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Alikhan Bukeikhan's Activities in the West Siberian Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society

Makhabbat M. Kozybayeva ^{a, *}, Sultan Khan A. Zhussip ^a, Khalil B. Maslov ^a, Ilkhomjon M. Saidov ^b

^a L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

^b Sh. Rashidov Samarkand City University, Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract

The article is devoted to a comprehensive study of the scientific activities of Alikhan Bukeikhan as a member of the West Siberian Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. The article examines the contribution of Alikhan Bukeikhan to the collection and systematization of data on the Kazakh people, which formed the theoretical basis for fundamental studies of the Kazakh cultural and social identity, identified during participation in scientific expeditions aimed at studying Kazakhstan, its economy, ethnography and geography. The article examines the scientific approach of Alikhan Bukeikhan to issues of territorial distribution, agriculture and ethnography of the Kazakh people, shows a fundamental position on the issue of preventing uncontrolled colonization of the Steppe region through the construction of railways. The authors note that as part of his activities in the geographical society, Alikhan Bukeikhan left a rich scientific heritage, which was represented by many scientific articles, points and notes on the history, ethnography, agriculture, animal husbandry of Kazakhstan and other branches of knowledge. Bukeikhan not only actively participated in expeditions, but also contributed to the integration of the Kazakh people into the scientific community, drawing attention to issues of their social and economic status. Despite the difficult political conditions of that time, Alikhan Bukeikhan continued to fight for the rights of his people, using scientific methods to substantiate his position. As a result, the authors come to the conclusion that with his scientific research, Alikhan Bukeikhan made an important contribution to understanding the specifics of the Kazakh people's economy, the historical, cultural and geographical study of the Kazakh steppe.

Keywords: Alikhan Bukeikhan, geographical society, Western Siberia, Steppe region, colonization, scientific expeditions, statistical surveys, Kazakh society, nomadic economy, cattle breeding.

1. Introduction

Today, a comprehensive study of the scientific research heritage of the leader of the national movement Alash Alikhan Bukeikhan is of great relevance. In turn, one of the brightest and most important pages in the life and work of A. Bukeikhan is his scientific activity as a member of the West Siberian Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (hereinafter referred to as WSO IRGS). In his activities, Alikhan Bukeikhan not only actively studied the natural and socio-economic aspects of the Kazakh steppe, but also directly participated in the formation of a scientific approach to the development of Kazakhstan in the context of the Russian Empire.

A study of the activities of Alikhan Bukeikhan in the ranks of the geographical society allows us to reveal his role as a scientist and public figure who, despite the difficult socio-political situation of that time, sought to improve the situation of the Kazakh people and ensure them a worthy place in the Russian colonial system. In the context of modern challenges, such as the preservation of cultural and historical heritage,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: koz.mahabbat_85@mail.ru (M.M. Kozybayeva), prahacz2002@gmail.com (S.A. Zhussip), khalil.maslov@mail.ru (Kh.B. Maslov), saiodovilhomjon@samdu.uz (I.M. Saidov)

as well as the search for sustainable development, the study of this research issue helps not only to better understand the past, but also to identify modern trends in the development of science in Kazakhstan to solve modern problems in the field of environmental and economic development of the country.

2. Materials and methods

A wide range of materials and methods was used in preparing the article. In particular, materials from the collections of the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation), the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg (Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation), the Historical Archive of Omsk Oblast (Omsk, Russian Federation), etc. were used as historical sources. Valuable sources on the topic of the research are also materials from regional periodicals, such newspapers as "Sibirsky Vestnik" (Siberian Herald) (Tomsk, 1885–1906), "Stepnoi Krai" (Steppe Region) (Omsk, 1893–1905), "Nasha Zhizn'" (Our Life) (Saint Petersburg, 1904–1906), "Turkestanskije Vedomosti" (Turkestan Vedomosti) (Tashkent, 1870–1917), materials from the WSO IRGS, as well as memoirs of contemporaries. In the context of studying the scientific activity of A. Bukeikhan, his scientific works on geography, ethnography and culture of the Kazakh people, published in scientific journals and reports of the Geographical Society, are of great interest.

During the study, methods of documentary analysis and interpretation of sources, content analysis, as well as special historical methods were used. These materials and methods helped to fully explore the contribution of Alikhan Bukeikhan to the development of geographical science, his scientific achievements and contribution to the study of Kazakhstan in the ranks of the WSO IRGS.

3. Discussion

The scientific activity of A.N. Bukeikhan was not the subject of a separate study, but was studied in the works of a number of Kazakh and foreign researchers in the context of studying the Alash national movement. In this regard, the works of Kazakh authors K. Nurpeisov ([Nurpeisov, 1995](#)), D. Kamzabekuly ([Kamzabekuly, 2002](#)), M. Asylbekov and E. Seitov ([Asylbekov, Seitov, 2003](#)), M. Koygeldiev ([Koygeldiev, 2008](#)), T. Zhurtbay ([Zhurtbay, 2008](#)), S. Akkuly ([Akkuly, 2017](#)) and others should be especially highlighted. The contribution of Alikhan Bukeikhanov to the scientific study of Kazakhstan was investigated by S.D. Shaimukhanova, Zh.S. Erdenbekova, B. Muratbekkyzy ([Shaimukhanova et al., 2016](#)). The scientific activities of A.N. Bukeikhan were not ignored by researchers from near and far abroad, such as D. Amanzholova ([Amanzholova, 2009](#)), V. Shishkin ([Shishkin, 2009](#)), M. Shilovskii ([Shilovskii, 2017](#)), V. Kozodoy ([Kozodoy, 2021](#)), S.R. Sarmanova ([Sarmanova et al., 2022](#)), M.B. Olcott ([Olcott, 1987](#)), A. Bennigsen ([Bennigsen, 1986](#)), scholars of the Central Asian Studies Society of Oxford University ([Kazakhs..., 1985](#)) and others.

The activities of the WSO IRGS in the context of its contribution to the scientific study of the Steppe Region and Kazakhstan as a whole in the late 19th – early 20th centuries were studied by such authors as A.E. Plotnikov ([Plotnikov, 1994](#)), Yu.R. Gorelova ([Gorelova, 2003](#)), A.P. Tolochko ([Tolochko, 2003](#)), R.S. Buktugutova ([Buktugutova, 2007](#)), V.A. Skopa ([Skopa, 2015](#)), S.A. Abselemov ([Abselemov, 2018](#)) and others. These works reveal various aspects of the participation of representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the ranks of the geographical society, and assess their scientific contribution to the study of the Kazakh steppe.

Of great importance in the study of the scientific heritage of Alikhan Bukeikhan are the published collections of archival documents and materials. In this context, of great interest is the documentary collection of works by Alikhan Bukeikhan in 15 volumes, which includes archival documents, his articles, scientific research, materials of expeditions, letters, which is the first most complete collection of works of the Kazakh national leader ([Bukeikhan, 2016](#)).

4. Results

One of the little-studied pages in the biography of the leader of the Kazakh national liberation movement, Alikhan Nurmukhameduly Bukeikhan (1866–1937), is his research activities in the ranks of the WSO IRGS, which falls on the Omsk period of his life from 1895 to 1908.

A.N. Bukeikhan's interest in the scientific study of the Kazakh steppe manifested itself during his studies at the Omsk Technical School in 1886–1890, which resulted in his scientific article "On agriculture in the Tokraun, Kotan-Bulak and West-Balkhash volosts of the Karkaraly district", published in 1889 ([A.N., 1889](#)). This scientific work served as the basis for A.N. Bukeikhan's referral in 1890 to continue his studies at the St. Petersburg Imperial Forestry Institute. In connection with this, the director of the school N.E. Dobrokhotoy addressed a petition to the Karkaraly district chief, where he asked to continue issuing a stipend of 200 rubles from Kazakh societies to the student Nurmukhamedov and petitioned for his admission to a higher educational institution ([IAOO. F. 43. Op. 1. D. 942. L. 15](#)).

During his studies in Omsk and St. Petersburg, Alikhan Bukeikhan established contacts with such outstanding Russian scholars as G. Potanin, S. Shvetsov, V. Bartold and V. Radlov. In addition to excellent knowledge of the main subjects, he also studied Western philosophy, Russian classics and jurisprudence. Bukeikhan translated into Kazakh the philosophical reflections of L. Tolstoy, whom he called "the last

prophet", and corresponded with the writer V. Korolenko. In 1894, he successfully passed the exams and received a diploma, according to which he was "awarded the title of a second-class scientist forester with all the rights and benefits of actual students of Russian universities" (TsGIA SPb. F. 994. Op. 4. D. 910. L. 33).

After graduating from the Forestry Institute (St. Petersburg), from September 1894 to February 1895 he worked as part of the so-called "Tobolsk Expedition," which investigated the situation of settlers in the Yalutarsky District of the Tobolsk Governorate (Novyy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', 1912: 452; Kazakhs, 1985: 15; Shvetsov, 1930: 110). Then, in September 1895, A.N. Bukeikhan went to Omsk. Bukeikhan was brought by another expedition, equipped to study the situation of settlers in the steppe regions by order of the owner of the Kyshtym factories in the Urals, a certain Polovtsev (Shvetsov, 1930: 110). However, after an unsuccessful attempt to get a job in one of the settler parties in the Steppe Region, he submitted a petition to the director of the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property, in which he expressed a desire to join the forestry department. Thus began his career in Omsk with the position of assistant forester of the Omsk forestry department of the Akmola region – teacher of the forestry school (RGIA. F. 387. Op. 24. D. 1307. L. 51).

From this time onwards, his activities in the WSD IRGS began. From that time on, his activities in began. As is known, this department was formed on June 30 (July 12), 1877, on the initiative of the Governor-General of Western Siberia N.G. Kaznakov, based on the Society for the Study of the Siberian Region. The department's tasks included a comprehensive historical and geographical study of Western Siberia and the adjacent regions of the Steppe Region (Buktugutova, 2007: 84-88). Over the years, such outstanding researchers of Siberia and the Kazakh Steppe Region as K.A. Verner, K.P. Gorshenin, P.L. Dravert, G.N. Potanin, T.I. Sedelnikov, M.A. Usov, I.N. Shukhov, N.M. Yadrintsev and others.

Alikhan Bukeikhan actively participated in the activities of the department, including at meetings of the general meeting of members, where issues of construction of the Omsk-Tashkent railway were considered for the purpose of further colonization of the Steppe region. Today, it is little known that the construction of the once famous Turkestan-Siberian Railway (Turksib), built in 1926–1931 to connect Central Asia with Siberia, was planned back in the mid-1890s under Tsarist Russia. It is important to emphasize that such an idea arose in connection with the adoption of temporary regulations on governance in the Semirechye and Syr Darya regions (1867) and in the steppe regions of the Orenburg and West Siberian Governorate General (1868), according to which all originally Kazakh territories were recognized as "the property of the Russian treasury."

Thus, one of the Omsk-Tashkent projects, as the most convenient and therefore the most probable, arose immediately after the commissioning of the Kurgan-Omsk section of the West Siberian Railway in 1894. On the initiative of Prince Nikolai Ignatiev, president of the Society for the Promotion of Russian Industry and Trade, the idea of building a highway was first discussed in St. Petersburg in December 1895, where, according to its author K.N. Mikhailov, it found general approval. Then, at the personal request of the chairman of the West Siberian Railway General G. Katanaev, on January 30, 1896, the same K.N. Mikhailov made a report "on connecting Omsk with Tashkent by rail, in the direction of the Kuucheku (Kushoky) coal deposits, from there along the Karkaralinsky district to the western shore of Lake Balkhash and further across the river. Chu and Tashkent already at the meeting of the members of the WSD IRGS in Omsk (Bukeikhan, 2016: 107).

Judging by the publication of the minutes of this meeting of the WSD IRGS in the periodical press, the construction of the Omsk-Tashkent highway was given strategic importance. We emphasize that the publication of the minutes of the meetings of the WSD IRGS in the press had never been practiced before this case. Reports on the activities of the department were regularly published in Izvestia and Zapiski of the WSD IRGS, occasionally - as a separate brochure. But this time the tradition was broken – the report of the meeting of January 30, 1896 was published in three February issues of the newspaper "Stepnoi Krai" under the title "Meeting of the members of the West Siberian Department of the Geographical Society" (No. 10, 12, 14), as well as in the April issues of the newspaper "Sibirsky Vestnik" (No. 88, 89).

In his report, K.N. Mikhailov reported that the issue of building a railway to Turkestan had been raised more than once. A total of three similar projects had been proposed. The first project proposed extending the main line from Chelyabinsk through the Turgai region, a distance of 1,720 versts; the second route – from Petropavlovsk to Kokchetav, Atbasar, through the Golodnaya Steppe, to Chimkent and Tashkent, a distance of 1,475 versts; and the third – "from Omsk straight to the south, through the Kuu-cheku (Kushoky – Auth.) tract in the Karkaraly district (Semipalatinsk region), along the western side of Lake Balkhash and further to Tashkent" (Stepnoi krai, 1896: 3-4). In his report, K.N. Mikhailov also outlined the main strategic goal of the construction of the Omsk-Tashkent highway: "With the construction of a railway here, not only would mining develop rapidly, but the colonization of the region would also quickly move forward" (Stepnoi krai, 1896a: 3-4).

K.N. Mikhailov's report was accompanied by lengthy debates, in which the active members of the WSD IRGS participated, including scientists Schmidt, Morozov, Korolev and others (Stepnoi krai, 1896b: 1-2). A. Bukeikhan also spoke in the debates on the report "with his authoritative reports and information about the nature of the Karkaraly district, due to which the railway for the population of the Kazakh steppe could be a destroyer of the people's well-being..." (Korrespondentsiya..., 1896: 3). He argued that the railway, while

raising local industry, could simultaneously ruin the population. At the same time, foreseeing the negative consequences of a new wave of colonization after the construction of the railway, he tried in every way to reduce the attractiveness of the region, noting that "on the western shore of Lake Balkhash known to him there is no life, where in the summer only lizards and other reptiles raise columns of dust in search of water" (*Korrespondentsiya...*, 1896a: 3). Under pressure from opponents, the author of the project was forced to agree with many arguments, in connection with which A. Bukeikhan noted: "We have just heard from the speaker a thorough criticism of the routes: Chelyabinsk – Tashkent and Petropavlovsk – Tashkent. Now from the debate it became clear that the Omsk – Tashkent route, as the speaker himself repeatedly agreed with his opponents, is just as useless!" (*Bukeikhan*, 2016: 117-118).

Thus, the closure of the Omsk-Tashkent project, with the active assistance of Alikhan Bukeikhan, stopped the wave of resettlement colonization and settlement of the land of Kazakhstan by landless peasants from the internal provinces of Russia, resumed after the October Revolution. It is important to emphasize that later, when defining the borders of Kazakhstan and the RSFSR, the leaders of the Soviet government put at the forefront not the belonging of certain territories to the Kazakh people from a historical point of view, but the ratio of the ethnic composition of the population at that time, that is, they took advantage of the "fruits" of that very resettlement colonization of the tsarist regime. What dividends the Siberian Railway alone brought to colonial Russia are evidenced by two historical facts. One of them concerns the history of the settlement of the Omsk district of the Akmola region, now the Omsk region of the Russian Federation, by settlers, the second - the Kustanai and Aktobe districts of the Turgai region, or the Kustanai and Aktobe regions of independent Kazakhstan.

In September 1896, Alikhan Bukeikhan was elected as a full member of the WSD IRGS in Omsk, and already in the following year, 1897, he was invited to work on an expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property (hereinafter referred to as MASP) (*Nasha zhizn'*, 1906: 3). According to the letter of the manager of the MASP office dated May 30, 1897, A. Bukeikhan was "assigned to the Ministry on May 29, remaining in the forestry corps and assigned to the head of the expedition for natural history and economic statistics research of the steppe regions" (*RGIA. F. 387. Op. 24. D. 1307. L. 36-36ob.*). According to the testimony of statistician Lev Karlovich Chermak, another member of Shcherbina's expedition, "when the expedition for the study of the Steppe regions was organized, he took an active part in its work and, having received leave, went to research in the steppe, and then left the service in the Forestry Department and devoted himself entirely to the work of collecting materials on the Kyrgyz economy, and then to their processing" (*RGALI. F. 1337. Op. 2. D. 67. L. 83-85*).

For his work as part of the Shcherbina expedition in 1897-1901, Alikhan Bukeikhan received high praise from the famous Russian scientist S.P. Shvetsov. He noted the high quality of the work produced by A. Bukeikhan in the expedition, which demonstrated deep knowledge and understanding of the Kazakh economy, objectivity and the ability to critically evaluate complex phenomena of the Kazakh economy (*Shvetsov*, 1930). In addition to surveying the Kazakh economy, he took part in the analysis and development of the collected statistical material. The Shcherbina expedition laid the first foundations for a systematic study of the nature of Kazakhstan from the point of view of the national economy, and in this regard, A.N. Bukeikhan occupies one of the honorable places. In addition, A.N. Bukeikhan was the first to develop materials on the history of the land community, which was first systematically studied by the Shcherbina expedition.

After Shcherbina's expedition, in 1902-1903 A. Bukeikhan took part in a statistical and economic study of Kazakh livestock farming in the area of the western section of the Siberian Railway from Chelyabinsk to Tomsk under the leadership of S.P. Shvetsov. Based on the results of the research, he published fundamental scientific articles on the specifics of Kazakh sheep and cattle breeding using cattle in the northern part of Kazakhstan as an example in two issues of a collection of materials on the economic survey of the areas of the Siberian Railway (*Bukeikhanov*, 1904, 1905).

The activities of A.N. Bukeikhan in the West Siberian Branch of the IRGO during the Omsk period of his life can be called multifaceted and very fruitful. He actively participated in department meetings, gave reports, participated in debates on reports of other researchers, compiled explanatory notes, and published in periodicals on issues, especially concerning the history, culture, and traditions of the Kazakh people, their national economy, nature, and climate of the Steppe region (*IAOO. F. 86. Op. 1. D. 77. L. 8, 85-86ob.*). He often published in periodicals with critical analyses of reports by various researchers of the Kazakh region (*Bukeikhanov*, 1896: 2; *V Zapadno-Sibirskom Otdel...*, 1897: 2-3).

From the works of A.N. In Bukeikhan's works on the history of the Kazakh people and their national statehood, it is worth noting the essay "Istoricheskiye sud'by Kirgizskago kraya i kul'turnyya yego uspekhi" (Historical destinies of the Kirghiz region and its cultural successes) (*Bukeikhanov et al.*, 1903: 156-175), the articles "Iz perepiski khana Sredney Kirgizskoy ordy Bukeya i yego potomkov" (From the correspondence of the Khan of the Middle Kirghiz Horde Bukey and his descendants) (*Bukeikhanov*, 1901a: 1-18), "Iz perepiski Kirgizskikh khanov, sultanov i pr. pr." (From the correspondence of Kyrgyz khans, sultans, etc.) (*Bukeikhanov*, 1901: 55-79), works on Kazakh folklore – "Zhenshchina po kirgizskoi byline "Koblandy" (A woman based on the Kyrgyz epic «Koblandy») (*Tuzemets*, 1899: 2-3), ethnography "O kirgizskikh pominkakh" (About the Kirghiz funeral feast) (*Bukeikhanov*, 1900, No. 7-8), economy "Svedeniya o kirgizskom khozyaystve Stepnogo kraya ot 15 yanvarya 1902 g." (Information on the Kirghiz economy of the

Steppe region from January 15, 1902) (Bukeikhanov, 1902), “Ob arychnom zemledelii u kirgiz Karkaralinskogo uyezda” (On irrigation ditch agriculture among the Kirghiz of the Karkaralinsky district) (Bukeikhanov, Chermak, 1903: 2), and many others. etc.

His election in 1901 as a member of the Administrative Committee of the WSD IRGS was an unconditional recognition of his multifaceted scientific activity in the study of history, economics, ethnography, folklore of the Kazakh people, the land, flora and fauna of Kazakhstan, another high assessment of his work as part of the Shcherbina expedition. He took part in the ceremonial meeting of the WSD IRGS on October 25, 1902 on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in the museum building in Omsk.

Since 1900, A.N. Bukeikhan combined his activities in the WSD IRGS with work in the Omsk department of the Imperial Moscow Society of Agriculture (hereinafter referred to as OD IMSA, or the Omsk department. – Auth.), acting as one of its founders and leaders. OD IMSA was established in November 1899 in Omsk on the initiative of a group of political exiles with K.A. Werner, headed by the local liberal intelligentsia, in the vanguard of which was Alikhan Bukeikhan. OD IMSA began its practical activities on November 24, 1900. The goal of the Omsk department was to promote the development of agriculture on cultural principles in Western Siberia and the Steppe region. In 1903, A.N. Bukeikhan published an obituary article in the report of the WSD IRGS for 1902 on the occasion of the untimely death of professor, one of the founders and head of the Omsk department of the IMSA K.A. Werner (Bukeikhanov, 1903: 36-39).

In 1902, A.N. Bukeikhan, being a member of the Administrative Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the IRGO, organized a congress of dairy farms and dairy industry figures, an exhibition of dairy products and dairy farming accessories at the Omsk Department of the IMSA (IAOO. F. 119. Op. 1. D. 9. L. 19-190b.). In 1904, Alikhan, as one of the leaders of the Omsk department, participated in the work of the Congress of Dairy and Livestock Farming Figures in Omsk. At the congress, he was elected to the presidium and delivered a detailed report on the problems of developing butter-making cooperatives among Kazakh cattle breeders and improving the breeds of Kazakh sheep, horses and cows. In addition, A.N. Bukeikhan contributed to the spread of dairy and butter production among the Kazakhs of the Akmola and Semipalatinsk regions, calling on them to unite into artels and cooperatives against unscrupulous entrepreneurs from among the rich Kazakh cattle breeders (Syn stepei, 1900: 4; Syn stepei, 1900a: 3). Materials on the activities of the Omsk department of the IMSA for 1905-1906 have not survived at all, having probably been destroyed during the reign of the reactionary government of P.A. Stolypin.

The revolutionary wave of 1905-1907 did not bypass the WSD IRGS and IMSA: they were included in the number of seditious organizations, some of their members were later expelled from the Steppe region. For example, Alikhan Bukeikhan was sentenced by the court of special presence of the St. Petersburg judicial chamber on charges of signing and distributing the Vyborg appeal in protest of the violent dissolution of the First State Duma in 1906 to 3 months in prison, but by order of the Steppe Governor-General I. Nadarov, he actually spent 8 months in the Semipalatinsk prison. After his release from prison, in order to avoid political exile, he was forced to leave his native Steppe region for St. Petersburg, and then for Samara. Thus ended his 13-year activity in the ranks of the WSD IRGS in Omsk. His last scientific works as a full member of the WSD IRGS were “Abay (Ibragim) Kunanbayev. Nekrolog” (Abay (Ibrahim) Kunanbayev. Obituary) (Bukeikhanov, 1907: 1-8), “Spisok obam na reke Slety v Korzhunkul'skoy volosti Akmolinskogo uyezda” (List of obams on the Sletya River in the Korzhunkul'skaya volost of the Akmola district) (Bukeikhanov, 1907a: 9-10) and others (Bukeikhanov, 1908: 46).

In general, Alikhan Bukeikhan's participation in the work of the West Siberian Department of the Geographic Society laid the foundations for his socio-political and scientific activities. During the turning points of the First World War and the Revolution, he, along with active political activity, continued to engage in research work on a systematic basis, devoting his works to the history, ethnography and literature of the Kazakh people (Kozybayeva et al., 2024: 1968).

5. Conclusion

Alikhan Bukeikhan's activities in the WSD IRGS played an important role in the study of Kazakhstan and its features, including ethnography, economy and natural resources. Bukeikhan not only actively participated in expeditions, but also contributed to the integration of the Kazakh people into the scientific community, drawing attention to issues of their social and economic situation. His works, including maps and reports, became the basis for further research and analysis. Despite the difficult political conditions of that time, Bukeikhan continued to fight for the rights of his people, using scientific methods to substantiate his position. Thus, his activities as part of the Geographical Society had a significant impact on the development of geographical and ethnographic science in Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as on public consciousness regarding nomadic peoples and their fate in the context of imperial policy.

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