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THE KUTAISI PROVINCE'S PENITENTIARY SYSTEM AND ITS ANALYSES BASED ON ANNUAL REPORTS

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Abstract

The article focuses the characteristics of the pre-revolutionary penitentiary system operating in the territory of the Kutaisi province in late 19–20th centuries. The specifics of the regional state and development of prison institutions is shown through the analysis of the Highest reports of the Kutaisi governors, reflected in the local press in the annual reviews of the Kutaisi province. The authors propose a detailed description of the quantitative composition of prisons and detention facilities at the end of the 19th century. There is a need to describe the problems associated with them, which prompted a review of both their quantitative and qualitative status at the beginning of the 20th century. The administrative transformations of the current penitentiary system in the region were studied along with the reform of law enforcement agencies. The article mainly discusses the description of the situation of prisoners detained in Kutaisi province; measures taken by local authorities to improve their life and the indifferent attitude of public institutions in the person of the provincial prison committee. There are sanitary and hygienic conditions of prisoners and an overview of the medical facilities located at the provincial prisons presented. The article presents an analysis of measures taken by the prison administration to re-educate convicts and return them to normal life in society through active work in multidisciplinary workshops created at prisons. The church has made a big peace building work through the clergy always ready to help.

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Keywords: Penitentiary system, Russian Empire, Kutaisi province.



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1. Introduction

The topic of the study remains one of the most important and relevant issues within the historical and legal past and the current state of law enforcement agencies while improving both Russian legislation and the activities of legal institutions. The penitentiary system can be considered in its diversity, as a mirror of the country's socio-political side, the level of the crime situation and the attitude of the authorities and society towards stumbled citizens from the point of humanism and their return to the civil society.

2. Problem Statement

The article suggests to review the reports of the governors to the emperor and analyze its diversity. On the one hand, it is an analytical document characterizing the state in a particular year of a certain area of life or institutions, in this case, the penitentiary system, and, on the other hand, “living evidence of the era”, which allows us to trace the active participation of authorities and society in the development of these institutes.

Nowadays both historians and lawyers studying general issues of their development and regional features are interested to study this approach (Khabriev et al., 2017; Ryazanov, 2017). However, there is no comprehensive studies carried in the context of prison in the highest reports in the Kutaisi province with its multinational population.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the research analysis of the main reports of late 1880s in the Kutaisi province. The study presents the specifics of the penitentiary system, its structure and features of functioning before the First World War.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to introduce into the scientific circulation an informative component, particularly, the content and static information of the main reports. The reports are partially reflected in the published annual reviews of the Kutaisi province and describe the state and development of local prisons.

5. Research Methods

The basic sources were published in the pre-revolutionary local press called ‘Reviews of the Kutaisi province’ in the late 19th century before the World War I. The main principle of conducting the research methods was the principle of historicism. At the same time, the study was conducted according to historical-legal, comparative-legal, problem-chronological, retrospective, quantitative methods which lead to the positive results. The analytical method contributed to a comprehensive review of regulatory acts of the era. The statistical and quantitative methods helped to present and analyze the penitentiary problems and the solution applied by the governor and departmental institutions.

6. Findings

Emperor Alexander III introduced amendments to the current prison legislation of the Russian Empire on June 15, 1887. This became one of the key papers of the late 19th century. The Regulation on the Organization of Controls of Separate Detention Centers of the Civil Department and the Prison Guard the Kutaisi governor's report for this year describes major prisons located in Kutaisi, Batumi, Potiisky, Zugdidi (RegDept, 1888).

At the same time, the Kutaisi prison was overcrowded with prisoners twice. Despite the fact of the space for 100-120 people, the prison had to imprison 348 people by January 1 of the next 1888. The prisoners suffer from different illnesses because of hygienic and sanitary conditions, lack of the indoor air content (on average less than 1 cubic meter of fathoms or 2 m³ per person). The number of prisoners suffering from malaria is 230 people, diseases of the digestive organs – 182 people, respiratory organs – 69 people, as for other infections – 93 people.

The sanitary situation in the city of Batumi, recognized as generally unsatisfactory was even worse: except overcrowding of the buildings, the rooms are too damp to be in. As a result, there were 50 prisoners out of 179 cases, sent for treatment to the Batumi Military Hospital. The local doctor in prison could no longer cope independently with the treatment of his outpatient wards.

Things were no better in the Poti prison, which is a small one-stored building, damp inside, with musty air in the interior rooms and insufficient lighting necessary for the convicts.

This building of the Zugdidi County Prison is fenced with a stone wall and consists of 6 rooms only. There are up to 35 prisoners living in the reporting year with an air volume in the premises of 2.8 m³ per person.

There were other places of detention in much worse sanitary conditions located in the Ozurgeti district – the villages of Ozurgeti and Chekhatauri; Kutaisi County – Khoni; in Senak district – Novo-Senaki; in the Shoropansky district – Kvirily and Sahcheri; in Rachinsky district – They; in Lehchum Uyezd – Tsageri and Becho; in Sukhumi district – Ochemcheri and the city of Sukhum itself. There were no hospital conditions created in these places of detention, and some of them lack district doctors and paramedics who could provide first aid.

The 1890s seems to be better when a part of the Kutaisi prison was rebuilt, as a result of which the new cells became large, bright and easily ventilated, and later in 1893 the prison expanded its space for 200 people. There were bathhouse and an infirmary built at the prison as well as rooms for a tailor, shoe and bookbinding workshop was tripled for the occupation of prisoners. In the same years, the prison was given a new name 'Kutaisi prison castle' due to the appearance of a separate Kutaisi prison for briefly arrested judges of the peace. There have been some attempts to build a separate women's prison.

At the same time, the same Batumi (for 80 people) and Poti (for 35 people) prisons would reach their aims to reconstruction unless the problem of the overcrowdings. The first building was located in a special building built by a private person, and the second – in a private house. The private house was a building of the Zugdidi prison. Moreover, in the prisons of Batumi and Poti, hospitals still would operate on 12 and 4 beds, respectively, which were managed by city doctors (the hospital at the Kutaisi prison castle could accommodate up to 20 prisoners at the end of the 19th century, and in the early 20th century – up to 30 people).

In 1890, the Sukhumi prison was also rebuilt with a capacity of up to 30–35 people, which almost housed twice larger number of prisoners. At the same time, the Sukhumi prison, like the Kutaisi prison castle was located in government buildings.

The prison in Novo-Senaki had some difficulties: the building was private, but later it was transferred to the "Zemstvo staged building". The building had no good fencing, which could not prevent prisoners escapes.

The rest of the places of detention located in Ozurgeti, Gudauta, Kviril and other settlements of the Kutaisi province, representing prison houses for people sentenced by magistrates, were hired from Zemstvo. However, they also served for the temporary placement of prisoners during their transportation to the main provincial prisons of Kutais, Batumi, Poti and Sukhum.

Some of them, at the request of the Kutaisi governor of 1893, were awaiting their transfer from the status of detention facilities to county jails. Due to the fact that they had been guarding prisoners for more than 10 years, not by police officers, but by a military guard, on April 18, 1894, the Provincial Government decided: to recognize 6 prison facilities in Kviril, Senaki, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Tsagery and another 7th extra in Khoni county prisons. On May 23, 1894, this resolution was sent to the Office of the Chief of the Civil Unit in the Caucasus. Then, from year to year, the first 6 detention facilities in the reports were separated from the remaining 6 detention facilities located at the local police departments. On April 10, 1901, the Kutaisi military governor submitted to the Main Prison Directorate of the Russian Empire ideas for improving the existing structure of provincial prisons and detention facilities. Later they weren't developed as well.

The role of the local authorities of the prison guardianship society remains one of the important issue – the Kutaisi provincial trusteeship committee for prisons and its departments in Sukhum, Batum and Poti. The committee was established in 1869, and its departments – in 1885. The complex of measures taken by them was aimed at improving the life of prisoners and preventing diseases in there. The Committee's activities included the delivery of products for prisoners of the Kutaisi prison castle, the purification and delivery of water, and the procurement of materials for sewing workshops for prisoners. The functional duties of the department directors included monitoring the cleanliness of the prison premises, purchasing food products, setting up workshops and organizing spiritual and moral conversations for prisoners.

Regarding their active work towards the late 19th century the specialization of the workshops created in prisons has expanded significantly: weaving, shoe, tailoring, carpentry, box and bookbinding workshops operated, and even at Kutaisi Prison, its own bakery was opened from January 1, 1900, which reduced the cost of bread purchased for prisoners by 20 %. Another positive result of her work was the reduce of complaints as they began to meet the sanitary requirements of the medical staff of the prison castle. Unfortunately, part of the workshops later closed because of their unprofitability (termination of orders) or lack of appropriate specialists among prisoners.

The following improvements of the Kutaisi prison were made with the economic resources of the Prison Committee in 1900: electric bells were adapted to connect the office with the prison corridor, the hospital ward and the caretaker's apartment, and a garden was built on the prison's territory. The territories of other prisons were not allowed to apply this experiment, except the Sukhumi prison

occupying the necessary area for the garden, but its soil turned out to be sandy and rocky that all attempts to set up the garden failed.

Returning to the activities of the main 4 prisons of the province, it is worthwhile to dwell separately on the reasons for their congestion indicated in the highest reports (as can be seen from the reviews (RegDept, 1897) presented in table 01):

- due to the transfer from districts at the end of the judicial investigation of all the more important prisoners to Kutaisi prison castle, as the central and most suitable for preventing escapes;
- due to the large concentration of exiled and transit prisoners in the Batumi prison, the building for which was hired in 1881, when the movement of prisoners from the internal regions and provinces of Russia to the Caucasus and back was much smaller;
- due to the overflow of the Sukhumi prison mainly by prisoners from local residents of the Sukhumi district, the number of which was almost 3 times the capacity of the local prison (some of them were later transferred to Poti and Kutaisi prisons, making their work more difficult).

Important to note the fact that a significant increase in crime in the Sukhumi district prompted local authorities to develop a project to increase the number of prisoners in it up to 100 people. However, no major changes occurred, which led, for example, in 1900 to the fact that prisoners had to be placed even along the corridors. In 1901 to prevent diseases among prisoners by order of the Sukhumi department The Prison Committee and increase from its means from June 15 to September 15 tea allowance up to 3 times a day (Yakovleva & Malchuk, 2017).

Table 01. Number of people registered in prisons and detention facilities of the Kutaisi province in 19-20th centuries

Date	In prison		Entered		Left the prison		Stay after	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1887	570		3304	44	3306	38	566	
1892	588	10	2820	59	2864	60	544	9
1897	714	13	4946	52	4784	52	876	13
1902	573	9	7853	71	7847	74	579	6
1907	779*	3*	7457	65	6859	52	1377	16
1912	1377	21	5678	129	5658	123	1397	26

*Data are given only for prisons in the province, excluding arrest. Premises.

There are changes are taking place in the structure of the penitentiary system of the Kutaisi province: prison houses in the villages of Baghdadi, Ochemchira, Chokhatauri and Naogalevi were abolished on the basis of the order of the Chief Civilian in the Caucasus, and only detention facilities were kept in these places at the apartments of district police officers. They were kept at the expense of them apartment amounts.

The activities of the Russian Orthodox Church is considered important. The Kutaisi prison had the only separate church conducting services with moral impact and aimed at re-educating prisoners. Batumi prison was visited once a week by the deacon of the local cathedral, Sukhumi was appointed local priest

by appointment of the bishop of the Sukhumi diocese, and prison priests in Poti were priests of the cathedral.

Following the secession of parts of districts from the Kutaisi province in 1903, both Batumi and Sukhumi prisons became a part of the appropriate institutions. Two prisons remained in the Kutaisi governorate in Kutais and Poti, as well as prison houses at the county police departments in Ozurgeti, the villages of Novo-Senaki, Zugdida, Oni and Tsageri, the apartments of police officers in Sakhcheri, Khoni and Becho (Uzak, 1887).

In November 1907 there was a temporary room rent for the Kutaisi prison by the governor in the Caucasus. It complied some of the prisoners transferred from the main room.

According to the law signed on May 9, 1911, there occurred another transformation of the Prison Administration of the Transcaucasian Territory. By the last pre-war period of 1913, there were 6 prisons in the Kutaisi province: Kutaisi, Potiysky, Zugdidi, Senaki, Ozurgeti and Kvirilskaya and 4 arrest rooms: Oniysky, Khonsky, Sachkhersky and Tsagersky. Kutaisi prison was located in a government building and two offices in hired buildings; Poti prison – in the hired building of the Poti society of mutual credit from zemstvo funds; Zugdidi prison – in a government building (for 12 years from January 1, 1910); Ozurgeti prison – in a hired building (for 12 years from January 1, 1907); Quiril prison – in a hired building (for 12 years from January 1, 1908).

7. Conclusion

The annual highest reports of governors is considered a unique historical source in the study of the pre-revolutionary socio-political and economic life in the Russian province. As mentioned above, they allowed us to get a detailed idea of the Russian Empire administrative-territorial formations in the context of the main areas of state and public activity. Thus, the source helped the researcher to see and analyze the specifics of the region.

The section analyses of social life in the province presents the moral side of the local population, as well as the specific activity of certain structures of the Russian law enforcement system, particularly, the penitentiary system in Kutaisi province in 19–20th centuries. In fact, according to the study results the state of prisons and the number of prisoners helps to describe the criminal situation and the policies of the central and local authorities to reduce and normalize them in a particular region.

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