

**THE ROLE OF POLICE ADMINISTRATION IN COLONIAL CONTROL IN FERGANA OBLAST (LATE NINETEENTH – EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES)****I. B. Jumaboyev**

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**Abstract**

The study examines the formation and development of police institutions within the administrative governance system introduced by the Russian Empire in the Turkestan region, particularly in the territory of the Fergana region, based on archival documents, normative-legal sources, and historical literature. It also analyzes the powers of police administrative bodies within the structure of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship and reveals the fundamental nature of the mechanisms established to exercise control over the local population.

**Keywords**

Fergana region, Turkestan Governor-Generalship, police administration, colonial policy, administrative control, Russian Empire, 19th–20th centuries.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, profound transformations took place in the history of Central Asia, particularly in Fergana Oblast. As the Russian Empire gradually incorporated the region into the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, not only territorial and political structures were altered, but the systems of local administration, judiciary, and policing were fundamentally reorganized. Within this process, police institutions became an essential component of the empire's military-administrative apparatus.

Although the establishment of police authorities in Fergana Oblast was officially justified as a measure to maintain public order, ensure public safety, and combat crime, in practice the system evolved into a significant instrument of colonial governance. The police institution was primarily oriented toward establishing administrative control over the local population, restricting social movements, and safeguarding imperial interests. In this regard, the police functioned not merely as a law-enforcement body, but also as a mechanism of political supervision and control.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the incorporation of Central Asian territories into the Russian Empire required a fundamental reorganization of the local police system. Traditional forms of governance were gradually replaced by imperial administrative mechanisms. Senior and mid-level police positions were predominantly occupied by Russian officials, while representatives of the local population were largely confined to lower-ranking duties. This process strengthened centralized control and limited local political influence.

Within the territory of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, the police system acquired a distinctly military-administrative character, where administrative, judicial, and police functions were closely intertwined. Rather than focusing primarily on ensuring public safety, police institutions were directed toward preserving colonial order and protecting imperial interests. The concentration of extensive police powers in the hands of the Governor-General led to a high degree of centralization within the system. Military governors possessed broader authority than governors in the internal provinces of the empire and were entitled to impose administrative penalties without judicial proceedings [5].

Uyezd chiefs served as the decisive link in police and administrative governance and were regarded as the principal officials responsible for implementing imperial policy at the local level. The number of police districts was determined according to population density and strategic



importance; for example, Fergana Oblast was divided into 20 police precincts [8, p. 23].

The establishment of police institutions in Fergana Oblast based on the model of the Russian Empire was carried out in accordance with the temporary regulation approved on May 10, 1876, in Kokand by the Turkestan Governor-Generalship [3]. Within the oblast, police personnel were divided into senior and junior ranks, and the authority to appoint or dismiss them rested with the city chief. According to the service hierarchy, a junior officer was required to report incidents of public disorder to a senior officer, and in urgent cases, information was forwarded to the uyezd chief. The regulation explicitly prohibited police officers from accepting gifts or rewards from the population, as they received salaries from the state treasury.

To regulate police activity in Fergana Oblast, a special service uniform was also introduced. Senior officers were provided with blue outer garments, while junior officers wore red uniforms. Each policeman was required to carry a service number and a special badge inscribed with the word “policeman” in both Russian and the local language. Initially, uniforms were supplied at state expense; however, later the costs of replacement were imposed on the officers themselves [3].

From the perspective of the imperial administration, Fergana Oblast was considered a socially and politically complex strategic region requiring constant oversight and reinforced security measures. Analysis of archival documents and official reports indicates that the organization and staffing of the police system often did not correspond to the region’s actual socio-demographic conditions. In densely populated urban and rural areas marked by strong social tensions, the number of police personnel was insufficient. Moreover, the limited knowledge of local languages and customs among officers significantly reduced the effectiveness of their service. As a result, the expected outcomes in combating crime were not fully achieved, and in some instances, police activities contributed to growing dissatisfaction among the local population.

Beginning in 1906, police powers within the territory of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship were further expanded. Uyezd chiefs and police officials were granted broader authority to impose stricter penalties for violations of public order. In particular, in areas placed under the regime of “reinforced protection,” administrative punishments became significantly harsher. Legislation introduced differentiated penalties based on ethnic and social affiliation: representatives of the local population were subjected to longer terms of detention and higher fines, while comparatively lighter sanctions were maintained for Russian and other European residents [7]. This practice clearly demonstrates the discriminatory character of the police system and indicates that its primary objective was not merely the maintenance of public order, but the continuous supervision of the indigenous population and the prevention of potential unrest.

On December 18, 1879, the Turkestan Governor-General, Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, issued a circular letter to uyezd chiefs permitting police and judicial investigators to enlist local imams for administering oaths during investigations. The oath-taking ceremony was regarded as an integral part of the investigative process, and its organization and oversight were entrusted to the police system. Mullahs or imams were involved not on their own initiative, but at the request of investigators and uyezd chiefs. The principal duty of the police was to ensure that the oath procedure was conducted in an orderly and administratively supervised manner. It was noted that if ordinary mullahs lacked literacy or adequate preparation, this could negatively affect the quality of the investigation. Consequently, police authorities played a decisive role in selecting religious representatives and categorizing them as “reliable.” This illustrates the partial subordination of religious institutions to the state apparatus. In effect, police officials utilized the religious beliefs of the local population to lend legitimacy to investigative procedures while simultaneously maintaining religious leaders within the framework of administrative control [2].

Nearly all senior leadership positions within the oblast police administration were occupied by individuals holding military ranks. Officials who headed police institutions were



predominantly former or active military officers, and their professional approach was characterized by strict discipline, command-oriented management, and punitive practices. This circumstance posed a serious obstacle to the development of the police as a body genuinely committed to the protection of civil rights. In fact, according to the “Temporary Regulation on the Organization of Police in Turkestan” adopted in 1876, the primary duties of the police were defined as ensuring public tranquility, protecting victims of crime, and maintaining social order. The regulation also stipulated the recruitment of “morally worthy individuals” into police service [3].

In Fergana Oblast, leadership positions within police institutions were largely assigned to representatives of the European population. For example, between 1905 and 1911, various divisions of the Andijan city police were headed by Bajanov, Zolotov, and Kolesnikov. Archival sources also record the service of officers such as Boris Medinskiy, Konstantin Prolov, Nikita Anashkin, Pyotr Porsev, Mitrofan Likhobabin, Vasiliy Siroshtanov, Pyotr Polyuskiy, Voysex Liber, Vladimir Kotov, Vasiliy Zelensev, and Pavel Konnov during this period. In Kokand Uyezd, police officials active in 1907 included Dmitriy Pechornikov, Nikolay Trichulov, Gerasim Bartishev, Aleksandr Prokofev, Ilya Cherkamin, and Pyotr Kuliskiy [3].

Every officer admitted to service in the Fergana Oblast police administration was required to take the following oath:

“I, the undersigned, swear before the Holy Gospel and in the name of Almighty God that I will faithfully serve our Supreme Ruler — the Tsar of All Russia, Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich. I pledge sincere and undivided loyalty to His Majesty, and, if necessary, I will spare neither strength nor life itself, serving until my last drop of blood in defense of state authority, its laws, and its property. I shall respect the existing laws and those that may be enacted in the future, and I will strive to uphold them. Should I witness or learn of any matter that may cause harm to state interests, I will report it in due time and make every effort to prevent such harm. I shall conscientiously fulfill the duties and rank entrusted to me in accordance with the instructions of my superiors. I will not act contrary to my service obligations for personal gain, property, or acquaintance. I shall conduct myself as a loyal subject of His Majesty and declare my readiness to answer before God for this oath. May the Creator grant me spiritual and physical strength. At the conclusion of this oath, I reverently kiss the Holy Word and the Cross. Amen.” [3]

This oath clearly demonstrates that police service was grounded not only in administrative duty but also in personal loyalty to the monarch — namely, Nicholas II — and to the interests of the Russian Empire.

At the same time, representatives of the local population were actively recruited into police institutions. This was primarily explained by their familiarity with the internal environment of the region, including customs, traditions, and social and kinship networks. Local policemen played an important role in maintaining public order, resolving disputes, and collecting оперативе information. European officers, by contrast, naturally lacked comprehensive knowledge of local social realities.

In particular, Uzbek representatives held a significant position within the Andijan uyezd police structure. In the first division, Musa Temirkhanov served as a mounted policeman, while Qurbon Ibroximov and Husayn Muhammadtajiev worked as junior policemen. In the second division, senior policemen included Musaxon Valixonov, Tojiboy Mahmudxojiyev, Otbosar Muhammadazimov, Madmusa Parpiboev, and Otbosar Azimboev. Sultonhoji Abduqodirxo‘jaev and Ahmadjon Madraimov served as mounted policemen, while Solix Muhiddin ugli worked as a foot policeman. In the third division, Muhammad Zarifboyev (junior policeman) and Nuriddin Xo‘jayev (mounted policeman) were recorded in service [1].

Mounted guards in the volosts of the uyezd were also predominantly recruited from among the local population. Among them were Muhammadsodiq Muhammadsolixov, Ahmadbek



Murodov, Abdusalim Datsiev, Juqmaboy Botiraliyev, Nuha Hamzamov, Abdurahmon Nazarmuhammedov, Toshmuhammad Sodiqboev, Qoraboy Solihboev, Madqurbon Baratboev, Irisboy Muhammadqulov, Iso Muhammadov, and Nasriddin Sodiqov [2].

Similarly, local staff participated in the Kokand uyezd police structure. Among the senior policemen were Qozoqboy Xudoyberdiyev and Mahsud Badalboyev. Junior foot policemen included Ali Oxunjonov, Zokir Sobitov, Olloyor Nazarboyev, Qozoqboy Tursunboyev, and Ashur Yo‘ldoshboyev. Among the mounted junior policemen was Yo‘ldosh Rizomuhammedov, all identified as representatives of the Uzbek population [3].

In Fergana Oblast, the activities of district police chiefs (*uchastka pristavs*) were marked by systemic shortcomings in the timely registration of crimes, reporting to higher authorities, and forwarding cases to judicial bodies. As a result, numerous complaints were submitted to administrative offices by members of the local population.

For example, on September 2, 1908, a serious criminal incident occurred in the village of G‘ozimulla, located in the Konibodom precinct of Kokand Uyezd. A fire broke out at the home of Mulla Haydar Mulla Muhammadqul, destroying part of his house and property. According to the *volost* administrator who arrived at the scene and relied on the victim’s testimony, four unknown individuals had entered the house at night, bound the homeowner, and deliberately set the dwelling on fire. The victim stated that four local residents who happened to be passing by extinguished the fire in time and saved his life.

Despite being informed of this grave crime by the *volost* administrator, the district police chief failed to report the incident to judicial authorities, the prosecutor’s office, or the uyezd chief, contrary to established procedures. He also did not personally visit the scene. Between September 5 and September 21, 1908, no investigative measures were undertaken. Only on September 21 were the victim and witnesses interrogated, and they fully confirmed the events described. Nevertheless, instead of forwarding the case to the appropriate judicial institutions as required by law, the district police chief artificially delayed the investigation until October 1908. Although officially justified as a “need to clarify all circumstances,” this delay was effectively regarded as a violation of legal requirements [8, p. 77].

Statistical analysis of criminal cases handled by investigative bodies in Fergana Oblast indicates a steady annual increase in crime. In the jurisdiction of the New Margilan District Court, the number of recorded crimes rose from 282 cases in 1900 to 800 cases in 1907. Particularly notable was the growth in serious offenses such as homicide, robbery, and theft.

For instance, of the 227 robbery cases recorded in 1905, only 20 were solved. In 1906, of 206 robbery cases, merely 7 were resolved. These figures demonstrate the low effectiveness of anti-crime measures. Even in Fergana Oblast, where the number of district police chiefs was relatively high compared to other regions, effective measures to counter rising crime were not implemented [7].

A report compiled by the Kokand detective department covering the period from January 1, 1915, to January 1, 1916, provides further insight into crime patterns and police activity. According to the report, one criminal group assisting individuals in evading military service was identified and fully exposed. Five armed crimes were recorded, four of which were solved. Of three reported cases of horse and livestock theft, two were resolved. Eight ordinary thefts were registered, six of which were solved. Additionally, three cases involving the theft of weapons, military property, or other state assets were recorded, all of which were solved [6].

The report also provides significant personnel statistics. Based on decisions of the detective department, 471 men and 91 women were arrested. Among registered offenders, 192 men and 10 women were officially recorded. The same number of individuals were photographed and placed under special registration. Furthermore, 150 men were classified as repeat offenders (*recidivists*) [6].



Overall, these data indicate that district police activity was characterized by insufficient legal knowledge, limited procedural experience, inadequate investigative skills, and incomplete compliance with legal norms. Such systemic weaknesses significantly constrained the effective investigation of criminal cases and undermined efforts to ensure public security in Fergana Oblast.

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