

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY OR ADMINISTRATIVE DREAMS?*

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In his monograph *The Burden of the Empire. The Administrative Policy of Russia in Central Asia. Second Half of the 19th Century*, D. V. Vasilyev analyses imperial Russian policy in the region, focusing on the administration of the steppe provinces and Russian Turkestan between 1865 and 1891. This approach allows the author to observe the evolution of views of the central and regional authorities responsible for the administration of these regions and compare broader imperial policy. The monograph is innovative, as it provides a parallel examination of Russian policy in the steppe provinces and in Russian Turkestan, with the author analysing draft regulations in chronological order. The measures taken to adapt the administrative system in both regions are considered at specific stages of their development. Vasilyev refers to new archival materials, which should be of interest both to researchers of the imperial Russian policy in Central Asia and specialists in the administrative and legal history of the Russian state. Careful and comprehensive analysis of the sources offers the reader an informed perspective on these documents and makes it possible to trace specific aspects and changes in imperial policy.

Keywords: Russian Empire; Central Asia; Kazakhstan; Turkestan; administrative reforms; imperial legislation; regional legal projects.

В монографии Д. В. Васильева «Бремя империи. Административная политика России в Центральной Азии. Вторая половина XIX в.» (М., 2018) автор анализирует имперскую политику в регионе путем характеристики

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проектов положений об управлении степными областями и Русским Туркестаном, разработанных с 1865 по 1891 г. Подобный подход позволяет ему проследить эволюцию взглядов российских центральных и региональных властей по поводу управления указанных регионов, при этом сравнивая административную политику имперской администрации в них. Новизной монографии является параллельное рассмотрение изменений российской политики в обоих регионах за счет анализа проектов положений об их управлении в хронологическом порядке, то есть на определенном этапе анализируются меры по изменению системы управления и степных областей, и Русского Туркестана. Автором книги введены в научный оборот новые архивные материалы, которые представляют интерес как для исследователей российской имперской политики в Центральной Азии, так и для специалистов по истории отечественного государства и права. Всеаспектный анализ положений об управлении степными областями и Русским Туркестаном формирует у читателя полное представление об этих документах и позволяет им в дальнейшем обратиться к более подробному изучению отдельных направлений российской политики в этих регионах.

Ключевые слова: Российская империя; Центральная Азия; Казахстан; Туркестан; административные реформы; имперское законодательство; региональные законопроекты.

The study of the history of Kazakhstan (designated, in turn, as the Kazakh Steppe, then Steppe provinces and, finally, the Steppe Governor-Generalship) and Turkestan as parts of the Russian Empire began during the joining of these regions to its imperial domain. There was practically oriented research on these territories carried out during the imperial period. Subsequently, Soviet scholars prioritized the condemnation of the “colonial” policy of the Russian imperial authorities in the Central Asia. Today, the goals and approaches connected to the study of these regions during imperial period has changed substantially from these past preoccupations.

In connection with active integration processes currently taking place within the Eurasian area, including the strengthening of ties between Russia and the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia, understanding the historical experience of states and their regional interactions becomes more and more significant. The imperial period, in particular, is one of the most important for study, in the view of the lessons it might offer present day actors keen to avoid repeating past mistakes, while working towards the establishment and further development of bi-lateral relations. The importance of the Central Asian region on the international scene also assures interest in this subject-matter extends not only to Russia and the republics of Central Asia, but to other countries beyond their borders too.

Thus, it is no wonder that during the first decades of the 21st century scholars pursued research across a multitude of fundamentally different aspects of history of Kazakhstan as a part of the Russian Empire: including, the political [Акимбеков; Темиргалиев], international and diplomatic

[Noda], the modernization of Kazakh society [Быков], and specific features of Russian reforms in the Kazakh Small Horde [Избасарова]. Similarly, the history of Russian Turkestan has been studied in detail: scholars have paid attention to the military dimensions of joining the region to the empire [Глушченко]¹, administrative transformations in the region [Крупенкин], economic policy [Алимджанов], the development of social relations in the region under Russian rule [Morrison, 2008; Sahadeo], the role of Islam and Shari'a in Turkestan during the imperial period [Мухамедов; Sartori], and specific features of the status of the region at the beginning of the 20th century [Котюкова; Шушкова].

Due to this wealth of research, one might expect that yet another book devoted to Russian imperial policy in Kazakhstan and Turkestan could not hope to make any significant contribution to the pre-existing scholarship. Nevertheless, the monograph under review deserves attention, as it stands apart from other works devoted to Russian Central Asia during imperial period for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the author observes the evolution of Russian administrative policy both in Steppe provinces and in Turkestan; scholars previously focused on one or another region. Almost the only book where authors paid attention to Kazakhstan as well as Turkestan is the collective work "Central Asia as a part of the Russian Empire" [Центральная Азия], though it remains only a general survey written by a number of authors with differing views and, consequently, cannot be considered a complete monograph study.

By contrast, the work of D. V. Vasilyev [Васильев, 2018] offers just such a complete and comprehensive study, while enjoying a singular perspective and uniform methodological approach. The author seriously examines Russian administrative policy both in Kazakhstan and in the Russian Turkestan on the basis of his long familiarization with the history of both regions during the imperial period: study of imperial policy in the Turkestan formed the basis of his candidate thesis [Васильев, 1999], and his subsequent study of Russian policy in the Kazakh Steppe was at the centre of his doctoral research [Васильев, 2016] The reviewed monograph also continues directly the research of two previous books by the author: "Russia and the Kazakh Steppe" and "The Outpost of the Empire" [Васильев, 2014; Васильев, 2015].

Secondly, Vasilyev, in his new work, ambitiously attempts to observe the main stages of Russian administrative policy in Kazakhstan and Turkestan during the second half of the 19th century based on all accessible draft legislation related to the administration of these regions, including those implemented as well as those that remained at the level of draft proposals. The scope of the book is, thus, impressive: the author analyzed, in detail, more than twenty legislative proposals developed by central and regional authorities and a series of documents devoted to discussions surrounding these proposals. The majority of the analyzed documents remain in the archives, and are being used for the first time.

¹ The new book on this subject is coming soon [Morrison, 2020].

The author analyzes each of the above-mentioned legal proposals individually, sometimes even at the level of item-by-item commentary. In terms of content, Vasilyev's study offers an up to date interpretation and contextualization of the analyzed documents. That modern all-aspects interpretation of the pedestrian and sometimes incomprehensible imperial official language allows the reader to gain an authentic view of their essence. Analysis of each new document is accompanied by comparison with previously considered examples.

Such an approach might make for an easier the reading of the broader book. However, the author does show "mercy" to readers, as he deals with complex categories of imperial administrative practice and legal regulation. Moreover, the book is unlikely to be accessible to those unfamiliar of the author's two previous works, in which Vasilyev first outlined his approach and began to introduce readers to the specific field of his research and his particular writing style.

The aims of the author required him to restrict his research to just the analysis and interpretation of the aforementioned legal proposals. That is why we can don't find in the reviewed book, in contrast to "Russia and the Kazakh Steppe", a lot of lively and expressive characteristics of Russian imperial statesmen or specific features of their professional relationships². However, such an approach does not mean that the author deals with some abstract documents, categories and facts: at times he supplements his general study with appropriate personal details. For instance, he mentions the known confrontation between N. A. Kryzhanovskiy, the Orenburg Governor-General, and M. G. Chernyaev, the first Military Governor of Turkestan Province (p. 43)³, the attempt of Kryzhanovskiy at his "own PR" (p. 122), a brief but expressive characterization of D. I. Romanovskiy, successor of Chernyaev (p. 88), and of K. P. von Kaufman, the first Turkestan Governor-General (148), and the intricate relations between Ministry of Finance and Military Ministry of the Russian Empire, which substantially influenced the fate of legal proposals developed by regional administrations under the control of the Military Ministry (p. 292, 327–328). The "boring" content of analyzed legal documents is, thus, "livened up" by the author's descriptions of the development process for such projects, the comments of their authors (such as the accompanying notices of Kaufman to his proposals on the administration of the Turkestan Region of 1871 and 1873), information on discussion of regional proposals by central authorities, especially by inter-departmental commissions, etc.

The analysis of legal acts is constantly subjected to criticism as their authors focus on "idealized" and "desirable" administrative and legal relations instead of practical ones. But D. V. Vasilyev succeeds in analyzing legal proposals within the context of real relations between different state authorities

² D. V. Vasilyev mentions in the introduction of the reviewed book that he purposefully refuses of many aspects which could be a subject for another fundamental research (p. 5).

³ Here and further references to the reviewed work are in parentheses with page numbers.

(down to the level of military governors and even heads of districts/*uezds*), and describes the problems related to the realization and implementation of statutes and their subsequent influence on the life and activity of individuals. The most significant example is the fate of a certain D. Aiderkin, Kazakh chief of the *volost'* in the Akmolinsk Province, who protested against some innovations in power symbols for chiefs of *volosts*, which was provided by the "Temporal Statute on administration of Ural'sk, Turgay, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces" of 1868. Aiderkin was arrested and exiled by order of N. P. Okol'nichiy, Akmolinsk Military Governor, but the case resonated with the authorities, and the positions of I. S. Unkovskiy, Yaroslavl' governor, A. P. Khrushchov, Governor-General of the Western Siberia, and governing body of Ministry of Internal Affairs were advanced (p. 180–190). What a pity that such detailed archival materials related to other participants (and victims) of Russian administrative reforms in the Central Asia have yet to be discovered in the archives!

As Vasilyev's study continues, the title of the book, "Burden of the Empire" gains further significance. During the imperial period, Russian Turkestan was often considered a "financial burden", i. e. an unprofitable region within the Empire [see in details: Стеткевич]. However, in the view of Vasilyev, the region is better understood as a "legal burden", due to the long-term failure of the imperial state authorities to elaborate universal legal regulations that could provide the effective development of Turkestan and upgrade its economic, social, cultural level (p. 17). The analysis of legal proposals and supplementary materials allows the author to clarify reasons for this failure, as well as the necessity of renewing previously implemented legal acts connected with the problems of their practical realization. As a result, D. V. Vasilyev succeeds in covering all aspects of the Russian administrative policy in Kazakhstan and Turkestan during the chosen period of time.

At the same time, some moments in the book deserve further consideration. The stated goal of author was "to present the direction of Russian imperial policy related to Turkestan and Steppe regions" (p. 5). And the "parallel" study of the imperial administrative power in Kazakhstan and Turkestan, as was mentioned above, was intended to be a novelty of the study. In fact, the author "challenges" the previous historiography, where imperial policy in Kazakhstan was examined separately from that related to Turkestan. Vasilyev rejects such a division and analyses legal proposals related to both regions in chronological order. Such approach allows him to reveal their similarity and differences.

Nevertheless, it appears that the traditional "divided" study of Russian policy in Kazakhstan and Turkestan was not born of the shortcomings of previous scholarship. The circumstances of joining of both regions to the Russian Empire, their ethnic structure, way of life, cultural, religious, political and legal traditions were actually quite different. And that caused different approaches in their administrations, as well as their study.

Furthermore, the longer existence of the Kazakh Steppe – Steppe provinces – and Steppe Region in the Russian Empire required less activity

on the part of central and regional authorities to transform its administrative system, and the structure of the reviewed book reflects this reality: some chapters (1, 4, 5, 6) are entirely devoted to reforms in Turkestan. This disparity might be explained by a number of reforms pursued in Kazakhstan during earlier periods, including the “court reform” of O. A. Igelstrom in the 1780s–1790s, the reform of M. M. Speranskiy, Governor-General of the Siberia, in the Kazakh Middle Horde (1822), and of P. K. Essen, Orenburg Military Governor, in the Small Horde (1824), the adoption of the statute “On the administration of the Kyrgyz⁴ of Siberian jurisdiction” (1838), and “On the administration of the Kyrgyz of Orenburg jurisdiction” (1844). The first project related to Kazakhstan analyzed by D. V. Vasilyev is the above mentioned “Temporal Statute on the administration of the Ural’sk, Turgay, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces” of 1868, which was the final legal act fixed to the status of Kazakhs in the Russian Empire and the specific features of Russian administrative policy in the region. As for Turkestan, its territory was formed only between 1865–1884, so there were a lot of reasons for legislative activity of its regional administration as well as central authorities, and their proposals were more contradictory.

Moreover, there were specific territories in each region that had their own traditions of power and social relations. D. V. Vasilyev in “Russian and the Kazakh Steppe” emphasized substantial differences between Russian administration in Great, Middle, Little Hordes and Bukei Khanate (Inner Horde). And the analysis of the legal project of the second half of the 19th century proves that this difference was maintained in the later period: the Statute of 1868 covers four Kazakh provinces, but the first two of them remained under the jurisdiction of the Orenburg Governor-Generalship and the other two were under the control of the Western Siberian authorities (p. 167). It is no wonder then that in 1871 two separate proposals for the administration of the Steppe provinces were developed: one for the Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces and another for the Ural’sk and Turgay provinces (ch. 3). Even the last Statute on administration for Kazakhs analyzed in the book, the so-called “Steppe Statute” of 1891 covered five Kazakh provinces (Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Semirech’e, Ural’sk and Turgay), but only the first three of them were incorporated into the newly formed Steppe Governor-Generalship, while the other two were handed over to the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (p. 547).

The same situation occurred in the Turkestan Region, which was also joined to the Russian Empire over an extended period of time. Initially its territories included only the Syrdaria and Semirech’e provinces – which was fixed by the “Project of the administration of the Syrdaria and Semirech’e provinces” of 1867⁵. Due to the military campaigns of K. P. von Kaufman, new territorial units were joined to the region: Zeravshan Mili-

⁴ “Kyrgyz” was an official name of Kazakhs until 1925.

⁵ It’s interesting that although this document was only a “project”, it remained the only legal act for Turkestan which was officially recognized by central imperial authorities until 1886.

tary District (later – Samarqand Province) from 1868, Ili Province (Kuldja District) in 1871–1881, Amudaria Military District from 1873, Fergana Province from 1876, and the proposal of 1867 could not be automatically expanded to cover them. As a result, four or five different statutes were issued and de-facto implemented under Kaufman's rule (1867–1882) – and a special chapter (5) of the reviewed book is devoted to this situation. Of course, regional authorities during the development of their own legal prioritized the specific features of their own provinces, which explains why the legal commissions of three provinces (Syrdaria, Semirech'e and Fergana) presented incompatible positions during the development of the proposal on the administration of Turkestan initiated by Kaufman in 1881 (p. 377–408).

Kaufman himself tried more than once to unify the administrative system of the Turkestan Region, and his projects of 1871 and 1873, described by D. V. Vasilyev in detail in chapters 3 and 4, evidence those efforts. Although central authorities continually criticized his proposals, it seems that their position was advantageous for the Turkestan Governor-General: for a long time he promoted the project of 1867 (approved by the central authorities) for the Syrdaria and Semirech'e provinces exclusively, while other provinces and districts were governed de-facto on the basis of his own proposals (in particular of 1873).

Thus, it is no wonder that the majority of legal proposals analyzed by Vasilyev remained unimplemented. That is why the results of legislative activities described by the author can be characterized not as “administrative policy”, but as “administrative dreams”.

Moreover, the author aims to “to present the direction of the Russian imperial policy” in chosen regions, but his analysis, in fact, proves that there was an absence of any such consistent direction: the routine appearance of new legal projects is evidence of the unsuccessful attempts of the authorities to form and realize such direction. The author himself complains of the failure of the ruling circles of the Russian Empire to establish a united act for Turkestan over the course of 20 years: from the capture of Tashkent in 1865 to the battle of Kushka in 1885.

D. V. Vasilyev more than once gives detailed attention to the above-mentioned Inner Horde and even devotes chapter 9 to it. But the question of whether this Horde was part of the broader Central Asian region remains unanswered. It is possible that the author included his characterization of Russian administrative policy in the Inner Horde because it was temporarily under the jurisdiction of Orenburg authorities (p. 114), besides which its rulers and populations were ethnically connected with the Kazakh Little Horde (p. 580), as the Inner Horde separated from it at the beginning of the 19th century. However, we should remember that, since its foundation, and with regards to territorial and administrative considerations, the Inner Horde was under the jurisdiction of the Astrakhan authorities and returned to their control in the last quarter of the 19th century, as Vasilyev himself mentions (p. 596).

While the author describes Russian administrative policy in the Inner Horde, he doesn't pay attention to the Trans-Caspian Province⁶ and Western Pamir which, in fact, was the last acquisition of the Russian Empire in Central Asia. This suggests that a study of Russian policy towards these territories could substantially widen and supplement the author's study of the region.

It is worth noting that the bibliography is not exhaustive in its engagement with existing scholarship, despite the size of the study and the number of topics under consideration. Of course, reasoning from the goal of the work, the author pays more attention to primary sources, i. e. legal projects of 1865–1891 and supplementary documents, which is reflected in the wide list of archival materials referenced in the bibliography. Besides these sources, the author deploys the works of “key” authors of relevant secondary works: E. V. Bezvikkonnaya, N. E. Bekmakhanova, S. N. Brezhneva, A. Yu. Bykov, G. B. Izbasarova, S. I. Koval'skaya, Yu. A. Lysenko, E. A. Pravilova, O. G. Pugovkina, B. S. Suleimenov, S. K. Uderbayeva, etc.

Still, it is strange that the author doesn't include in this list the classic works of N. A. Khal'fin or R. A. Pierce, as well as the research of the above-cited, modern scholars, T. V. Kotyukova, A. Morrison, Sh. B. Mukhamedov, J. Sahaev, and M. Ye. Shushkova. Though some of the interpretations made by these authors remain questionable, taking into account their works might have helped the author avoid needlessly detailed descriptive elements related to some aspects of the work, which at time drift into mere polemics.

Similarly, it is not clear why the author did not take into account the works devoted to study of specific regions which were examined in the course of this study, in particular, the books and articles of S. Z. Zimanov (Inner Horde), S. Gorshenina, J. Noda, I. C. Y. Hsü (Ili Province), T. G. Tukhtametov (Amudaria Military District), etc. With its wide survey of the problems surrounding the integration of the traditional nomadic court of Turkestan (*sud biyev*) into the imperial court system, the recent doctoral thesis of A. L. Saliev is also an obvious omission.

Nevertheless, these remarks are subjective and, of course, in no way diminish the scientific value of the reviewed book. Firstly, there is no doubt that D. V. Vasilyev succeeds in clarifying the basic phases of Central Asian administrative policy of the Russian Empire during the second half of the 19th century. It is interesting that the projects at the end of 1860s and towards the close of the 1880–1890s were implemented in Kazakhstan and Turkestan, while the proposals of 1870–1880-s remained unimplemented. Secondly, Vasilyev's study proves that reforms in Russian-controlled Central Asia were not episodic and spontaneous: legal proposals were established and discussed routinely and consistently at the central and regional

⁶ D. V. Vasilyev acknowledges that Trans-Caspian Province “remained outside the territorial limits of the book” (p. 6), besides, now he pays attention to study the history of this region [Васильев, 2019; Васильев, 2020].

levels. Furthermore, it was not always the opinion of central ruling circles which prevailed, as they continued to take into account the positions and preferences of regional authorities. Finally, this book could just as ably provide the casual reader with a “guidebook” of legal projects of the given period, while also allowing scholars to use specific documents or an aspect of its detailed research as the basis of their own interpretation of the region and its history.

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