

## THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF THE 1911 KEBIN EARTHQUAKE IN THE OTTOMAN AND RUSSIAN PRESS

### Abstract

On January 4, 1911, an earthquake of magnitude 8.0/8.2 occurred in the Semirechenskaya region. The epicenter of the Kebin earthquake was located in the valleys of Chon-Kemin, Chilik, Chon-Aksu and on the coast of Issyk Kul. Geologists have conducted many studies on the Kebin earthquake to date. However, there are few studies on the social aspect of Kebin earthquake. There are many newspapers, magazines and literary sources about the social impact of the Kebin earthquake. It is also clear that the earthquake was widely reflected in the Ottoman and Russian press. The newspapers, *Turkestanskije Eparhialnye Vedomosti* and *Sirat-i Mustakim* contain detailed information about the damage caused by the earthquake and the anguish of the earthquake victims. Therefore, this research focuses on the impact of the 1911 Kebin earthquake on the people living in Turkestan and the relief campaigns launched for the earthquake victims.

**Keywords:** Kebin earthquake, Verniy, Chon-Kemin, Semirechenskaya Region, the Ottoman press, the Russian press, *Sirat-i Mustakim*, *Turkestanskije Eparhialnye Vedomosti*, the relief campaign, the earthquake victims.

## СОЦИАЛЬНЫЙ АСПЕКТ КЕБИНСКОГО ЗЕМЛЕТРЯСЕНИЯ 1911 ГОДА В ОСМАНСКОЙ И РОССИЙСКОЙ ПРЕССЕ

### Аннотация

4 января 1911 г. в Семиреченской области произошло землетрясение силой 8,0/8,2 балла. Эпицентр Кебинского землетрясения располагался в долинах рек Чон-Кемин, Чилик, Чон-Аксу и на побережье Иссык-Куля. На сегодняшний день геологи провели множество исследований Кебинского землетрясения. Однако исследований социального аспекта Кебинского землетрясения немного. Есть много газет, журналов и литературных источников о социальных последствиях Кебинского землетрясения. Ясно также, что землетрясение широко освещалось в Османской и Русской прессе. Газеты «Туркестанские епархиальные ведомости» и «Сират-и мустахим» содержат подробную информацию о разрушениях, причиненных землетрясением, и страданиях пострадавших от землетрясения. Поэтому данное исследование сосредоточено на влиянии Кебинского землетрясения 1911 года на людей, проживающих в Туркестане, и кампаниях по оказанию помощи пострадавшим от землетрясения.

**Ключевые слова:** Кебинское землетрясение, Верный, Чон-Кемин, Семиреченская область, османская пресса, российская пресса, *Сират-и мустахим*, *Туркестанские епархиальные ведомости*, кампания помощи, пострадавшие от землетрясения.

## 1911-ЖЫЛДАГЫ КЕБИН ЖЕР ТИТИРӨӨСҮНҮН ОСМОН ЖАНА ОРУС БАСМАЛАРЫНДАГЫ СОЦИАЛДЫК АСПЕКТИ

### Кыскача мазмуну

4-январь 1911-жылы Семиреченская областында күчү 8,0/8,2 баллга жеткен жер титирөө болгон. Кебин жер титирөөнүн очогу Чоң-Кемин, Чилик, Чоң-Аксуу өрөөндөрүндө жана Ысык-Көлдүн жээгинде жайгашкан. Жер титирөөлөр боюнча геологдор бүгүнкү күнгө чейин көптөгөн изилдөөлөрдү жүргүзүшкөн. Бирок, Кебин жер титирөөнүн социалдык аспектилери боюнча изилдөөлөр аз. Кебин жер титирөөнүн коомго тийгизген таасири тууралуу көптөгөн гезит-журналдар, адабий булактар бар. Жер титирөөнүн Осмон жана Орус басма сөзүндө кеңири чагылдырылганы да анык. «Туркестанские епархиальные ведомости» жана «Сират-и мустахим» гезиттеринде жер титирөөнүн келтирген зыяны жана жер титирөөдөн жабыркагандардын кайгы-муңу тууралуу кеңири маалыматтар бар. Ошондуктан бул изилдөөдө 1911-жылдагы Кебин жер титирөөнүн Түркстанда жашаган элге тийгизген таасири жана жер титирөөдөн жапа чеккендерге баиталган жардам кампанияларына басым жасалган.

**Түйүндүү сөздөр:** Кебин жер титирөө, Верный, Чоң-Кемин, Жетиреченская областы, осмон басмасы, орус басмасы, *Сират-и Мустахим*, *Туркестанские Епархиальные Ведомости*, жардам кампаниясы, жер титирөөдөн жабыркагандар.

The Semirechenskaya region can be divided into different regions according to its surface structure: mountainous and dry steppe. In this region, the main cause of earthquakes are subsidence or displacement that occurs in the Tian-Shan Mountain. It can be said that the Tian-Shan Mountain in the mountainous part of the Semirechenskaya region is the main source of earthquake [11, s. 32]. Several devastating earthquakes occurred in the Semirechye region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It can be said that there were strong earthquakes between Issyk-Kul and Verniy (Almaty), such as a magnitude 9.0 quake in Belovodskoye on August 3, 1885, a magnitude 9.0 quake in Verniy on July 9, 1887 and a magnitude 8.0 quake in Kebin on January 4, 1911 [10, s. 33]. The earthquake was so strong that the tremor was felt in Novaya Bukhara (Kogon), Kokand, Zharkent and Tashkent. In addition seismometers were damaged by the strong

earthquake shaking [14(2), s.40].

Immediately after the earthquake became known, the Russian government commissioned Karl Ivanovich Bogdanovich to investigate the Semirechye region. After the earthquake, Bogdanovich arrived in the Semirechye region. Bogdanovich invited D. I. Mushketov and I. M. Kark, who were local engineers working in Turkestan, to observe the area to determine the magnitude of the earthquake. B. Korolkov was summoned by Alexander Vasilyevich Samsonov, the military governor of Turkestan, In addition, Kovalevskiy and Nalivkin, students of the Mining Institute, joined the research group. Bogdanovich and his colleagues immediately began surveying the area that was the epicenter of the earthquake. In April and May, they observed that the area between the Chilik (Shilik) River and Chuy (Shu) River, and from Verniy to Issyk-Kul. [8, s. 331–334].

Табл. 13

Распределение линий разлома во время Тянь-шанского землетрясения.  
22-го декабря 1910 года.



Figure 1: The Epicenter of the Kebin Earthquake.  
[8, s. 420]

The Kebin earthquake was reflected in detail in the newspaper *Turkestanskije Eparkhialnye Vedomosti*. The letter of priest A. Minulin was published in the first issue of the newspaper in 1911. According to the priest A. Minulin, the quake occurred at 4:40 in the morning and the residents of Verniy frantically ran into the street in their night clothes. He also added that at that time no one could have predicted the damage of the earthquake, as many of them were very scared. And A. Minulin in his letter told in detail how the houses in Verniy collapsed and went on to say that the Patriarch of Verniy came to the cathedral and then left from there to visit the victims for moral support [14(1), s. 9-11]. On January 11, 1911, Alexander Vasilyevich Samsonov from Tashkent came to Verniy and visited the earthquake-stricken area [14(2), s. 41-42].

The second news about the earthquake, published by *Turkestanskije Eparkhialnye Vedomosti* stated that aftershocks of magnitude 4 and 6 in December. But the quakes peaked

in early-January. On the first day of the New Year, when the people gathered to pray in the church, an earthquake of magnitude 6.0 occurred. They all panicked, were even afraid. And suddenly they left the church. At home, they could not sleep because of their worries. Hundreds of men, women and children wrapped in blankets were shivering in sub-zero temperatures. Moreover, reports reached the newspaper that women penetrated through the destroyed buildings of the city and the people got a nervous shock. On the night of January 2nd, they were frightened because there were more aftershocks. As a result, many people slept in their courtyard or yurt (the nomads' goat-hair tents). Some of them left their houses and started to go to safe places. On January 13, A. I. Karneev, a mining engineer, held a conference in order to inform people. He warned that "aftershocks can be repeated until spring but do not panic and keep you calm". But his call made them even more worried [14(2), s. 37-40].

In the third issue of *Turkestanskije Eparkhialnye*

Vedomosti letters of priests G. Tikhonravov and Alexander Skalsky were published. Both mentioned in their letters that people gathered in churches to pray, but they were very frightened because of the aftershocks and many of the people were mourning the loss of loved ones. According to the newspaper, the Ascension/Zenkov Cathedral in the Bolshaya Almatinskaya was also badly damaged in the January 1911 earthquake, and Malenkaya Almatinka also suffered extensive damage from the earthquake. Taranchians who lived in the village near Malenkaya Almatinka felt the earthquake very strongly. Almost hundreds of victims died when the roofs of their houses collapsed. Many people buried their children, spouses, fiancés or relatives in the earthquake. But instead of helping each other, Taranchians preferred to wait for the Russians to come. A village guard saved his wife and two children with the help of a Kyrgyz and his house owner, but his one of children died under the roof [14(3), s. 77-84].

On January 9, 1911, before a prayer of thanksgiving in the cathedral, the Bishop of Turkestan announced that the

Russian royal family would provide financial assistance for the recovery of those affected by the earthquake [14(2), s. 33]. The Russian government cared for the victims of the earthquake. This approach was particularly important in establishing a social bond between the Russian government and Muslims. One motivation for the people of Turkestan was to know that the Russian government and researchers were taking all precautions. Also, it was very important to know that they were putting their heart and soul into saving the victims. Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna took the lead to help victims of the earthquake and then launched a relief campaign throughout Russia. For the campaign, Alexandra Feodorovna donated 10,000 rubles and Tsar Nicholas II (1894-1917) also donated 50,000 rubles. Maria Feodorovna, mother of Nicholas II, also supported the campaign and sent 15,000 rubles through the Russian Red Cross [14(2), s. 40-41]. The Relief Commission, consisting of priests and volunteers, visited the earthquake victims and tried to determine their needs and the damage caused by the earthquake [14(3), s. 84-85].



Figure 2: A Photo of the Kebin Earthquake

[9, s. 30]

The Ottoman government organized two different relief campaigns to help the earthquake victims in Turkestan. The first of these was initiated by the leader of the Bab-ı Meşihat, Şeyhülislam (Shaykh al-Islâm) Musa Kazım Efendi. The second relief campaign was carried out by Sırat-ı Müstakim magazine. In addition to the relief campaign for the earthquake victims, it was decided to organize a conference to send the proceeds to the earthquake victims [3 (150/76/2)]. Different types of tickets were prepared for those who wanted to make a donation to the relief campaign [4]. And the proceeds from the tickets were sent to the commission in Bab-ı Meşihat [4 (3889/291634/2)]. Ottoman Sultan Mehmed Reşad donated

10,000 kurush for the relief campaign [3(150/78)]. To the commission, 1,321 kurush were sent by the officers working in the Sublime Porte [4 (3889/291634/3); 4(3889/291634/1)].

Likewise, the Muslims living in Bulgaria donated money for the earthquake victims through the Embassy of the Ottoman Empire in Sofia, Vidin and Ruse [5(852/49/3); 5(372/91); 5(624/14/2)]. Bab-ı Meşihat forwarded donation tickets to the Embassy of the Ottoman Empire in England in order to extend the relief campaign to a wide range of people [6(650/12/10)]. The Ministry of Education, called Maârif-i Umûmiye Nezâreti, also sent an official letter for donation to the educational institutions in Istanbul. The students and

officers of the most famous educational institutions of Istanbul such as Dârülfünûn and Dârülmualimîn participated in the campaign by buying a large amount of tickets [7(1168/1); 7(1168/39/1); 7(1168/39/2); 7(1168/39/3)].

In the *Sırat-ı Müstakim* magazine was published a series of the news about the earthquake called *Asya-yı Vusta Felaketzedegani İane Defteri (I-XI)*. As highlighted earlier a campaign was launched by the administrators of magazine. As part of this campaign, the list of people sending money to Turkestan was published in these news series. According to the magazine, the Russian royal family sent 50,000 rubles for the victims in Turkestan. And it was reported that the aid was sent from all over Russia [1(5/125), s. 352]. And magazine emphasized that the Russian Press published many news about the earthquake in Kebin. In contrast, magazine blamed the Ottoman Press of indifference [1(5/126), s. 368].

According to the *Tearüf-i Müslimin* magazine, Muhammed Safa Bayazitov, the spiritual leader of the Muslims of Russia, launched a campaign for the earthquake victims in Turkestan. The worst effect of this disaster was on people. Because they went to sleep and in the morning, they lost their family, their house or their cows and goats. In the earthquake it was estimated that thousands of people died or were injured. In addition thousands of houses were destroyed in large parts of a number of mid-sized cities [12(2/31), s.109]. The administrators of *Tearüf-i Müslimin* magazine made an important appeal to the public, asking everyone to help the earthquake victims in Turkestan. The Ottomans felt that they had a responsibility to help the victims who were hungry and homeless. In particular, they believed that all Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire must take into account the historical background of cultural and religious communication between the Ottoman Empire and the Khanates of Turkestan [12(2/32), s.127]. Many parts of the Ottoman society, which consisted of doctors, teachers and students impressively supported the relief campaign of the *Sırat-ı Müstakim* magazine. The cadets trained in Berlin also eagerly participated this campaign [1(5/127), s.384; 1(6/132), s. 32; 1(6/136), s. 96; 1(6/143), s. 208; 1(6/139), s. 144].

Looking at the list of names published in *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, it seems that the Ottoman soldiers and cadets made the most donations to the relief campaign [1(6/131), s. 16]. However, Kırım Talebe Cemiyeti organized a conference for the victims and Yusuf Akçura (Юсуф Хасанович Акчурин), one of the authors of *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and Musa Asım Efendi, member of parliament, attended the conference. The Fetva (Fatwa) of Musa Kazım Efendi was published in the magazine of *Sırat-ı Müstakim* to draw attention to the relief campaign [2(5/128), s. 397-400]. The residents of Ödemiş (İzmir) also collected money among themselves and Muftı of Ödemiş sent it to the magazine with a letter on behalf of the Ödemiş People [1(5/129), s. 414-416]. Moreover, money was sent not only from Malazgirt (Muş), Kosovo and Skopje, but also from the association founded by Russian Muslim, called Mekke-i Mükerrreme Rusyalı İslam Talebesi İlmiye Cemiyeti [1(6/137), s. 112].

In this article has discussed the social aspect of the 1911 Kebin. As can be seen, the Kebin earthquake deeply affected the people of Turkestan. The damage to the Kebin earthquake was tried to be overcome with the help of the Russian royal family and the organization of the Orthodox Church in Turkestan. The Ottomans, who had sociocultural ties with the Muslims of Turkestan, also supported the earthquake

victims by participating in the relief campaign.

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