dodkhokh and were forced to sign a dismal peace treaty with the invaders there. (Tashkent passed into the hands of the invaders on July 7, 1865.) According to the peace treaty, it was stated that the city's people would remain in their religion, all affairs would be conducted based on Sharia, and houses, gardens, and squares would remain in the hands of their owners as before. The seals of all four districts of the city—Shaykhontohur, Beshyogoch, Sebzor, and Kokcha—were pressed onto the treaty. [6]

Although the conquest of Tashkent by Chernyayev was received with great satisfaction in St. Petersburg, some government officials were dissatisfied and alarmed. This was because the conquest of Tashkent was causing a great stir in the international press. To prevent this situation and to justify his savage acts of invasion, Chernyayev prepared a special letter. In this letter, prepared on behalf of the population of Tashkent, emphasis was placed on the city allegedly surrendering to General Chernyayev of its own free will: "For many times and years, the khans of Fergana have ruled in Turkistan and inflicted much oppression and injustice on the citizens. They did not take the *zakat* and *khiraj* (taxes) based



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on Sharia rules but took them in excess, and never showed mercy; they abandoned ancient customs and traditions, for many years they killed great men for office, and followed the words of sedition and intrigue. Innocent blood was shed, and they refused to follow Sharia and the words of the scholars. On the land of Fergana and Turkistan, for a long time and mostly, Kipchak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz ruffraff and unruly people have ruled. Therefore, for the sake of the citizens and the peace of the country, by our own will and desire, we brought the Russian soldiers and handed the city over to them." [4]

After the letter with such content was read aloud, Solihbek dodkhokh told the invaders that they had captured Tashkent through war and looting, and that these processes caused damage to the peaceful population, the city's defenders, and many buildings. General Chernyayev became enraged by these fair words of Solihbek okhun domla. He ordered that whoever agrees with these words should step to one side. Seven of the city's influential elders—Halimboy, Berdiboy, Azimboy, Fozilboyvachcha, mulla Muzaffarkhoja, and mulla Fayzullas—took their place in the line of Solihbek okhun domla. They were immediately arrested and imprisoned. Later, they were exiled to Siberia. Fearing this, other influential notables of the city were forced to sign Chernyayev's treaty. Chernyayev handed the fake treaty to merchants named Abusaid and Khodikhoja and ordered them to take it to St. Petersburg and deliver it to the White Tsar. The Russian government, in order to justify and cover up its war of aggression in Turkistan, multiplied the fake document and distributed it to countries around the world through its envoys, trying to prevent the outcry raised in the international press in this way. For instance, the Russian embassy in Turkey posted the fake treaty on the streets, markets, and crowded places in Istanbul. The reason for this was Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. [5]

Conclusion

The conquest of Tashkent can be described not just as an invasion or a military campaign, but as a product of internal betrayal. The military backwardness of the people of Tashkent, the severe wounding and subsequent death of Alimquli, the abandonment of the city by some officials in the hope of seizing power, the moral collapse of the defenders, and the fact that individuals like Abdurahmonbek and



Muhammad Soatboy served the enemy by spying and providing key information were the determining factors that sealed the fate of the Tashkent population in favor of the enemy. Many civilians suffered for the defense of Tashkent, and many died in the battles. In the history of Uzbekistan, the occupation of Tashkent by Russian troops led by General Chernyayev remains engraved as one of the most difficult and tragic pages.

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