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The System of Public Education in Samarkand Oblast in the Period Between the late 19th and early 20th centuries

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Abstract

This paper examines the system of public education in Samarkand Oblast, a province within the Russian Empire. It touches upon the ethnic composition of the region's population, details the religious, gender, and social-estate composition of its student body, and presents data concerning the operation of its educational institutions.

The work relies on two groups of sources: 1) archival materials from the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russia); 2) published documents. The second group is represented by the annual *Survey of Samarkand Oblast* and *Samarkand Oblast Reference Book*.

The study's findings revealed that in the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries the development of the system of public education in Samarkand Oblast was attended by certain problems due to its distinctive characteristics as a region. The period witnessed a fourfold increase (from 8 to 32) in the number of Russian educational institutions in the region, and also during that period secondary education became accessible there to both boys and girls. A relatively smaller increase was posted by the region's Russian-indigenous schools – their number more than doubled (from 5 to 12). Due to the small size of the Russian population in Samarkand Oblast, the oblast's leadership would include in the statistics the figures for Muslim and Jewish ecclesiastical educational institutions there, although such schools were hardly ever included in reports on oblasts and governorates across the Russian Empire, as they had little to do with secular education.

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Consequently, Samarkand Oblast was one of the country's biggest underperformers in terms of public education, as 100,000 out of its 105,000 school-age children were not in school by 1915.

Keywords: public education, Samarkand Oblast, period 1894–1912, Russian Empire.

1. Introduction

Samarkand Oblast was founded in 1868, with its capital in the city of Samarkand. In 1875, the Turkestan Educational District was formed from Samarkand, Syr-Darya, and Fergana Oblasts (Cherkasov, 2023: 1690). As at 1897, Samarkand Oblast had a population of 857,000 people, with 135,000 of these being urban dwellers (Naselenie..., 1898: 5-29). The region's population had a fairly motley ethnic composition. As at 1916, it had a population of 978,000 people, with 521,000 of these being Uzbeks, 270,000 – Tajiks, 39,000 – Kazakhs, and only 27,000 – ethnic Russians (Zarubin, 1926: 24).

2. Materials and methods

The study's source base is founded on two groups of sources: 1) archival materials from the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russia); 2) published documents. The second group is represented by the annual *Survey of Samarkand Oblast* and *Samarkand Oblast Reference Book*.

Use in this study was, most importantly, made of the statistical method, which helped analyze the dynamics of the numbers of educational institutions and students in Samarkand Oblast in the period 1894–1912. The other method employed was the retrospective method, used in order to examine the relevant historical events in historical sequence.

3. Discussion

The historiography on imperial-period Samarkand Oblast is relatively thin. The relevant publications include the work by I.I. Zarubin, released in the early Soviet period, which examines some of the key characteristics of the region's population, including its size, ethnographic composition, and territorial distribution (Zarubin, 1926), the one by A.P. Ryzhova, focused on the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov House in Uzbekistan (Ryzhova, 2021), and the one by O.G. Pugovkina, which paints a historical portrait of N.S. Lykoshin, former Military Governor of Samarkand Oblast (Pugovkina, 2018). None of these publications address the system of public education in Samarkand Oblast, though.

In terms of Russia's Asian dominions, research has recently been conducted looking at the system of public education in Amur Oblast (Shevchenko et al., 2023) and Orenburg Governorate (Magsumov, Zulfugarzade, 2020; Magsumov et al., 2020). Other areas in the Russian Empire with a high concentration of indigenous people included some in the Caucasus, with that being a factor influencing the development of the regional system of public education (e.g., Sukhumi District (Mamadaliyev et al., 2022) and Dagestan Oblast (Rajović et al., 2022; Rajović et al., 2022a; Rajović et al., 2022b)).

4. Results

The first statistics on Samarkand Oblast were published in 1893. However, the first statistics on the system of public education in the region appeared only in 1894.

As at 1894, the region had just 13 educational institutions – 8 Russian and 5 Russian-indigenous (Spravochnaya knizhka..., 1894: 26-28).

In 1896, the number of educational institutions in the region reached 14, following the establishment of another Russian-indigenous school there (Spravochnaya knizhka..., 1896: 29-30).

As at 1898, the region had 18 educational institutions (1 Mariinsky female four-grade facility, 1 urban four-grade facility with a boarding school within its grounds, 4 parish schools for both sexes, 1 parish one-grade female school, 1 parish one-grade male school, 1 male and 1 female two-grade rail schools, 8 Russian-indigenous schools, and 4 night schools for adults within the grounds of the urban schools). These educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 896 students (628 males and 241 females) (Obzor..., 1900: 79).

On January 18, 1899, Samarkand Mariinsky Four-Grade Female School was reorganized into a five-grade female gymnasium. Around the same time, a male four-grade progymnasium was also established there (Obzor..., 1900a: 144).

Consequently, the number of Russian educational institutions in the region reached 11 (1 female gymnasium, 1 male progymnasium, 1 urban four-grade school, 1 Pushkin urban female two-grade school, 1 Pushkin urban male two-grade school, 2 two-grade schools at Samarkand Railroad Station (one male and the other, female), and 4 parish schools for both sexes in the cities of Katta-Kurgan, Dzhizak, and Khodzhent and the village of Sretenskoye) (Obzor..., 1900a: 144). The Russian educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 703 (Obzor..., 1900a: 145). In terms of the religious composition of the student body in this sector, it was dominated by Orthodox Christians – 602, followed by Jews – 59, Muslims – 17, Lutherans – 11, Catholics – 9, and Armenian Gregorian Christians – 2, with members of other faiths numbering 9 (Obzor..., 1900a: 147).

At the same time, the number of Russian-indigenous schools in the region dropped from eight to seven. There were such schools in the cities of Samarkand, Katta-Kurgan, Dzhizak, Khodzhent, and Ura-Tyube and the aul of Dzhizak in Atakurgan Volost. These educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 414 (Obzor..., 1900a: 145).

In 1896, to help boost interest in attending the region's Russian-indigenous schools among the indigenous population, the Military Governor of Samarkand Oblast, Lieutenant General N.Ya. Rostovtsev, recommended in a report addressed to Emperor Nicholas II the opening of trade classes at them. The approval of the initiative resulted in the establishment within the grounds of Samarkand's Russian-indigenous schools of a boarding school equipped with a workshop (Obzor..., 1900a: 151).

In addition, the region had a large number of ecclesiastical schools (31 higher Muslim schools (madrasas), 1,615 lower Muslim schools (maktabs), and 11 lower Jewish schools (cheders)). These educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 15,565 (Obzor..., 1900a: 145). The region's ecclesiastical schools sector is worth dwelling on in more detail. As at 1899, higher Muslim schools (madrasas) there would not accept girls. There were an average of 68 students per madrasa. As regards lower ecclesiastical schools in the region, which *were* open to girls, the situation across its uyezds was as follows: Khodzhent Uyezd having the highest enrollment of female students (321 girls versus 3,214 boys, or about 10 % of the student body), followed by Samarkand Uyezd (350 girls vs 6,903 boys), Dzhizak Uyezd (30 girls vs 1,034 boys), and Katta-Kurgan Uyezd (4 girls vs 1,234 boys). The average figure per maktab was about 8 (Obzor..., 1900a: 146).

In 1900, the number of Russian-indigenous schools increased by two – one, a facility for Jewish children, was opened in Samarkand and the other, in the city of Pendzhikent (Samarkand Uyezd). In addition, at the behest of the Emperor, a boarding school for 25 students was established within the grounds of Atarabat Russian-Indigenous School in Dzhizak Uyezd (Obzor..., 1901: 21). On the whole, the region witnessed a sharp increase in the number of maktabs. As a reminder, as at 1899 there were 1,615 such schools. The figure was 1,913 as at 1900 (Obzor..., 1901: 22).

As at 1900, the region's Russian educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 780 students, its Russian-indigenous schools (inclusive of the night school) – 461 students, and its Muslim and Jewish ecclesiastical schools – 17,349 students (Obzor..., 1901: 23).

However, it is worth taking into account that the number of ecclesiastical indigenous educational institutions in the region was not constant, with the figure dropping to 1,795 in 1901 (Obzor..., 1902: 145). On the other hand, the number of Russian (11) and Russian-indigenous (9) educational institutions there remained unchanged (Obzor..., 1902: 145). The primary reason behind the sharp drop in the number of maktabs in the region was the complicated economic situation there. It is worth noting that in actual fact maktabs there were private ecclesiastical educational institutions established on the initiative of groups of individuals prepared to have an educational facility housed in their own home or a mosque. In good-harvest years, hundreds of such schools for 5–10 students would open in the region, while during poor-harvest times the sector would shrink substantially (Obzor..., 1902: 145).

As at 1901, the region's student body had the following ethnic composition: ethnic Russians – 703, Jews – 589, Poles – 22, Sarts – 16,449, Tatars – 2, Kyrgyz – 3, Armenians – 3, Persians – 1, and Germans – 16 (Obzor..., 1902: 146). It had the following social-estate composition: children of nobles and officials – 237, children of persons of ecclesiastical status – 3, children of urban dwellers – 493, children of rural dwellers – 16,457, and children of foreigners – 11 (Obzor..., 1902: 146).

In 1902, the city of Ura-Tyube became home to a Russian parish school. Thus, the region now had 13 Russian educational institutions. In addition, the number of Russian-indigenous schools in the region increased to 11. At the same time, the number of ecclesiastical indigenous schools there continued to drop, totaling 1,679 (Obzor..., 1903: 87). This must have been caused by locusts

destroying crops there. Despite the drop in the overall number of educational institutions in the region, the number of students there not only did not drop but actually increased – from 17,788 in 1901 to 18,307 in 1902 (Obzor..., 1903: 87). Note that such increases were posted by both Russian and Russian-indigenous schools, as well as ecclesiastical schools.

In 1903, Samarkand Male Progymnasium was reorganized into a gymnasium (Obzor..., 1904: 88). Thus, secondary education was now accessible in the region to both sexes. In addition, that same year the region became home to the following educational institutions: 1 school of gardening, winegrowing, and winemaking, run by the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property, 1 primary school (the region's first third-class private school), 1 parish school, and 223 lower indigenous literacy schools (maktabs) (Obzor..., 1904: 88). Despite the sharp increase in the number of educational institutions in the region, the number of students there increased relatively little – just by 128. As at 1903, the region had a student body of 18,435 (Obzor..., 1904: 89).

As at 1904, the region had 1,781 educational institutions (17 Russian schools with a combined enrollment of 1,321 (702 boys and 619 girls), 14 Russian-indigenous schools with a combined enrollment of 567 (559 boys and 8 girls), and 1,750 indigenous schools with a combined enrollment of 18,887 (18,332 boys and 555 girls)). There were a total of 20,775 students in the region (Obzor..., 1905: 102). The drop in the overall number of educational institutions in the region in the year under review was wholly down to its indigenous schools. In 1904, Russian parish schools were opened in the township of Fedorovsky and at Chernyayevy Railroad Station. In addition, the region became home to Russian-indigenous schools in the village of Zaamin and the village of Yany-Kurgan in Dzhizak Uyezd, as well as the village of Khalvai in Samarkand Uyezd (Obzor..., 1905: 103). It is also to be noted that in 1904 the region's indigenous educational institutions were divided into 83 madrasas, 1,657 maktabs, and 10 cheders (Obzor..., 1905: 103).

As at 1905, Samarkand Oblast had 1,891 educational institutions (19 Russian, 15 Russian-indigenous, and 1,857 indigenous), with a combined enrollment of 21,627 students (19,926 boys and 1,701 girls) (Obzor..., 1906: 109). A notable fact is that the region's Russian schools sector had virtually attained a gender balance (194 boys and 780 girls), unlike the other two, which approximately had one girl per 20 boys (Obzor..., 1906: 109). In 1905, the number of educational institutions in the region increased by 110, while the number of students there increased by 852 (Obzor..., 1906: 109).

It is also worth noting that as at 1905 the region had a population of 1,026,391 people, with 171,065 of these (about one-sixth) being of school age. Given the region's total student body of 21,627 at the time, it can be concluded that just 12.6 % there were in school (Obzor..., 1906: 111).

In 1906, there was no increase in the numbers of Russian and Russian-indigenous schools there. Nevertheless, the region became home to an Armenian school, with the number of its indigenous schools increasing by 107. As a result, the total number of educational institutions there reached 1,998 schools, with a combined enrollment of 25,955 students (Obzor..., 1907: 67).

In 1907, the number of educational institutions in the region reached 2,016 schools, with a combined enrollment of 27,038 students (Obzor..., 1909: 60).

In 1908, the number of educational institutions in the region reached 2,118, an increase of 111, while there was a sharp drop in the size of the student body – by 2,820 students (10 %) (Obzor..., 1910: 57). At that time, the number of private primary educational institutions in Samarkand reached 3 (Obzor..., 1910: 57). The region's other uyezds had no private educational institutions.

In 1909, there was a drop in the number of educational institutions in the region – by 60 maktabs. Consequently, as at that year, the region had 2,058 educational institutions, with a combined enrollment of 25,270 students (Obzor..., 1912: 57).

In 1910, the total number of educational institutions in the region reached 2,177 (27 Russian, 14 Russian-indigenous, and 2,136 indigenous schools, inclusive of the Armenian school) (Obzor..., 1912a: 64). At that time, the region's Russian educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 2,606 students, with 820 of these attending its secondary educational institutions and the rest, its lower and primary schools (Obzor..., 1912a: 64). The region's Russian-indigenous schools had a combined enrollment of 417. Its Armenian school had a student body of 85. And its Muslim educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 20,493 students (Obzor..., 1912a: 64).

By 1912, the number of Russian educational institutions in the region continued to grow. At that time, Samarkand became home to a female progymnasium. The region also became home to a private second-class school (a lower educational institution) (Spravochnaya knizhka ..., 1914:

27-31). The total number of educational institutions in the region reached 2,193 schools, with a combined enrollment of 26,000 ([Spravochnaya knizhka ..., 1914: 31](#)). However, secondary and lower education remained accessible in the region only in its capital, Samarkand.

Table 1. Numbers of Educational Institutions and Students in Samarkand Oblast in 1894–1912 ([Spravochnaya knizhka..., 1894: 26-28](#); [Spravochnaya knizhka..., 1896: 29-30](#); [Obzor..., 1900: 79](#); [Obzor..., 1900a: 144](#); [Obzor..., 1901: 21-23](#); [Obzor..., 1902: 145-146](#); [Obzor..., 1903: 87](#); [Obzor..., 1904: 89](#); [Obzor..., 1905: 102](#); [Obzor..., 1906: 111](#); [Obzor..., 1907: 67](#); [Obzor..., 1909: 60](#); [Obzor..., 1910: 57](#); [Obzor..., 1912: 57](#); [Obzor..., 1912a: 64](#); [Spravochnaya knizhka..., 1914: 27-31](#))

Year	Educational institutions				Students		
	Russian	Russian-indigenous	Indigenous	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1894	8	5	-	13	-	-	-
1896	8	6	-	14	-	-	-
1898	10	8	-	18	628	241	869
1899	11	7	1,657	1,675	15,593	1,089	16,682
1900	11	8	1,894	1,913	17,752	837	18,589
1901	11	9	1,795	1,815	16,190	1,598	17,788
1902	13	11	1,679	1,703	-	-	18,307
1903	15	11	1,902	1,926	-	-	18,435
1904	17	14	1,750	1,781	19,593	1,182	20,775
1905	19	15	1,857	1,891	19,926	1,701	21,627
1906	19	14	1,965	1,998	24,152	1,803	25,955
1907	21	22	1,973	2,016	25,128	1,910	27,038
1908	23	15	2,080	2,118	22,511	1,707	24,218
1909	24	14	2,020	2,058	23,298	1,972	25,270
1910	27	14	2,136	2,177	21,932	1,929	23,861
1912	32	12	2,148	2,193	24,294	2,400	26,694

As evidenced in [Table 1](#), no statistics were maintained in the 1890s for indigenous ecclesiastical schools in the region. The situation began to change only in 1899. However, there still were some gaps in the documentation (e.g., the lack of data on the student body's gender composition in 1902–1903). [Table 1](#) increasingly demonstrates the growth of both Russian, Russian-native, and native Muslim schools. Furthermore, it was the Russian educational institutions that had the greatest dynamism, which were financed both from public funds and local budgets.

In 1915, when World War I was already under way, the Ministry of Public Education, in trying to assess the reach of secular educational institutions among school-age children, found that the region had 105,044 such children but only 4,417 were in school as at 1915 ([RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 39. L. 1](#)).

5. Conclusion

In the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of the system of public education in Samarkand Oblast was attended by certain problems due to its distinctive characteristics as a region. The period witnessed a fourfold increase (from 8 to 32) in the number of Russian educational institutions in the region, and also during that period secondary education became accessible there to both boys and girls. A relatively smaller increase was posted by the region's Russian-indigenous schools – their number more than doubled (from 5 to 12). Due to the small size of the Russian population in Samarkand Oblast, the oblast's leadership would include in the statistics the figures for Muslim and Jewish ecclesiastical educational institutions there, although such schools were hardly ever included in reports on oblasts and governorates across the Russian Empire, as they had little to do with secular education. Consequently, Samarkand Oblast was one of the country's biggest underperformers in terms of public education, as 100,000 out of its 105,000 school-age children were not in school by 1915.

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