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# The 1966 Tashkent Earthquake and the People of Tashkent

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**Abstract**---In this article, the authors examine and analyze the memories of eyewitnesses of the Tashkent earthquake of April 26, 1966 and its details, consequences, and situation using the method of "oral history" from a sociological point of view. This topic, which is one of the few studies conducted in Uzbekistan on the basis of the "oral history" method, focuses on the development and transformation of modern urban planning in the country. In the process of writing the article, the results of observation, document analysis, in-depth interviews and focus group research were also addressed.

**Keywords**---earthquake, ecosystem, historical memory, oral history, respondent, seismic zone, social memory, urban planning, urban social image.

**Introduction**

On April 27-28, 2020 in Alat and Karakul districts of Bukhara region it rained with strong winds, wind speed increased to 30-35 meters per second in some areas. According to preliminary data, a total of 5,293 facilities were damaged in the region. As a result of the natural disaster, the regional economy, primarily energy, social sphere, multi-story housing, individual houses, non-residential buildings, cultural heritage sites, agricultural crops, as well as grain, cotton, fruit and vegetable fields and greenhouses. suffered great losses<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of the flood on May 1, 2020, in the Sardoba reservoir in Syrdarya region, about 70,000 people from 22 settlements of Sardoba, Oqoltin, Mirzaabad

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the project program of the German Association of People's Universities (DVV International) in Tashkent for 2006-2008.

districts were evacuated to Syrdarya and Jizzakh regions, 56 people were hospitalized with various injuries. It was noted that as a result of the accident, buildings and crops were severely damaged in Kurgantepa and Dustlik settlements of Sardoba district (Tojiev et al., 2013; Woang, 2021; Larionov et al., 2021). The floods damaged fields, livestock, and homes, including model homes, gardens, and communications. Sadly, the people living in these areas were forced to experience two severe anxieties at the same time. At a time when the population of Uzbekistan is experiencing an indefinite quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic facing the entire world community, such natural and man-made disasters have left the general population in a state of social and psychological stagnation. However, this is not the first time that the Uzbek people have experienced such a large-scale natural disaster. The Tashkent earthquake in the second half of the 1960s also had a serious impact on the socio-psychological mood of the people. We present to the readers this article, prepared based on the international goant project "Tashkent earthquake in memory of historical witnesses", which is widely studied in sociology by the method of "oral history".

The capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan, ancient and beautiful TASHKENT has a history of 2200 years. Following the decision of the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference on November 2, 2007 to celebrate the high prestige and status of Tashkent, known as the "Eastern Gate", the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued a decree (Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. 2008) to hold the anniversary in May 2009. For centuries, Tashkent has witnessed a peaceful life, as well as noisy and dangerous days. Written sources that have come down to us mention several names of ancient Tashkent. These are such names as "Choch", "Shosh", "Shoshkent", Madinat ash-Shosh, "Binkat", "Tarkan" (Tashkent. Encyclopedia.1992.), and the name "Tashkent" was first mentioned in the XI century. The great thinker Abu Rayhan Beruni described the city in his book "India" as "The word stone is of Turkish origin and takes the form Shosh, which means Tashkent is a stone village"<sup>2</sup>.

Tashkent was the capital of the Governor-General of Turkestan and the center of the Syrdarya region, founded in 1867 due to its mild climate and convenient geographical location. during which he served as the capital of Samarkand), he regained this status. After the country gained its independence in 1991, Tashkent became the capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For centuries, the city of Tashkent and its people have been known for their tolerance on all fronts. For this reason, the city has always been multi-ethnic, allowing several religious denominations to operate freely. In addition to Uzbeks, Tashkent was inhabited by Russians, Tatars, Kazakhs, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Greeks, Turks, Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Uighurs, and even Finns, Swedes, and Danes. The ethnic and religious tolerance of the multinational population towards each other has not lost its significance for centuries. Another status of this city is that it is known as the "City of Peace and Friendship". In Tashkent, in the second half of the 19th century, along with Muslim mosques, there were Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical, Lutheran (Kh. Ziaev, Yu. Burakov., 1988.) churches and Jewish synagogues, which still operate today (Sichugova & Fazilova, 2021; Wyer Jr & Gruenfeld, 1995).

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<sup>2</sup> Beruniy A. Selected works / 2 T., Tashkent, 1963. – 232 p.

Currently, the total area of Tashkent is about 334.8 square kilometers or 33.8 thousand hectares, and the population is 2.3 million around. In 1939, it was the eighth largest city in the former Soviet Union, and by the 1970s, it was the fourth largest (Tashkent. Encyclopedia. 1992.) city in terms of land area and population, after Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and Kiev. In order for our readers to get a clear picture of Tashkent, the two most popular German cities are Cologne (area of about 405.15 km<sup>2</sup>, population 986,168 thousand people) and Munich (area of about 300.00 km<sup>2</sup>, the population of one million three hundred thousand people). Around). To date, Tashkent consists of eleven administrative districts. These are Bektemir, Mirzo Ulugbek, Mirabad, Sergeli, Sabir Rakhimov, Uchtepa, Hamza, Chilanzar, Shayhantahur, Yunusabad, Yakkasaray districts, where a total of 474 mahalla and quarter committees, local self-government bodies operate. Here is some information for comparison. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city consisted of four districts: Shayhantahur, Sebzor, Kokcha and Beshyogoch. The city area at that time was only 16 km<sup>2</sup> and had a population of 80,000 (some sources say around 100,000).



Figure 1. Tashkent looks

Although ancient Tashkent has always been repaired and renewed, its modern image of socio-cultural and economic development is due to the effects of the earthquake on the morning of April 26, 1966 (from 5 to 22 minutes and 52 seconds). Changed more. Before the earthquake, in 1965, the city's population was one million. 174.3 thousand people (Ghosh et al., 2009; Vakov, 1996; Suryasa, 2019).



Figure 2. Tashkent earthquake

“Sovet Uzbekistani”, the country's main newspaper at the time, and almost all other media outlets reported that "four people were killed in the earthquake of April 26, 1966, and about 150 were hospitalized" (Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper. 1966). The government of the country will develop measures to immediately eliminate the consequences of the earthquake and set up a government commission responsible for it.

TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE... In recent history, Tashkent has witnessed a number of dangerous earthquakes. The city is a seismically active zone. It is a space located in an 8-9 magnitude seismic region. For example, one of the strongest earthquakes occurred on April 4, 1866. As a result, many buildings and structures will be destroyed. The quake lasted about 4 hours and killed at least 50 people. Two years later, on February 4 and April 4, 1868, the people of Tashkent again witnessed strong earthquakes. The next strong earthquake occurred on November 29, 1886, in which many buildings were destroyed, and the population for a long time could not get out of a state of numbness and confusion. The damage caused by another strong earthquake was observed on June 7, 1924. Almost all of these earthquakes were reported to have a magnitude of 7-8 on the Richter scale. Prior to the April 26, 1966 earthquake, there had been about 300 earthquakes of various magnitudes (Tashkentskoe zemletresenie. 1966) in Tashkent since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Negarestani et al., 2002; Tojiev et al., 2014).





Figure 3. Effect Tashkent earthquake



Figure 4. Effect Tashkent earthquake

THE TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE is the longest continuous earthquake in the history of the capital. The number of earthquakes from April 26, 1966 to December 31, 1969 was 1,102. The strongest oscillations, i.e., 7 points and above, occurred on May 9, 1966, May 24, June 5, June 29, July 4, and March 24, 1967. People lived (Tashkentskoe zemletresenie. 1966) in tents and in the courtyards of their homes out of depression and fear.

On the night of May 9-10, 1966, at 00:46, a magnitude 6.5 earthquake shook the region. A minute later, there were two more vibrations with 4 - 5 points. The quake struck at 6:50 p.m. Then at 1 to 13 minutes later, seismograph tapes recorded an earthquake at a magnitude of 4-5 on the ground. After that, the quake subsided and there were several aftershocks of less than 2 magnitudes and 2 magnitudes ( Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper. 1966).



Figure 5. Effect Tashkent earthquake

As a result of the Tashkent earthquake 2 million sq.m. more than 236 administrative buildings, about 700 trade and catering facilities, 26 utilities, about 180 educational institutions, including schools with 8,000 seats, 36 cultural institutions, 185 medical and 245 industrial enterprises were damaged. 78,000 families or 300,000 people from the cities were left homeless ( Tashkent. Encyclopedia. 1992). For comparison, we draw attention to the following data (Rikitake, 1968; Zmazek et al., 2003). One of the smallest sports complexes in Tashkent is Pakhtakor Central Sports and Training Association. If you want to understand it in a broad sense, you will see the favorite football team of the Uzbek people - Pakhtakor. The total area of the sports complex is 72 hectares or 7,200 square meters. If we only imagine the destruction of residential buildings, we will have to embody approximately 280 Pakhtakor Central Sports and Training Associations.

Urgent measures have been taken to eliminate the consequences of the earthquake, to accommodate the homeless, to reorganize the work of industrial and commercial enterprises, to protect public and private property. More than 15,000 tents and wagons have been set up on city streets and neighborhoods. Health authorities provided medical care to residents living in tent camps. For this purpose, 14 mobile pharmacies, 29 medical points and 23 mobile points were opened.



Figure 6. Tents effect Tashkent earthquake

To eliminate the consequences of the earthquake, the Tashkent Fund was established and its account number was set at 170064.



Figure 7. Account number fund for Tashkent earthquake

As a result of the earthquake, about 15,000 families were relocated to the cities of Uzbekistan and the allied republics with their consent. Several thousand children from the capital rested in pioneer camps in 94 regions of the former Soviet Union (now the CIS). By the end of 1966, about 300,000 Tashkent residents had been provided with housing. It was decided to build a temporary town near the city. Homeless people were placed in these areas. 50 thousand sq.m. prefabricated houses were planned to be built, and the modern satellite town of Sergeli was completed (Vázquez-Liñán, 2017; Meza et al., 2018).

In the capital 3200 thousand sq.m. housing was completed, of which 1180 thousand sq.m. restored by the builders of the sister republics and the military builders. According to Soviet state standards, houses at that time were mostly built of 5-story brick or reinforced concrete structures. According to the special price list, the living area of a 1-room house (ploshad) is 18-20 sq.m. and the common room (obshaya ploshad) is 30-32 sq.m. formed. The living area of 2-room houses is 28-30 sq.m., the total area is 40-42 sq.m., and the living area of 3-room



houses is 35-40 sq.m. of the one-bedroom houses, the living area was about 48 sq.m. and the common room was 72 sq.m. Therefore, if we give an approximate figure of the houses built by builders in three years during the Tashkent earthquake, we can imagine the following figures:

- If one-room houses are taken into account, about 100,000 apartments will be built;
- At the expense of two-room houses, about 76,190 apartments will be built;
- if taken into account three-room houses, approximately – 58,180 apartments will be built;
- If we take into account the four-room houses – about 45 thousand apartments will be built.



Figure 8. Houses built during the Tashkent earthquake

On the recommendation of the Republican Government Commission, the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR adopted a resolution "On some measures to mitigate the effects of the earthquake in Tashkent." According to the decree, the Ministry of Education was allowed to cancel the entrance exams in grades 5, 6, 7 and 9 and finish the school year on May 14 in these classes. . (Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper, May 13, 1966). Many university students have been actively involved in mitigating the effects of the earthquake (Meza et al., 2017; Maledo & Edhere, 2021).



Figure 9. Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper





Figure 10. Tashkent earthquake



Figure 11. Tashkent earthquake

TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE ... 12 days have passed since April 26. The ground is still shaking. On April 29, at 11:48 a.m., a seismogram tape-recorded an earthquake with a magnitude of 5-6. After that, the magnitude of the earthquake decreased. 178 times more than 2 points, 42 times 2 points, 22 times 3 points, 13 times 4 points and 7 times 4-5 points, a total of 264 earthquakes in 12 days (Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper, May 9, 1966).

TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE ... According to the Tashkent seismic station, three vibrations occurred on the night of May 17. A total of 375 earthquakes of various magnitudes were observed from April 26 to date (Sovet Uzbekistani, May 19, 1966). THE TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE ... The Uzbek people are by nature hospitable, tolerant and hardworking. Especially in difficult times, Uzbeks can sympathize with each other. Their way of life, known as hashar, has become a way of life for the people.



Figure 12. The Uzbek people are naturally hospitable, tolerant, and hardworking

TASHKENT EARTHQUAKE... Nowadays, it is more important than ever to fight against high-level cohesion, stability, peace, iron-clad discipline, and all kinds of rumors and provocative rumors circulating the natural disaster in Tashkent. It is very important to inspire high labor enthusiasm in every production team, to work hard, to take all necessary measures to complete the first tasks of the five years. (Soviet Uzbekistan newspaper, May 15, 1966). Even in the most difficult moments, full opportunities were created for the cultural recreation of the townspeople.

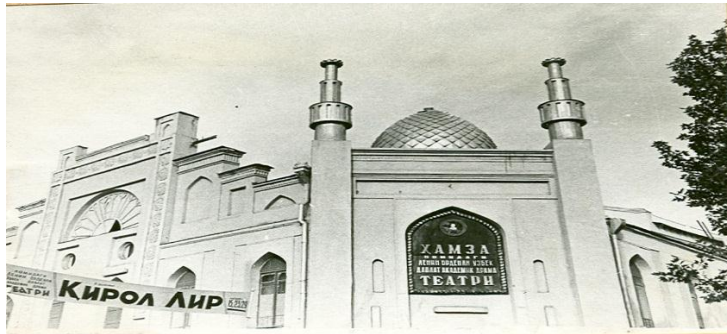


Figure 13. Tashkent Mosque



Figure 14. Tashkent looks

No matter how beautiful Tashkent looks, no matter how much we talk about the scientific and technological achievements associated with its name, the huge opportunities in various fields, the city still has an unprecedented number of tasks. No matter how much we talk about the courage of the people of the capital during and after the Tashkent earthquake in various sectors of the economy, there are still some specific problems that are needed in modern urban planning. In particular, the architectural structure of housing and some administrative buildings, built at a rapid pace during the earthquake, was hastily built based on standard plans, without taking into account the climatic level and mentality of the population of Central Asia. As Gavhar ..., Venus ... and I, Kamil Kalanov, members of our small group, recounted the memories of our contemporaries in connection with the Tashkent earthquake, we naturally heard different attitudes towards him. What is important, however, is that there is no doubt that a process has taken place in the course of history that expresses another infinite potential of humanity.

The experience later improved the image of Tashkent based on the latest achievements in urban planning. Smooth streets, beautiful modern buildings and structures always continue to make the old and young Tashkent look like the world. PS: Looking at the historical documents and photos in this article, it is possible to reinterpret the social memory by comparing the damage caused by the man-made disaster in Sardoba district of Syrdarya region with 25 settlements and the damage caused by the 1966 Tashkent earthquake.

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