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ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL REFORMS IN THE FERGANA VALLEY DURING THE SOVIET PERIOD (1917–1926)

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Abstract: This article provides a historical and scholarly analysis of the administrative-territorial reforms carried out in the Fergana Valley between 1917 and 1926. It examines the establishment of Soviet power, the introduction of a new administrative system in governing the Turkestan region, the processes of national delimitation, and their impact on the Fergana Valley. The political, social, and economic consequences of these reforms are assessed on the basis of historical sources and scholarly research.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, administrative reform, Turkestan ASSR, national delimitation, Soviet power, regional governance, oblast, district.

INTRODUCTION

The Fergana Valley — one of the most densely populated and economically significant regions of Central Asia — was profoundly affected by the political upheavals of the early twentieth century. The administrative-territorial reforms carried out in this region following the October Revolution of 1917 did not merely transform the system of governance; they also exerted a profound influence on the ethnic, social, and economic life of the population.

From a historical perspective, this period (1917–1926) was extraordinarily complex and contradictory: on one hand, the Kokand Autonomy and its violent suppression (1918); on another, the establishment of the Turkestan ASSR (1918); and on a third, the national-territorial delimitation of the peoples of the USSR carried out in 1924–1926 — all of these processes were deeply intertwined. These reforms continue to be evaluated differently by scholars and remain a subject of active academic debate.



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET POWER AND INITIAL ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN THE FERGANA VALLEY (1917–1920)

The February Revolution of 1917 brought an end to the tsarist administrative system in Turkestan. The Turkestan region came under the authority of the Turkestan Committee, which operated under the Provisional Government. At that time, Fergana Oblast consisted of five uyezds (districts) inherited from the Russian colonial system: Kokand, Andijan, Namangan, Margilan, and Osh.

After Soviet power was proclaimed in Tashkent on 28 October 1917, local nationalist forces in the Fergana Valley attempted to create their own political structure. The Turkestan (Kokand) Autonomy, established in Kokand on 27 November 1917, initially possessed an independent administrative framework. However, in February–March 1918, Bolshevik forces stormed the capital of the autonomy, reducing the city of Kokand to ashes. This event entered history under the name the "Kokand Tragedy" (Ziyaev Kh., 2000, pp. 145–148).

On 30 April 1918, with the formation of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee (TurkTsiK) and the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan, the Turkestan ASSR was officially proclaimed. Within the framework of this new state structure, Fergana Oblast was incorporated into the new administrative system. The oblast retained its composition until 1920, transitioning to Bolshevik governance (Nabiev R., 2008, pp. 89–92).

Simultaneously, a powerful resistance movement arose in the Fergana Valley — referred to as the "Basmachi" in Soviet sources, or the "National Liberation Movement" by contemporary Uzbek historians. This movement posed a serious obstacle to the consistent and rapid implementation of administrative reforms (Babakhanov M., 1993, pp. 34–41).

REFORM OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE TURKESTAN ASSR (1920–1924)

In 1920, as part of the administrative reform process in the Turkestan region, the old "oblast–uyezd–volost" system began to be replaced by a new Soviet administrative structure. According to the administrative-territorial framework of the Turkestan SSR in 1921, Fergana Oblast retained five uyezds, but in each of them, Revolutionary Committees (revkomy) assumed administrative control.

The introduction of the NEP (New Economic Policy) in 1921–1922 brought a degree of relative stabilization to the administrative system. Uyezd Executive

Committees (uispolkomy) were established in Fergana Oblast. However, the internal boundaries of the oblast remained poorly defined, and border disputes continued in ethnically mixed territories. According to the scholar A. J. Arnold (1921), the administrative structure of the Fergana Valley was more under the control of local revolutionary forces than under that of the central authorities.

In 1923, the oblast–uyezd system was formally confirmed in the Turkestan SSR. Within Fergana Oblast, five uyezds — Andijan, Kokand, Namangan, Margilan, and Osh — functioned as official administrative units. The administrative distinction between towns inhabited by the Russian settler population and villages inhabited by the indigenous population was still being maintained at this time (Mukhammadiev A., 2015, p. 102).

THE NATIONAL-TERRITORIAL DELIMITATION OF 1924–1926 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE FERGANA VALLEY

In October 1924, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR adopted a resolution on the redistribution of the Turkestan region along national lines. This process is known in history as the "National-Territorial Delimitation of Central Asia." As a result, three new republics replaced the Turkestan ASSR and the Bukhara and Khorezm republics: the Uzbek SSR, the Turkmen SSR, and the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast.

The Fergana Valley proved to be one of the most complex territories in the delimitation process. The ethnic composition of the valley was extremely diverse: Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Russian settlers, and others lived intermingled. The delimitation commission relied primarily on linguistic and demographic criteria, but these criteria often failed to produce satisfactory outcomes in many areas.

As a result of the delimitation: the Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana (Margilan) uyezds remained within the Uzbek SSR; the Osh uyezd was transferred to the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast; and the Khujand uyezd (from Syr Darya Oblast) was assigned to the Tajik Autonomous Oblast. This division subsequently became the primary source of the modern border disputes between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (Olimov M., 2019, pp. 78–84).

In 1925–1926, new administrative units — oblasts — were established within the Uzbek SSR. In the Fergana Valley, the oblasts of Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana were formally proclaimed. The former uyezd system was abolished and replaced by the "tuman" (rayon/district) system. Oblast centres were provided with corresponding executive committees (oblispolkomy) (UzSSR CA, f. 86, op. 1, d. 12, l. 34–38).



CONCLUSION

The administrative-territorial reforms carried out in the Fergana Valley between 1917 and 1926 unfolded historically in several stages: first, the Kokand Autonomy and its suppression (1917–1918); then the consolidation of the Soviet administrative system within the Turkestan ASSR (1918–1924); and finally, the national delimitation and the establishment of the Uzbek SSR (1924–1926).

These reforms diverged to a considerable degree from their originally declared objectives — namely, the realization of "the right of peoples to self-determination." In practice, the reforms served to consolidate Moscow's control over Central Asia and to subordinate territorial resources (land, water, transport routes) to the interests of the Soviet state. At the same time, these reforms also laid the territorial foundations of the modern states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

An objective and scholarly comprehensive investigation of this historical period remains a matter of relevance to this day. Broad engagement with archival sources and comparative analysis with the works of foreign researchers will make possible a still deeper study of this subject.

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