



# Organization Of Zarafshon District And Implementation Of Initial Military-Administrative Measures In Its Territory

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the formation of the Zarafshan district and its initial administrative system in the territories taken from the Bukhara Emirate as a result of the military campaigns of the Russian Empire in 1868. The study covers the principles of the district's "military-people's administration", the segregated urban planning policy of "Russian Samarkand", and issues of hydro-strategic control in the region based on primary sources and archival documents. In particular, the mechanisms of maintaining the Bukhara Emirate in an economically and politically subordinate state ("hydraulic hegemony") by establishing control over the upper reaches of the Zarafshan River are scientifically substantiated. The legal status of the district and its evolutionary processes up to its transformation into the Samarkand region in 1887 are also studied.

**Keywords:** Zarafshan district, General AKA Abramov, hydro-geopolitics, military-people's administration, Samarkand, Bukhara Emirate, colonial administration, truce of 1868, Iskanderkul expedition.

**INTRODUCTION:** In the second half of the 19th century, the military expansion of the Russian Empire in Central Asia radically changed the political map of the region. The structure of the Turkestan province, established in 1865, served more military-operational purposes than civil administration, and its divisions, such as the Right Wing, the Center, and the Left Wing, were aimed at ensuring the continuity of the empire's aggressive policy [1; p. 35]. The military campaigns of 1868 and the capture of Samarkand were the culmination of this process, which allowed not only territorial annexation, but also the strategic control of the Zarafshan valley,

the economic heart of the Bukhara Emirate. The relevance of the topic is that the organization and functioning of the Zarafshan district served as a kind of laboratory of colonial administration. The study of this administrative unit is key to understanding the empire's policies of water resource management in the region, segregation in urban planning, and legal dualism. The purpose of the study is to analyze the organization of the Zarafshan district, its military-administrative structure, and the means of geopolitical pressure applied to the Bukhara Emirate.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of the Zarafshan district and its administrative structure began to be studied by military historians and orientalists of the empire as early as the 19th century. The military-statistical description of the district and the processes of conquest are described in detail in the works of such authors as M. Liko, N. N. Belyavsky and L. N. Sobolev [14; p. 221] [3; p. 13] [7; p. 13]. In Western historiography, in particular, in the studies of D. Bulger and A. Morrison, the occupation of the Zarafshan valley is analyzed in the context of economic determinism and the "Great Game". While D. Bulger assessed the demographic and agrarian potential of the valley as an important resource for the empire [5; p. 5], A. Morrison, conducting a comparative analysis of Russian rule with British India, emphasizes the strategic importance of Samarkand [39; pp. 24–25]. Uzbek researchers Sh. Murodova, T. Akhmedov, and O. Iriskulov studied the activities of the district office, tax policy, and social life based on archival documents [27] [20; p. 26] [21; p. 30] [22; p. 13]. However, the role of the Zarafshan district as a means of "hydraulic pressure" and the main aspects of border demarcation need to be re-analyzed based on a holistic conceptual approach.

#### METHODS

The research used methods of historical-comparative, chronological, systematic analysis and archival document study. The sources were the funds of the National Archive of Uzbekistan (UzMA) (funds I-1 and I-5), Russian military collections of the 19th century ("Военный сборник", "Материали по Туркестану") and travelers' diaries (Ilyavorsky, N. Stremoukhov).

#### RESULTS

As a result of the victory in the Battle of Zirabulak in 1868 and the complete capture of Samarkand, the "special Zarafshan district" was established by order No. 38/47 of the Governor-General of Turkestan, K.P. Kaufman, dated June 29, 1868 [36; p. 16]. At the initial stage, the district was administratively divided into Samarkand and Kattakurgan departments. The Samarkand department consisted of 11 districts, and

the Kattakurgan department - 16 districts [30; p. 16]. Major General A.K. Abramov was appointed head of the new administrative unit. The administrative system was in the form of a "military-people's administration", in which civil, judicial and military power were concentrated in the hands of a single person - the head of the district [27; p. 19]. To maintain order, the garrison deployed in the city of Samarkand consisted of 2.5 companies of infantry, 450 Cossacks, 16 artillery and rocket divisions, which took control of the city center (Ark) and strategic roads (Bukhara Road) [2; p. 3]. The district administration was established in September 1868 and initially consisted of three clerks and a translator [36; p. 17]. According to the new staffing table approved on October 24, 1869, the administrative apparatus was expanded, but since this system was based on the temporary charter of 1867, it could not provide a fully integrated civil administration [32; p. 28].

The most important, but often overlooked, factor in the formation of the Zarafshan district is "hydraulic hegemony". As noted in the confidential materials of NN Belyavsky, by capturing Samarkand, the Russian Empire was able to keep the entire settled population of the Bukhara Khanate in material dependence through the water distribution gates [3; p. 13]. The establishment of control over the upper reaches of the valley, in particular the Akdarya and Karadarya branches, created the potential to deprive the Bukhara Emirate of vital resources. Although during Kaufman's time, completely blocking the water was technically difficult (5,000 people were required to work for 3 weeks for the Karadarya dam) and environmentally dangerous, the existence of this possibility served as a means of constant political pressure on Emir Muzaffar [35; p. 300].

The expansion of the district's territory began in 1868. On July 25, Panjakent was annexed. In 1870, as a result of the "Iskandar-Kul Expedition" with the participation of General Abramov and A.P. Fedchenko, the mountainous principalities of the upper Zarafshan basin - Matcha, Falgar, Yagnob, Kishtut, Mog'iyar and Farob - were conquered [33; p. 11] [28; p. 80]. As a result, the district's territory expanded to the Hissar ridge, covering an area of 11,841.7 square versts [4; p. 18]. The border between the empire and the emirate was marked by a stone pillar erected on a hill near Jam, on one side of which was the Russian coat of arms, and on the other - Persian inscriptions [40; p. 561-571]. The traveler Ilyavorsky describes this border as the point where "the protection of the law" and "security" end, which is evidence of the colonial administration's attempt to present itself as a "bringer of civilization" [6; p. 31].

With the construction of the “New City” (Russian part) in Samarkand, a classic example of colonial urbanism was created. The avenue named after General Abramov (130 meters wide) served as a security buffer separating the Russian and local parts [15; p. 162] [25; p. 111]. The process of purchasing land from the local population and allocating it to Russian officers was regulated by imperial legislation. Economically, the Zarafshan Valley (Miyonkal) had the most fertile lands (2047 km<sup>2</sup>) and a population of over 100 thousand taxpayers, becoming a source of income for the state treasury [3; p. 13].

## DISCUSSION

The legal status of the Zarafshan district remained unclear between 1868 and 1886. Although diplomatic circles in Petersburg discussed the issue of returning Samarkand to Bukhara, the Governor-General of Turkestan, K.P. Kaufman, and a group of military officials strongly opposed this. Their main argument was the strategy of containing Bukhara by controlling the waters of Zarafshan [39; pp. 24–25]. According to the peace treaty of 1868, Samarkand was to be held as a “hostage” until the indemnity was paid, but when the empire broke this promise, even the embassy of Sayid Abdulfattah in 1869 could not reclaim the city [14; p. 220]. This situation shows that the norms of international law were subordinated to the interests of “realpolitik”. The “Regulations on the Administration of the Turkestan Territory” approved on June 12, 1886, abolished the district and established the Samarkand region on January 1, 1887 [19; p. 6]. This reform meant a transition from military administration to an empire-wide civilian system, although the military governor of the region retained broad powers.

## CONCLUSION

The creation of the Zarafshan district was a turning point in the strategy of the Russian Empire in Central Asia. First, it was not just a territorial expansion, but a well-thought-out geopolitical operation aimed at limiting the political sovereignty of the Bukhara Emirate by establishing control over its “water artery”. Second, the system of “military-popular rule” in the Zarafshan district was a hybrid of local traditions and the imperial military dictatorship, which later became a model for all of Turkestan. Third, the expeditions and urban planning reforms led by Abramov changed the demographic and social face of the region, creating a new political and geographical reality: the “Bukhara part” and the “Russian part”. The transformation of the district into a province in 1887 legally confirmed the complete integration of this territory into the body of the empire.

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