

The Establishment And Administrative System Of The Zarafshan Okrug (1868–1886)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the administrative-territorial structure, governance mechanism, and role within imperial policy of the Zarafshan Okrug, established in 1868 by the order of Konstantin von Kaufman. The process of the okrug's formation is examined in direct connection with the conquest of the territories of the Emirate of Bukhara by the Russian Empire. Furthermore, based on historical sources and archival documents, the study explores the system of military-popular administration, governance under the "Temporary Regulations," the transformation of local administrative bodies, the introduction of the volost system, and the establishment of the Samarkand Oblast under the Regulation of 1886.

Keywords: Zarafshan Okrug, Turkestan Governor-Generalship, military-popular administration, provisional regulations, volost system, Emirate of Bukhara, colonial policy.

Introduction

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire's expansionist campaigns in Central Asia fundamentally transformed the political map of the region. The capture of Samarkand in 1868 and the subsequent establishment of the Zarafshan Okrug served to secure the empire's military-strategic and economic interests. The creation of the okrug was significant not only as an act of territorial expansion but also as the introduction of a new model of governance.

Although the military-popular administrative system imposed by the empire ostensibly preserved certain elements of traditional local institutions, in practice it subordinated them entirely to the control of the centralized imperial administration. The purpose of this article is to analyze, on the basis of historical sources, the establishment of the Zarafshan Okrug, its administrative-territorial structure, and the transformations within its governance system, as well as to elucidate its role within the broader framework of imperial colonial policy.

Literature Review and Methodology

The subject under study is reflected in a wide range of sources, which may be classified into the following categories: archival documents; reports of official administrators and inspection commissions; materials of statistical committees, yearbooks, and articles and data published in various reference works; sources in local and foreign languages; periodical press materials. Archival sources include documents from the funds I-1, I-5, I-7, I-18, I-20, I-21, and I-22 of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In addition, the reports of official administrators, special commissions, and inspection commissions of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – such as those by Fyodor Girs and Konstantin von Palen – as well as statistical compilations and surveys, periodical publications, and local and foreign sources provide valuable information on the socio-political and economic life of the region.

Results and Discussion

The conquest of the khanate territories by the Russian Empire was carried out in several stages over different years. After the capture of Khujand, Ura-Tyube, and Jizzakh in 1866, the empire shifted its primary focus to the capture of Samarkand. On 30 April 1868, Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman launched a military campaign toward Samarkand from Yangikurgan Jizzakh with a force consisting of 25 companies, 700 Cossacks, 16 artillery pieces, and a total of 3,500 soldiers [1]. The decisive battle between the forces of the Emir of Bukhara and the Russian troops for Samarkand took place on 1 May 1868. Following the battle at Chupanata hill, the city was captured without resistance on 2 May [2]. The complete incorporation of the Samarkand region into the imperial structure was determined by the battle of Zirabulak. According to the

treaty signed on 23 June 1868 between the Emir of Bukhara and Governor-General von Kaufman, the Emirate of Bukhara lost Samarkand, Kattaqurgan, and the upper basin lands of the Zarafshan River. After control over the waters of the Zarafshan River was transferred to the imperial administration, agricultural activity in the emirate became dependent on the decisions issued by the Tsarist authorities.

During the continuation of military operations, and in a military camp near Samarkand, a separate Zarafshan Okrug was established on 29 June 1868 in the territories captured from the Emirate of Bukhara, based on the order of the administration of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship until the final formation of the Turkestan region [3]. The city of Samarkand was designated as the administrative center of the okrug, and Aleksandr Konstantinovich Abramov was appointed as the head of the okrug administration [4].

The okrug later expanded as a result of the incorporation of new territories. In particular, according to the order of the okrug head dated 25 July 1868, Panjikent and its surrounding villages were included [5]. During 1870-1871, small mountain principalities located in the upper basin of the Zarafshan River—including Maghiyon, Farob, Kishtut, Matcha, Falgor, Yagnob, and Fan – were incorporated into the okrug and designated as mountainous districts. As a result of territorial expansion, the okrug was divided into three administrative divisions: Kattaqurgan division, located closest to the Emirate of Bukhara; the Samarkand division, which formed the central part of the okrug; and the Panjikent division, which was independently established in 1872 in the eastern part of the territory [6].

The incorporation of mountainous regions was significantly influenced by the 1870 Iskandarkul expedition organized under the leadership of general-major Aleksandr Konstantinovich Abramov, which was tasked with studying the mountainous areas from the gorges of the upper Zarafshan River to Lake Iskandarkul. The expedition dispatched in the spring of 1870 consisted of two groups. The first group, led by A.K. Abramov, included 551 soldiers and 2 mountain troops, while the second group, led by lieutenant colonel Dennet, consisted of 203 members [7].

For scientific investigation purposes, a research team was formed comprising mountain engineer D.K. Mishenkov, orientalist L. Kuhn, and captain Grebenkin; later, A.P. Fedchenko and his wife joined the expedition. Topographical work was supervised by A.M. Skassi and N.P. Starsova. The main expedition group, led by lieutenant colonel Dennet together with the temporary commander of the military unit, captain L.N. Sobolev, conducted astronomical and barometric observations in the Khujand uyezd and the Zarafshan region [7]. The results of the Iskandarkul expedition facilitated the reconnaissance of small principalities, prepared the ground for their subsequent incorporation into the Zarafshan Okrug, and contributed to their scientific study.

It can be observed that the imperial administration defined borders based on its political and socio-economic interests. In particular, the Zarafshan Okrug was bounded in the south by the Shahrisabz Mountains, in the west by the Emirate of Bukhara, in the north by the Nurata Mountains, and in the east by the Ilanutti Valley and the Qashgar-Davan mountain range. The Sangzor Valley was also incorporated into the territory of the Zarafshan Okrug [8]. Thus, territories of strategic and economic importance were separated from the Emirate of Bukhara.

Initially, the empire preserved the boundary lines between the divisions as they had been established during the emirate period. For instance, in 1868, the border between the Samarkand division and Kattaqurgan was delineated along the areas of Jom, Kritakur, Ishat, Kuktash, Qushkuduk, Qandakhar, Ofarinkent, and Yangiqurgan. On the side of Kattaqurgan, the border passed through the villages of Qorachuval, Qozoqota, Dusat, Shayxlar, Urtabulak, Juvontupi, and Asat Baxrin, while the Mitan Yangiqurgan area bordered the villages of Saroychinak, Odil, and Yorbooshi [9].

At the time of its initial formation, the Zarafshan Okrug consisted of three districts within the Samarkand division and one district within the Kattaqurgan division. Subsequently, the number of districts within the divisions increased. By 1876, the administrative-territorial structure of the okrug was as follows: the Samarkand division comprised 8 districts, 2 subdistricts, 134 area units, and 653 villages; the Kattaqurgan division included 3 districts, 22 subdistricts, and 286 villages; the mountainous region contained 2 districts, 12 subdistricts, and 223 villages [10].

In general, the administrative-territorial division implemented by the imperial administration in Turkestan did not take into account the natural, historical, economic, and national characteristics of the region. It became a

logical continuation of the all-imperial administrative policy aimed at organizing territories that were rightly described as having primarily bureaucratic and fiscal significance [11].

In 1874, in the work of L.N. Sobolev, the total area of the okrug was indicated as 23,184 square versts. The largest part of the okrug territory belonged to the mountainous districts of Panjikent: the Panjikent division – 9,540 square versts, the Samarkand division – 6,700 square versts, and the Kattaqurgan division – 6,944 square versts [6]. In the reports of imperial secret councillor Fyodor Girs, who inspected the region between 1882 and 1884, the territory of the okrug was recorded as 23,177 square versts (accounting for approximately 1/27 of the territory of the Turkestan region), distributed as follows: the Samarkand division – 6,713 square versts; the Kattaqurgan division – 6,958 square versts; and the mountainous districts – 9,506 square versts. [12] These figures indicate that over a ten-year period (1874–1884), the territory of the okrug remained largely unchanged.

Administrative governance within the okrug was conducted according to the “Temporary Regulations for the Administration of the Zarafshan Okrug” approved on 29 June 1868 by the Governor-General of Turkestan Governor-Generalship [11]. The “Temporary Regulations” consisted of five sections: 1) administrative structure; 2) judicial system; 3) taxes, fees, and obligations; 4) management of revenues and expenditures, accounting, and remittances; and 5) organization of the medical service [13]. According to these regulations, the okrug head possessed military, administrative, police, and judicial authority. The main objective of the document was to establish a new governance policy in the region based on a military administrative system. The head of the Zarafshan Okrug was appointed and dismissed by the Governor-General of the Turkestan region. In the absence or illness of the okrug head, the senior division chief performed his duties. The okrug was governed by the following administrators over different periods: Aleksandr Konstantinovich Abramov (1868–1877), Nikolay Ivanov (1877–1883), and A.M. Yafimovich (1883–1886) [14]. Aleksandr Konstantinovich Abramov was well acquainted with the territory of the okrug under his administration and personally inspected each part of the region [15]. Although officially referred to as an okrug and governed by a head administrator, the structure and governmental system were similar to other provinces of the general-governorship.

The head of the okrug concentrated both civilian and military administration of the territory under his control and possessed rights and obligations equal to those of the military governors of the Yettisuv and Syrdarya provinces. According to the “Temporary Regulations,” the okrug head was directly subordinated to the Governor-General of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship in matters of military and civil administration. The troops stationed within the territory under his administration were subordinated to the head of the Zarafshan Okrug in combat situations, whereas in all other matters they were under the command of the Syrdarya provincial troop commander [8]. In other words, administrative and socio-economic affairs were under the authority of the okrug head, while military affairs were controlled by the Syrdarya provincial military command.

The head of the Zarafshan Okrug administered the territory through the local administrative office and appointed service personnel, and this system was referred to as military-popular administration. Officials of the military-popular administrative apparatus were appointed and dismissed by the Governor-General upon the recommendation of Aleksandr Konstantinovich Abramov. In 1869, the administrative staff of the Zarafshan Okrug consisted of 38 persons: 16 officials in the central administration, 11 in the Samarkand division, and 11 in the Kattaqurgan division. Their annual salaries amounted to 39,950 rubles for the central administration, 18,775 rubles for the Samarkand division, and 19,100 rubles for the Kattaqurgan division, totaling 77,425 rubles for the entire okrug [13]. Officials of the military-popular administration were appointed and dismissed by the Governor-General of the Turkestan region upon the recommendation of the okrug head [8].

The Zarafshan Okrug initially consisted of the Samarkand Kattaqurgan divisions [16]. The head of the Samarkand division was appointed as troop centurion N. Serov, while the head of the Kattaqurgan division was Karaganov [3]. Sections 11–15 of the “Temporary Regulations” defined the rights and duties of division heads. According to these provisions: 11. In each division, the administration of military-popular and military affairs was concentrated in the hands of the division heads; 12. In matters of military-popular administration, division heads exercised authority and responsibilities equivalent to those of uyezds as specified in the draft regulations for governing the Yettisuv and Syrdarya provinces. Regarding command of troops stationed

within the division territory, division heads possessed rights equivalent to those of uyezd heads of the Yettisuv and Syrdarya provinces, subject to special instructions issued by the district governor; 13. Division heads operated through the division administration, the structure of which was determined by staffing regulations; 14. The administrative centers of the divisions were designated as the cities of Samarkand and Kattaqurgan; 15. The senior assistants of division heads and other officials within the division administration possessed rights and duties equal to those of the uyezd administrative officials of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship provinces [8]. Based on the authorities outlined in these sections, division heads carried out administrative management within their respective territories.

Although the imperial administration left the lower-level governance system in the hands of the local population, its overall functioning remained under the control of the higher administrative authority. Sections 16–21 of the “Temporary Regulations” were devoted to local administration. According to these provisions: 16. The indigenous population of the Zarafshan region was divided into *oksokollik* units governed by local elders (*oksokols*); 17. The number and size of the *oksokollik* units within the divisions were maintained as during the rule of the Emirate of Bukhara; 18. As in the period of the Bukhara emirate, several *oksokollik* units were allowed to be combined under the administration of an *amin*. This measure was implemented both to meet local administrative needs and to bind influential local elites to the Russian authorities. The merger of several *oksokollik* units into a single unit was carried out with the approval of the district governor; 19. *Oksokols* and *Amins* were elected by the population through methods deemed most appropriate by the division heads; 20. *Oksokols* were approved or dismissed by the division heads, whereas *amins* were appointed and removed by the district governor [8]. Thus, although the lower level of administration was formally left to the local population, the system was designed to control indigenous society and integrate influential local elders into the imperial governance structure.

However, it can be observed that as a result of subsequent imperial reforms, the local administrative system was gradually transformed. In particular, in 1871, the position of volost head was introduced to replace the former *amin* position of the Emirate of Bukhara period, and the volost head was appointed by the okrug administration. Each volost consisted of 6 to 10 *oksokollik* units. After the abolition of the *amlokdor* institution, from 1872 onward, the administrative system inherited from the emirate period was completely restructured by the Russian Empire, and a new governance model aligned with imperial interests was implemented [17]. In general, the traditional administrative system of the emirate was gradually replaced by a structure adapted to the strategic and political interests of the empire.

In the work of G.A. Arandarenko, it is stated that in 1868 the number of volosts in the okrug was 38 (18 volosts in the Samarkand division, 10 volosts in the Kattakurgan division, and 10 volosts in the mountainous districts) [18]. However, according to archival documents, during the period of 1868–1873, the Samarkand and Kattakurgan divisions were not administratively divided into volosts and *oksokollik* units [19]. During this period, the okrug was divided into tax collection districts, which were managed by tax collectors known as *amlokdors*. The administration of the mountainous districts was initially carried out from the residence of staff captain Shipisberg, who was appointed as the assistant to the head of the Samarkand division by the order of the Governor-General dated 30 January 1871. His headquarters was located in the city of Urgut [13]. From 1871 onward, a separate administrative structure for the mountainous districts was established, consisting of an administrator, interpreter, and secretary (*mirza*). In addition, local messengers could be recruited for administrative operations [20].

The mountainous districts in 1876, as noted above, consisted of the Panjikent and Urgut districts, as well as two separate administrative subunits. Each district had its own local administrative structure. In particular, the local administration of the Urgut district of the okrug in 1877 consisted of 12 officials, with total annual revenues amounting to 2110 rubles [18]. The administrative positions in the district were distributed as follows: one volost head (700 rubles), two messengers (240 rubles), three *oksokols* (450 rubles), one police and security officer (*qurbaši/police master*) (240 rubles), and five village guards (480 rubles). The judicial system in the district included one judge (*kazi*) with an annual income of 2,500 rubles, three *muftis* with annual incomes totaling 460 rubles, and two messengers earning 200 rubles annually. The local administration operated within this institutional composition.

Konstantin von Kaufman did not attempt to reform the local administration or organize local elections until 1878 and did not issue corresponding directives [15]. Although the imperial administration’s early regulations

and provisional rules for the region formally mentioned an electoral system, these provisions were not implemented in practice. From 1878 onward, only the election system for *oksokols* and judges (*kazis*) was introduced in the okrug [12]. This system was implemented in accordance with the decree issued by the okrug head on 17 February 1878. During the first elections of *oksokols* and *kazis* in the divisions in 1878, village and city *oksokols* were elected by thirty heads (*o'ttizboshi*), resulting in the election of 110 *oksokols* and 12 *kazis* [21]. However, although the system of electing volost heads by the local population was formally introduced, the elected individuals were not necessarily those preferred by the people, but rather persons loyal to the imperial administration and willing to serve imperial interests.

According to the 1886 Regulation, on 1 January 1887 the Samarqand viloyati was established on the territory of the former Zarafshan Okrug within the Russian Empire [22]. In addition, the Jizzakh and Khujand uyezds, which had been part of the Syrdarya province, were separated and transferred to the Samarkand region. The newly established province was administratively divided into uyezds, subdistricts, and volosts for governance.

Conclusion

The research results show that the Zarafshan Okrug became an important component of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire in Turkestan. Through the establishment of the okrug, strategic and economically significant territories, particularly the Zarafshan Valley, were brought under imperial control. Although the military-popular administrative system introduced on the basis of the "Temporary Regulations" outwardly preserved elements of local governance, in practice it created a centralized administrative structure serving imperial interests. The establishment of the Samarkand province under the 1886 Regulation marked the completion of the transition from a temporary administrative stage to a fully imperial governance system.

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