



## THE IMPACT OF ASIANS ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE FERGANA REGION IN THE LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** This article explores the historical and political causes of the migration of Uighur and Dungan peoples from East Turkestan to the Fergana and Semirechye regions between 1881 and 1883. It discusses the content of the colonial policy pursued by the Russian Empire and analyzes the impact of this migration on the demographic structure, socio-economic, and cultural life of the Fergana Valley from a historical-ethnographic perspective. The article uses archival documents, statistical data, and advanced academic studies to analyze demographic changes and interethnic relations.

**Key words:** East Turkestan, Fergana region, Uighurs, Dungans, migration, Russian Empire, demographic composition, archival sources, colonial policy, ethnocultural transformation, economic and cultural relations, Kashgar-Andijan, ethnic identity.

### INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 19th century, Central Asia, and particularly the Fergana region, experienced major demographic shifts due to migration flows resulting from imperial expansion, regional conflicts, and inter-state treaties. One of the significant waves of migration was the influx of Uighur and Dungan refugees from East Turkestan into the Fergana and Semirechye regions following the Saint Petersburg Treaty of 1881 between the Russian and Qing Empires. The collapse of the short-lived state of Yaqubbek in Kashgar and subsequent Qing repression catalyzed the migration of tens of thousands of Muslim families seeking refuge within the Russian Empire's domain. This period coincided with the intensification of Tsarist Russia's colonial policy in Turkestan, which was aimed not only at securing strategic territories but also at manipulating the ethnic and social structure of the region for political control. The resettlement of these refugees, however, was met with mixed responses: while some received limited state aid, many were settled on lands belonging to the indigenous population, leading to complex interethnic dynamics. The Russian colonial administration viewed the presence of Muslim refugees as both a humanitarian challenge and an opportunity to exert greater control over the socio-economic landscape of the region.

The demographic impact of this migration, alongside the cultural, economic, and ethno-political interactions between the newcomers and the local populace, forms the core focus of this study. Drawing upon archival records, historical-statistical materials, and modern academic research, this article seeks to shed light on how these migration processes reshaped the demographic makeup and ethnic identity formations in the Fergana Valley.

### MAIN TEXT

Between 1881 and 1883, according to the Treaty of Saint Petersburg signed on February 12, 1881, between the Russian Empire and China, over 60,000 Uighur and Dungan refugees migrated from East Turkestan to the Fergana and Semirechye regions. This migration resulted mainly from the collapse of Yaquzbek's state and the repressive actions of the Qing dynasty against the Muslim population, especially Uighurs and Dungsans [To'xtasinov M., 2013, pp. 48–50]. Although the Russian Empire received 9 million rubles in compensation from China, these funds were directed to imperial needs rather than aiding the migrants. In the autumn of 1881, General Kolpakovsky, acting on behalf of the ailing Governor-General K.P. Kaufman, reported from Verniy: "The people are impoverished and have few children. Even a single horse or ox is rare. Some arrived riding only a donkey" (Grosul V.N., 1974, p. 201). According to Tsarist policy, local populations were held responsible for the settlement and subsistence of these Muslim refugees. Uighurs and Dungsans were settled on lands belonging to the indigenous people, where they began independent agricultural activities [Karimov M., 2010, pp. 152–155]. Archival documents reveal discrepancies in the official statistics regarding the ethnic composition of the Fergana region provided by Russian authorities. For instance, in the 1877 census, Jews, Gypsies, Tatars, and even Indians were listed as "local population" [Bartold V.V., 1898, p. 88]. According to documents from the National Archive of Uzbekistan dated 1915–1916, precise figures were recorded for Armenians (1,162), other Caucasian peoples (172), and Persians (831) living in the Fergana region. These were classified by Andijan, Kokand, Margilan, Namangan, and Osh districts [National Archive of Uzbekistan, F. I-1, r.234, y.e.15, pp. 23–24]. Academic studies on the historical relations with East Turkestan indicate that Uighurs were not only migrants in the Fergana region but also active economic and cultural agents. Trade relations between the Andijan district and Kashgar played a significant role in their activities [Jo'rayev S., 2006, pp. 203–205]. Although Uighurs who migrated to Fergana tried to preserve their traditional culture, a cultural convergence and social integration process occurred between them and the native Turkic population (especially Uzbeks). In contemporary literature, such processes are described by the term "ethnocultural transformation" [Tursunov A., 2008, pp. 98–101]. The issue of Uighurs and Dungsans was also analyzed by Sh. Qo'ldoshev, who focused on political and cultural relations between the Kokand Khanate and East Turkestan, particularly the ties between Yaquzbek's state and the Russian Empire [Qo'ldoshev Sh., 2014]. As a result, the migration policy of the Russian Empire impacted not only demographic changes but also fundamental socio-economic systems. The newly settled ethnic groups enriched the region's cultural diversity, though the process was largely subordinated to political consciousness and strategic interests.

## CONCLUSION

The forced migration of Uighurs and Dungsans from East Turkestan to the Fergana region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries left a deep imprint on the demographic and cultural landscape of Central Asia. This process, a product of the Russian Empire's colonial policy, initiated new phases not only in ethnic composition but also in economic relations and cultural integration. The interaction between newcomers and the local population, their economic integration, and efforts to preserve cultural identity became integral to the social processes of that era.

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