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THE IMPACT OF THE POST-TELEGRAPH SYSTEM ON SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE AND THE FORMATION OF INFORMATION CULTURE AMONG THE POPULATION IN THE FERGANA VALLEY (LATE XIX – EARLY XX CENTURIES)

Dilmurodjon A. Qosimov

Independent Ph.D. Candidate, Fergana State University; Senior Lecturer at the Department of Methodology of Socio-Economic Sciences, Andijan Regional Center for Pedagogical Excellence (Institute for In-Service Teacher Training and Professional Development), Uzbekistan.

azamjonovich@1989.gmail.com

Abstract:

This research paper evaluates the multi-layered socio-cultural transformations triggered by the institutionalization of the post-telegraph system in the Fergana Valley during the late XIX and early XX centuries. Moving beyond traditional economic paradigms, the study investigates how the introduction of synchronized telecommunication networks fundamentally altered the daily lives, cognitive habits, and information culture of the local population. Utilizing primary archival materials from the National Archives of Uzbekistan, the paper demonstrates how the post-telegraph infrastructure accelerated the circulation of periodic press, facilitated the transnational intellectual networking of the Jadid reformist elite, and introduced new modes of administrative and personal literacy, thereby transforming a traditional agrarian society into an active participant in early global information flows.

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Keywords: Fergana Valley, post-telegraph system, socio-cultural transformation, information culture, periodic press, Jadidism, linguistic adaptation, communication networks.

INTRODUCTION

The historical evolution and structural modernization of communication networks within global peripheries have routinely been analyzed through the narrow, often reductive analytical windows of military-strategic logistics, imperial administrative surveillance, and macroeconomic industrialization. However, the forced introduction of highly complex, structurally synchronized technological systems like the post-telegraph matrix into traditional, deeply rooted agrarian societies induces far-reaching structural consequences that ripple far beyond state treasuries, colonial garrisons, and cotton commodity exchanges. In the specific, deeply layered context of the Fergana Valley during the late imperial period (late XIX – early XX centuries), the calculated deployment of standardized telecommunication networks acted as a profound epistemic, cognitive, and socio-cultural disruptor.

As the physical topography of the valley was rapidly integrated into the volatile flows of the global capitalist cotton market, its internal social fabric, daily communicative habits, religious interactions, and cultural transmission patterns underwent a comprehensive, irrevocable structural transformation. This shift was driven not merely by political decrees, but by the steady, unrelenting physical compression of spatial and temporal boundaries (Anderson, 1983). The telegraph wire did not just carry imperial administrative commands or wholesale cotton prices; it functioned as an uninvited yet highly powerful agent of social re-engineering that fundamentally altered how local populations conceptualized time, distance, and community.

Prior to the systematic, top-down institutionalization of standardized post-telegraph offices in key regional urban centers such as Kokand, Andijan, New

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Margilan, and Namangan, the local population of the Fergana Valley relied exclusively on traditional, highly localized, and deeply fragmented channels of information dissemination. Social knowledge, historical memory, and immediate news were primarily transferred through oral communication networks, localized bazaar gatherings, and traditional religious institutions such as mosques and madrasahs. These traditional pathways inherently restricted the geographic scope, verification metrics, and processing speed of socio-cultural information. This structural isolation and systemic spatial asymmetry exposed the general population to highly volatile localized rumors, severely restricted broad social mobility, and left regional communities vulnerable to sudden economic shocks and administrative manipulation by localized elites.

The physical introduction of Morse and Hughes telegraph lines, bound strictly by the universal technical and regulatory parameters of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), permanently shattered these localized boundaries and localized cognitive frameworks. For the first time in Central Asian history, the social reality of information was completely decoupled from physical human transit and the speed of animal labor. Information transformed rapidly from an elite, heavily guarded, and localized commodity into a highly dynamic, fluid, and rapidly circulating force that ordinary citizens could witness, interact with, and absorb into their daily socio-cultural experiences (Headrick, 2000).

While the broader infrastructural and political history of Central Asia has recently received renewed academic interest from post-colonial scholars, a glaring, highly problematic scholarly balkanization continues to persist within the contemporary literature. Existing academic studies routinely relegate the history of technology to quantitative engineering summaries or highly dry economic cost-benefit analyses. Conversely, socio-cultural historians and specialists in intellectual movements frequently ignore the essential technological and physical prerequisites that allowed these very intellectual and philosophical shifts to occur. Specifically, the precise socio-technical mechanisms through which the post-

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telegraph service facilitated the rapid distribution of the vernacular periodic press and directly connected localized regional reformists with international, pan-Islamic intellectual networks remain profoundly under-researched and theoretically isolated.

Classical Soviet-era historiography intentionally minimized, distorted, or completely denied the cultural agency and adaptive intelligence of the local population under these technical grids, viewing them merely as passive victims of a unilateral Tsarist colonial apparatus. On the other hand, modern contemporary works, while highly nationalistic and descriptive, often completely overlook how the physical layouts of wire networks and postal stops directly dictated the geopolitical spread, operational locations, and physical viability of early independent printing presses, private book depositories, and public reading rooms (*qiroatxona*). This failure to bridge the material history of infrastructure with the intellectual history of ideas has left a critical gap in our understanding of Central Asian modernity (Noam, 1992).

To systematically bridge this deep academic divide and address this clear conceptual limitation, this research paper offers a rigorous, data-driven, and theoretically informed analysis of the multi-layered socio-cultural impacts and the gradual formation of an early information culture among the diverse population of the Fergana Valley. By moving away from purely descriptive histories, this study utilizes a highly specialized interdisciplinary methodology that evaluates the post-telegraph system through the conceptual lenses of Jürgen Habermas's theory of the "public sphere" and modern information sotsiologiyasi (Habermas, 1989). Through a meticulous decoding, translation, and analytical synthesis of unreleased personal correspondences, regional administrative police records, early vernacular newspapers, and institutional post-office traffic logs preserved within the National Archives of Uzbekistan, this study delineates exactly how the expansion of telegraphic and postal infrastructure accelerated public literacy, reshaped localized linguistic habits through administrative

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adaptation, and provided the vital communicative foundation for the rise of localized enlightenment movements.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the post-telegraph system functioned not as a static tool of imperial subjugation, but as an active, highly dynamic agent of socio-cultural modernization. It effectively provided the material infrastructure that allowed the intellectual elite and the broader population of the Fergana Valley to transition from insulated, localized connectivity to active, conscious participation within the broader matrix of transnational intellectual, political, and informational flows (Qosimov, 2025).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Empirical Source Infrastructure and Granular Archive Matrix

The empirical validation, historical authenticity, and socio-cultural reliability of this qualitative and quantitative inquiry are rigorously constructed upon a multi-layered, structural triangulation of primary state archival assets, historical periodic literature, localized censorship files, and early vernacular linguistic registries. The central body of evidentiary material was systematically excavated, critically cross-referenced, and transcribed through comprehensive investigative operations conducted within the National Archives of Uzbekistan (NAU) and the Fergana Regional State Archive (FRSA). To reconstruct the institutional, regulatory, and physical infrastructure of the communication layout, this study heavily unspooled, translated, and evaluated extensive files from Fond I-126 (Turkestan Post and Telegraph District), Fond I-19 (Fergana Regional Administration), and Fond I-1 (Chancellery of the Governor-General of Turkestan) (National Archives of Uzbekistan [NAU], I-1, I-19, I-126).

Rather than executing a superficial narrative reading of these bureaucratic records, this study systematically subjected specific document types to close analytical scrutiny. These document types included regional post-telegraph traffic ledgers, internal communication blueprints, operational surveillance memos from

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the provincial gendarmerie regarding literacy spaces, official postal receipts, and budgets for public reading halls.

To capture and systematically measure the specific cultural responses, structural cognitive shifts, and public reactions of the local Muslim population, these official state-bureaucratic records were dynamically cross-referenced with early regional periodic literature and vernacular printed media. The central textual source for analyzing real-time socio-cultural commentary was the official newspaper *Turkiston viloyatining gazeti* (1870–1917). This was supplemented by early, highly influential Jadidist reformist publications, including *Sadoi Farg‘ona* (1914–1915) and *tiraj* broadsheets preserved within the highly restricted rare book collections and microfilmed archives of national libraries.

Furthermore, these historical materials were structurally synchronized with strategic contemporary digitization frameworks, metadata standards, and infrastructure analytical methodologies outlined by the Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Ministry of Digital Technologies, 2021). This alignment enables a comprehensive, long-term scientific comparative evaluation of how informational networks shape local society across radically different historical epochs.

2. Theoretical Taxonomy, Epistemological Framework, and Advanced Analytical Methods

The interpretative processing, qualitative synthesis, and conceptual coding of these diverse primary source metrics move far beyond simple description or linear chronology. Instead, the study is firmly anchored within the advanced epistemological doctrines of techno-social history, network sociology, and post-colonial text criticism (Jenkins, 2003). To ensure absolute analytical consistency and filter out colonial Eurocentric biases inherent in imperial data sets, the empirical material was processed utilizing several advanced, non-linear methodologies:

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- 1) The Advanced Techno-Cultural Contextual Method: This highly specialized methodology was deployed to systematically track how physical, structural changes in communication speeds and postal routing directly altered human social behavior, daily reading habits, and the geographic distribution of literacy across the valley's rural-urban continuum. By converting geographic distance into chronological transmission time, this method uncovers the precise material conditions required for the emergence of modern public awareness, mapping how technical network expansions directly correlate with the growth of modern cultural centers (Fischer, 1992).
- 2) The Network-Sociology and Socio-Technical Approach: Moving away from classical interpretations of infrastructure as mere physical hardware or simple engineering utilities, this framework conceptualizes the post-telegraph apparatus as an active, independent socio-technical network. Drawing heavily on modern network theories, particularly Manuel Castells' conceptualization of the "network society," the post-telegraph system is analyzed as the foundational material infrastructure that allowed alternative intellectual spaces, cross-border social classes, and transnational imagined communities to form and thrive (Castells, 2000). This methodology treats information networks as active creators of fresh social relations.
- 3) Rigorous Historical Hermeneutics, Textual Deconstruction, and Internal Source Criticism: Given that official imperial statistics and reports regarding regional literacy rates, local message classifications, and cultural activities were frequently compiled under strict political biases and colonial assumptions, a strict external and internal criticism of texts was implemented. Following the foundational tenets of historical source deconstruction established by the Annales School, imperial data points were cross-examined against private indigenous letters, local printing press diaries, and independent reformist accounts (Bloch, 1953). This specialized textual filtering successfully exposes how local populations subverted, adapted, and re-engineered the imperial post-telegraph

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infrastructure to serve their own socio-educational advancement, national enlightenment agendas, and political preservation efforts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Proliferation of Print Culture: Postal Networks and the Velocity of the Periodic Press

The structural, logistics-driven expansion of standardized post-telegraph corridors across the complex urban-rural continuum of the Fergana Valley during the late XIX and early XX centuries functioned as the primary physical catalyst for the rapid democratization, socio-spatial distribution, and quantitative expansion of vernacular print culture. Prior to this monumental infrastructural transformation, the circulation of independent books, educational lithographed manuscripts, and early informational broadsheets was completely dependent on irregular, seasonal, and highly insecure merchant caravans. This archaic logistical paradigm structurally and intellectually isolated the general indigenous population from both continental and regional modernization trends, keeping communities bound within highly restricted, localized oral information ecosystems. The institutionalization of a centralized, highly reliable postal transport network, which operated strictly under the regulatory guidelines of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), fundamentally corrected this historic informational lag and spatial asymmetry (Noam, 1992).

Granular, descriptive archival indicators extracted from Fond I-126 (Turkestan Post and Telegraph District) reveal that by the first decade of the XX century, the overall volume of periodic newspapers, scientific journals, and socio-political literature legally entering the Fergana region via official state-administered postal nodes experienced a massive expansion, increasing by over 300 percent (National Archives of Uzbekistan [NAU], I-126). This highly synchronized infrastructural network permanently altered the internal spatial dynamics and sociology of reading. Major regional urban hubs, most notably Kokand and Andijan, rapidly

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transformed into dominant regional distribution networks. These stations received bulk, daily shipments of highly influential, progressive publications not only from imperial metropolitan printing centers such as Saint Petersburg, Kazan, and Orenburg, but also directly from transnational intellectual capitals of the Islamic world, including Istanbul, Baku, and Cairo.

The imperial postal apparatus, despite its original military surveillance intents, inadvertently enabled the systematic, rapid transport of these texts to newly established public libraries (*kutubxona*) and localized, independent reading rooms (*qiroatxona*) across the valley (NAU, I-19). The near-instantaneous availability of current print media introduced a radically fresh, unprecedented cognitive habit among both the urban merchant class and the agrarian population: the consumption of real-time, globally synchronized socio-political news.

Viewed through the theoretical lens of Benedict Anderson's framework on modern nationalism, this technical velocity transformed reading from an isolated, deeply traditional, and elite religious ritual into a highly collective, secularized social practice (Anderson, 1983). It became a ubiquitous socio-cultural phenomenon for a single literate individual to read aloud the freshly delivered weekly vernacular newspaper to large, diverse gatherings of citizens at local teahouses (*choyxona*). This collective absorption effectively forged a shared, modernized socio-political consciousness and an early form of public opinion across the entire Fergana Valley (Headrick, 2000).

2. Intellectual Networking: The Post-Telegraph System as the Neurological Infrastructure of Jadidism

The historical rise, organizational mobilization, and rapid intellectual expansion of the Jadid reformist movement within the socio-political landscape of the Fergana Valley were deeply and structurally dependent on the continuous physical availability of the post-telegraph infrastructure. The progressive Jadidist elite—most prominently represented by visionary local intellectuals such as Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy, Ibodullo Asadullaxo'jayev, and Ashurali Zohiriy—

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clearly recognized that to effectively challenge traditional scholastic stagnation, resist dark colonial administrative policies, and mobilize public awareness, they required a highly coordinated, resilient, and trans-regional communications network. The post-telegraph system provided these enlightenment scholars and reformist legal minds with the exact, highly efficient logistical tools necessary to execute their socio-educational campaigns and protect their institutional projects from sudden state suppression.

Primary confidential correspondences, intercepted letters, and targeted secret surveillance logs preserved within Fond I-1 (Chancellery of the Governor-General of Turkestan) explicitly demonstrate that the Jadid intelligentsia utilized the imperial telegraph and rapid postal delivery networks to form a highly sophisticated, multi-layered hidden network of intellectual and financial exchange (NAU, I-1). When systematically establishing newly budgeted modern schools (*usuli jadid*) or continuously coordinating the publication of reformist journals in Kokand, Marghilan, and Namangan, local progressive activists relied heavily on high-frequency telegraphic correspondence. This was done to swiftly synchronize diverse curriculum designs, securely transfer financial endowments (*vaqf*), and dynamically manage sensitive printing logistics with their reformist counterparties operating in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara.

The telegraphic grid enabled these regional reformists to completely bypass localized geographic boundaries and traditional administrative barriers, forming a tightly integrated, highly responsive intellectual community that operated as an early Central Asian public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Furthermore, when local progressive printing houses faced immediate threat of censorship, arbitrary fines, or physical seizure by the Tsarist provincial administration, the telegraph allowed Jadid lawyers, editors, and journalists to quickly alert national and international civil defense networks. This demonstrated a highly sophisticated, pragmatic operational mastery over early global telecommunication channels and legal protocols (Qosimov, 2025).

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3. Linguistic Adaptation and Cognitive Shift: The Formation of Modern Information Literacy

Beyond its undeniable macro-level impact on the expansion of print culture and the structural networking of the intellectual reformist elite, the day-to-day interactions of ordinary citizens with the post-telegraph service introduced profound cognitive shifts and forced permanent linguistic adaptations among the broader population of the Fergana region. The strict, unyielding structural requirement of interacting with a highly modern, westernized technical bureaucracy demanded the rapid acquisition of entirely new forms of social, cognitive, and linguistic literacy. Because the imperial post-telegraph administration operated strictly on rigid Western technical templates, standardized messaging protocols, specific character limits, and foreign linguistic constraints, the indigenous population was forced to quickly adapt their traditional, highly contextual communication habits to survive within this modern informational landscape.

This intense socio-technical pressure resulted in the rapid emergence of a unique, highly specialized caste of local indigenous intermediaries, legal scribes, translators, and native postal clerks who effectively bridged the gap between traditional Islamic societal norms and modern industrial communication technologies (Fischer, 1992). To successfully transmit a commercial or personal telegram, local citizens were structurally forced to convert complex, emotionally expressive, and highly detailed contextual thoughts into highly concise, linear, and rigidly standardized textual structures. This absolute conceptual and economic constraint triggered a massive cognitive shift toward logical abstraction, informational economy, and textual precision among the local users. Furthermore, specialized technical terms and Russified loanwords associated with telecommunications rapidly entered the everyday lexicon of the Uzbek language across the Fergana Valley, permanently altering the semantic and syntactic structures of colloquial speech. The physical, ubiquitous presence of the

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telegraph pole and the postal ledger in local rural villages functioned as a permanent, highly visible catalyst for the institutionalization of modern information literacy. It successfully trained ordinary citizens to view information not as a vague, fluid rumor, but as a precise, time-sensitive, and valuable asset that could be systematically encoded, transmitted across vast geographic spaces, and commercialized for social and political advancement (Castells, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive historical evaluation, multi-layered archival deconstruction, and techno-social contextual analysis of the post-telegraph system within the administrative borders of the Fergana region during the late XIX and early XX centuries provide a deeply paradigm-shifting framework for understanding how advanced communication infrastructure acts as a primary structural driver, systemic catalyst, and epistemic foundation for socio-cultural modernization and the creation of early information literacy. The vast body of primary archival evidence, meticulously reconstructed throughout this interdisciplinary research from the classified registers of the National Archives of Uzbekistan, systematically dismantles traditional linear historical narratives, leading instead to several definitive, historically grounded, and theoretically robust conclusions:

1. The Infrastructure of Modern Literacy and Spatial Democratization: The physical institutionalization and regulatory expansion of reliable, highly standardized postal distribution channels permanently and structurally shattered the historic geographical isolation and centuries-old cultural insularity of the Fergana Valley. By vastly accelerating the circulation velocity and spatial penetration of vernacular newspapers, scientific journals, educational textbooks, and trans-continental periodicals, the postal network effectively democratized access to objective external knowledge. This technical velocity successfully transformed the act of reading from an isolated, heavily guarded, and elitist religious ritual into a collective, secularized, and highly participatory social

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practice. This shift generated a progressive socio-political consciousness and established early modern public opinion spheres within the urban-rural networks of the valley.

2. The Neurological Support and Logistical Mobilization of Reformism: The localized post-telegraph matrix functioned not merely as a passive imperial utility, but as the absolute vital neurological infrastructure that enabled the organizational coordination, ideological survival, and institutional expansion of the Jadidist enlightenment and reformist movement. The telegraph wire provided regional progressive scholars with rapid, reliable, and legally protected communication channels that were essential to bypass traditional scholastic boundaries, easily synchronize alternative educational curricula, securely transfer multi-regional endowments, and establish a deeply connected transnational network of national awakening that fundamentally challenged both local conservatism and colonial stagnation.

3. Cognitive Re-engineering, Linguistic Adaptation, and Semiotic Shifts: The daily micro-level operational requirements of interacting with modern, highly formalized telecommunication protocols forced a profound, irreversible cognitive shift and semantic transformation among the broader population of the Fergana region. The absolute, economic necessity of compressing traditional, expressive communication styles into highly standardized, linear, and time-sensitive telegraphic texts effectively trained ordinary citizens in early forms of modern information literacy, logical abstraction, and informational economy. This socio-technical pressure altered the semantic structure, everyday lexicon, and syntactic habits of the Uzbek language, integrating permanent technological concepts into the regional cultural identity.

Ultimately, the complex socio-cultural evolution and structural modernization of the Fergana Valley's communicative matrix convincingly demonstrate that the systemic introduction of advanced telecommunication networks influences historical development far beyond the acceleration of commodity capital or the

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enforcement of imperial borders. It actively reconstructs the intellectual, cognitive, and linguistic architecture of traditional societies, transforming an insulated agrarian periphery into a dynamic, deeply conscious, and structurally integrated node within the emerging global information age.

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