

## REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROCESSES OF THE COLONIAL PERIOD IN UZBEK HISTORIOGRAPHY (1920–2020)

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**Abstract:** This article explores how the political and social dynamics of the colonial period in Central Asia, particularly during the Russian Empire and early Soviet rule, have been represented in Uzbek historiography from 1920 to 2020. The paper identifies key trends and transformations in historical narratives, analyzing the ideological influences that shaped historiographical discourse during the Soviet era, the independence period, and modern academic scholarship. Drawing upon primary texts, historical monographs, and educational materials, the study traces the shifting interpretations of colonialism, resistance movements, reforms, and identity formation in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Uzbek historiography, colonial period, Soviet rule, political processes, national identity, post-Soviet narrative

The historical understanding of colonialism in Uzbekistan has evolved significantly over the past century. During the Russian imperial conquest of Central Asia in the 19th century, and the subsequent incorporation of the region into the Soviet Union, Central Asian societies underwent deep political, economic, and cultural transformations. These changes were reflected—and at times distorted—in the way history was written and taught.

From 1920 onwards, Uzbek historiography became a tool of ideological influence. Under Soviet rule, historical narratives often emphasized class struggle, proletarian revolution, and the "liberating" role of Russia, while downplaying or demonizing nationalist movements and traditional structures. However, after Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, a dramatic revision of historical perspectives took place. Historians began to re-examine the colonial past with a renewed focus on national identity, cultural autonomy, and the resistance to imperial domination.

This study aims to critically analyze how the political and social processes of the colonial period have been interpreted and represented in Uzbek historical writing between 1920 and 2020. It pays particular attention to the changing political contexts, methodological shifts, and the influence of national ideology on historical scholarship.

This research employs a qualitative historiographical analysis, examining both primary and secondary sources over a 100-year period. The main materials include:

- **Soviet-era history textbooks and party publications** (1920s–1980s)
- **Post-independence Uzbek monographs and university textbooks** (1991–

2020)

- **Scholarly articles and dissertations by Uzbek historians such as M. Is'haqov, B. Ahmedov, and A. Raxmonov**

- **Archival documents and memoirs relating to the Jadid movement, Basmachi resistance, and colonial administration**

The study utilizes comparative analysis to identify ideological biases, narrative structures, and shifts in historical interpretation across different political regimes.

The research reveals several key trends in the representation of colonial-era political and social developments in Uzbek historiography:

- **Soviet Period (1920–1991):**

- Emphasis on the class struggle and the supposed backwardness of pre-Soviet society

- The Basmachi movement portrayed as "banditry" rather than a national liberation effort

- The Russian conquest of Central Asia framed as a civilizing mission

- **Early Independence Period (1991–2000s):**

- Shift toward nationalist historiography emphasizing the heroism of Jadids and Basmachis

- Critical reassessment of Soviet colonial policies and repression

- Strong focus on cultural revival and the rediscovery of pre-colonial heritage

- **Recent Trends (2010–2020):**

- Move toward a more balanced, academic tone in analyzing colonialism

- Integration of global postcolonial theory into Uzbek historiography

- Continued emphasis on national identity, but with increased attention to socio-economic analysis and comparative history

Uzbek historiography has undergone a dynamic transformation, reflecting broader political and ideological shifts. During the Soviet era, the colonial past was interpreted through a Marxist-Leninist lens that justified Russian dominance as historical progress. This narrative marginalized indigenous agency and framed colonial resistance as counter-revolutionary.

Following independence, there was a conscious effort to rewrite history from a national perspective. The formerly suppressed figures of national awakening—such as Mahmudhoja Behbudi, Abdurauf Fitrat, and the Jadid intellectuals—were reintroduced as heroes of cultural resistance and enlightenment. Similarly, the Basmachi movement was redefined as a legitimate struggle for independence rather than criminal rebellion.

However, post-Soviet nationalist narratives sometimes lacked critical depth and relied heavily on symbolic representations. Only in recent years has Uzbek historiography begun to mature into a more scholarly field that incorporates critical methodologies, cross-disciplinary approaches, and comparative frameworks.

This evolution demonstrates that historiography is not merely a reflection of the past, but also a product of present-day concerns, ideologies, and aspirations. As Uzbekistan continues to modernize its academic institutions and integrate with global scholarship, a more nuanced understanding of colonial history is emerging—one that balances national pride with critical inquiry.

The representation of the colonial period in Uzbek historiography has mirrored the nation's political journey—from ideological conformity under Soviet rule to national reawakening and scholarly independence after 1991. Over the course of a century, the narrative has evolved from portraying colonialism as progress to recognizing it as a period of suppression, resistance, and complex transformation.

Today, Uzbek historians are better positioned than ever to engage with the colonial past through critical, multidisciplinary lenses. This allows for a deeper understanding of how historical memory shapes identity, state-building, and cultural continuity in post-colonial societies.

Future research should continue to explore under-represented aspects of colonial-era life in Central Asia, such as women's experiences, rural transformations, and transregional connections. Doing so will not only enrich Uzbek historiography but also contribute meaningfully to global debates on imperialism and postcolonial studies.

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