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Statistical Expeditions of the Russian Empire and the Formation of the Source Base for the History of Kazakhstan: the Case of *Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*

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Abstract

This article presents a source-critical analysis of the multi-volume publication “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” as one of the key source complexes for the history of Kazakh society in the late XIX and early XX centuries. The study reveals the informational potential of this corpus, which reflects socio-economic development, forms of land use and economic activity, demographic conditions and the historical-geographical features of the settlement patterns of the Kazakh population. Particular attention is given to data on auls, uyezds and volosts of the Syr-Darya, Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural and Turgai oblasts, making it possible to identify regional differences and shared patterns in the development of traditional society during the transformations at the turn of the century.

It is demonstrated that the scholarly value of “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” is determined not only by the extensive territorial coverage and the diversity of the recorded data, but also by the methodological principles underlying their collection. The materials were obtained through specially organized statistical expeditions employing questionnaires, quantitative calculations, field observations and cartographic work, which ensured a high degree of systematicity and comparability of the information. The article notes that the data presented in the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” have been extensively employed by both national and international researchers and remain significant for current historical scholarship. It argues that a comprehensive application of this source enables the reconstruction of a well-grounded socio-economic and historical-geographical profile of Kazakh society in the late XIX and early XX centuries, while also contributing to a clearer understanding of the processes through which imperial knowledge was produced within the framework of colonial policy, administrative management, scientific activity and center-periphery relations in the Russian Empire during the period under study.

Keywords: Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use, source studies, Kazakh society, resettlement processes, imperial statistical expeditions, land use, socio-economic history, historical geography, colonial administration, Russian Empire.

1. Introduction

In the second half of the XIX century and the early XX century, Russian colonial expansion in Kazakhstan underwent a qualitatively distinct phase. In this timeframe, administrative reforms implemented by the tsarist government led to the de facto elimination of the political autonomy of the Kazakh people. Parallel to these transformations, a scientifically justified campaign was launched to expropriate Kazakh lands that were officially declared “surplus” and subsequently allocated to settler populations. Research initiatives carried out as part of the colonial agenda were most intensively implemented in several administrative regions, including the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural-Turgai, Syr-Darya and Semirechye oblasts. The empirical materials gathered across these territories were subsequently analyzed, organized and published under the title “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use...” (Tassilova, 2017: 10). An analysis of this corpus

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of sources as one of the most significant bodies of evidence for the history of Kazakhstan's colonization today offers broad opportunities for identifying and interpreting aspects of national history that remain insufficiently studied.

Prior to the activities of these statistical teams and research expeditions, no comparably large-scale or comprehensive scientific investigations had been carried out on the territory of Kazakhstan (Volkova, 1982: 4). Despite differences in territorial coverage and chronological scope, many scholars regard these expeditions as a single, integrated complex of research activities. As a result of their work, an extensive body of sources entitled "Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use" was produced, covering the period from 1898 to 1915 and comprising a total of 27 volumes.

This complex consists of 13 volumes compiled by the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina, 7 volumes produced by the statistical team of P.A. Skryplev and 7 volumes prepared by the team headed by P.A. Khvorostanskii. These materials were the outcome of a large-scale investigation that encompassed the territories of Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, Turgai and Syr-Darya oblasts, as well as the Fergana and Namangan oblasts, which were part of present-day Uzbekistan.

Individual volumes within the complex differ both in their chronological frameworks and territorial scope. Thus, the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina investigated Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk and Turgai oblasts between 1896 and 1903; the statistical team headed by P.A. Skryplev conducted research in the Syr-Darya oblast from 1906 to 1913; and the team led by P.A. Khvorostanskii worked in the Turgai and Ural oblasts between 1904 and 1912. An important characteristic of this source complex is that the collected materials were not published simultaneously. They appeared over different years, from 1898 to 1915, reflecting the phased nature and extended duration of the research activities.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. The empirical foundation of this study is based on materials issued between 1898 and 1915 as part of the multi-volume publication "Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use". This body of sources derives from a comprehensive and systematic statistical investigation of the territory of present-day Kazakhstan, carried out by multiple specialized expeditionary teams operating under the authority of the Russian Empire.

Materials from the holdings of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TsGA RK. F. 29. Op. 1. D. 13. L. 65) were widely used as the primary sources for this research. In particular, documents from the following archival fonds were introduced into scholarly circulation: № 362 "Administration of State Properties of the Syr-Darya Oblast", № 33 "Office of the Head of Resettlement Affairs in the Syr-Darya Oblast", № 8 "Administration of State Properties in the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk and Semirechye Oblasts (Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties)", № 501 "Akmolinsk-Semipalatinsk Administration of Agriculture and State Properties", № 317 "Office of the Head of Resettlement Affairs in Akmolinsk Uezd", № 469 "Office of the Head of Resettlement Affairs in Semipalatinsk Uezd", № 457 "Aktobe Uezd Resettlement Administration of the Turgai-Ural Resettlement District", № 184 "Office of the Head of Resettlement Affairs in Aulieata Uezd of the Syr-Darya Oblast", № 479 "Pavlodar Uezd Resettlement Administration", № 643 "Petropavlovsk Uezd Resettlement Administration", № 454 "Office of the Head of Resettlement Affairs in Chimkent Uezd of the Syr-Darya Resettlement District", № 29 "Administration of the Turgai-Ural Resettlement District", № 25 "Turgai Oblast Administration".

Documents from fonds №8, № 501, № 317, № 469, № 479 and № 643 are of particular significance, as they contain a substantial body of materials related to natural-historical studies conducted in Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk and Turgai oblasts. These sources enable a systematic analysis of data on the natural and geographical characteristics of the steppe regions, their botanical features, historical dynamics of development, demographic conditions and the ethnographic structure of the population (TsGA RK. F. 501. Op. 2. D. 33a. L. 14).

In addition, the above-mentioned fonds include valuable supplementary information on the composition, objectives and material support of the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina, as well as of the Ural-Turgai research team headed by P.A. Khvorostanskii. This significantly expands the possibilities for a comprehensive study of the history of scientific expeditions and the colonial policy of the Russian Empire in Kazakhstan.

2.2. The methodological approach employed in this study relies on the structured examination of documentary materials preserved in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, alongside multi-volume expeditionary compilations and published statistical and ethnographic sources reflecting the practices of the colonial administration. In the course of the comprehensive examination of archival sources, several methodological levels were employed in accordance with the objectives and tasks of the research.

First, the application of a system-based approach allowed for the identification of internal hierarchies within communication and administrative governance structures, as well as the clarification of their operational logic, socio-cultural differentiation and regional specificity. This approach allows imperial institutions of power to be examined as a multi-level and interconnected system.

To address the research objectives, general scientific methods were applied, including logical analysis and a structural-systemic approach, generalization, synthesis and interpretations of sources, also comparative analysis aimed at identifying interregional similarities and differences.

3. Discussion

“Materials of Kyrgyz Land Use” were published as the outcome of a comprehensive investigation carried out by a specialized research expedition focused on Kazakh society. For this reason, the discussion must begin with an analysis of the aims and historical prerequisites underlying the establishment of the scientific expeditions that enabled the compilation of this source base, together with the research methods they employed.

The prominent scholar of traditional Kazakh nomadic society, S.E. Tolybekov, made extensive use of the rich empirical data produced by these expeditions. He offered a high assessment of their scholarly value while explicitly articulating their underlying objectives. Tolybekov did not conceal the fact that the research was conducted in the interests of land expropriation for settler use and openly characterized the activities of the tsarist administration as colonial in nature. As he noted: “These expeditions were intended to identify the foundations and forms of Kazakh land use, to analyze the economic conditions necessary for the existence of an average household and to determine the standard of land provision for a typical Kazakh household in each region. Their purpose was to reveal surplus Kazakh lands in order to transfer them to the resettlement fund” (Tolybekov, 1959: 56).

Despite the availability of such explicit assessments, the true substance of the colonial policy pursued by the tsarist government has not yet been sufficiently examined or fully articulated in the scholarly literature. The present study seeks to address this gap through a focused analysis of these issues.

In domestic historical scholarship, research has largely emphasized that the resettlement policy pursued in Kazakh territories served as a key instrument of imperial colonization, aimed at weakening ethnic cohesion, advancing processes of russification and incorporating the region into the imperial economy as a supplier of raw materials. Although the colonization of Kazakhstan formed a general strategic objective of the Russian Empire, the practical realization of this policy differed across regions. Such differences were determined by local geographical settings, strategic priorities, demographic factors, transportation networks and the degree of resistance exhibited by local populations. Accordingly, the methods of colonization also differed.

The objective origins of the “Materials of Kyrgyz Land Use” are directly linked to the political situation of the late XIX and early XX centuries, and to the colonization of Kazakh lands through settler implementation. Research activities were undertaken precisely to identify “surplus” lands, which could then be withdrawn for resettlement purposes during this period.

In essence, the “Materials of Kyrgyz Land Use” represent a direct product of Russia’s colonial policy. The primary task of the research teams and scientific expeditions was to investigate the economic practices of the Kazakh population, to determine the extent of “excess” land, and to incorporate these territories into the resettlement fund for allocation to incoming settlers. Through this mechanism, the tsarist government aimed to secure full control over the vast expanses of Kazakh territory while simultaneously resolving the broader resettlement problem.

The [Table 1](#) presented below illustrates the intensity with which colonization was pursued in Kazakhstan through the activities of research teams and expeditions organized by the tsarist authorities.

Table 1. Expeditions and statistical teams that studied Kazakhstan in the late XIX and early XX centuries

Researchers and years of expeditionary research	Regions investigated	Materials collected by expeditions and statistical teams
F. A. Shcherbina, 1896–1903	Akmolinsk, Turgai and Semipalatinsk oblasts	Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use, collected and processed by the expedition for the study of the steppe regions, 13 vols.
V. Kuznetsov, 1907–1909	Akmolinsk oblast	Kyrgyz economy in Akmolinsk oblast. A repeated survey of 1907–1909, 5 vols.
P.A. Scryplev, 1906–1913	Syr-Darya oblast	Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use, collected and processed by the Syr-Darya statistical team, 5 vols.
P.P. Rumiantsev, 1909–1913	Semirechye oblast	Materials from the survey of indigenous and Russian old-settler households and land use in Semirechye oblast, 7 vols.
P.A. Khvorostanskii, 1904–1912	Ural, Turgai oblasts	Materials on Kyrgyz land use, collected and processed by the statistical team and the Turgai-Ural resettlement district, 7 vols.
A.V. Perepletchikov, 1910–1911	Semipalatinsk oblast	Materials from the repeated survey in 1910-1911 of Kyrgyz household and land use in Semipalatinsk oblast, 3 vols.

In the late 1870s and 1880s, large-scale peasant resettlement was underway in Central Russia, as this period was marked by an agrarian crisis following the abolition of serfdom. Growing contradictions in the agrarian sphere, together with the intensification of peasant unrest, compelled the tsarist government to seek

an urgent solution to the resettlement problem. In the view of authorities, agrarian tensions could be alleviated through a policy of migration from the densely populated provinces of European Russia to the imperial borderlands. One of the regions most actively settled by peasant migrants was Kazakhstan.

Following the adoption on 25 March 1891 of the “Statute on the Administration of the Steppe Oblasts”, the colonization of Kazakh lands entered a new phase. Articles 119 and 120 stipulated that nomadic settlement areas, along with land resources, forests and groves, were to be regarded as state property; at the same time, taking customary practices into account, these lands were to be granted to nomadic populations for perpetual use (*Materials...., 1960: 396*).

As a result, Kazakh land was legally recognized as the property of the Russian state, while the Kazakh population was effectively reduced to leasing land for its own use. The first addendum to Article 120 stated that any “potential surplus lands” of the nomads would be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of State Property. Following the enactment of this statute, the colonization of Kazakh territories proceeded without formal constraints: land plots were formally assigned to individual Kazakh households, and a resettlement fund was created from lands classified as “surplus”, from which allotments were subsequently distributed to peasant migrants arriving from the central regions of Russia.

At the same time, imperial authorities placed particular emphasis on encouraging the movement of Russian peasants to the outer regions of the empire, including on Kazakh steppe, viewing this process as a key instrument for advancing colonial expansion. To implement this policy, a number of administrative institutions were established. Among them was the Main Resettlement Administration, created within the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In pursuit of these objectives, the first research expedition was organized in 1896 under the leadership of F.A. Shcherbina. The expedition was assigned a single, clearly defined task – to identify and demarcate “surplus” lands for allocation to Russian peasant settlers (*MKZ, 1898: 1*).

To implement the planned objectives, a number of key issues first had to be addressed. First, it was necessary to conduct a thorough examination of the principles and methods underlying nomadic economic practices. Second, the Kazakh population had to be classified according to aul communities and differentiated by types of household economy. Third, calculations were required to determine the number of livestock that could be maintained within each type of household. Fourth, standards for pasture land had to be established for each category of livestock. Fifth, ethnic and geographical characteristics were to be examined within the framework of their historical development. This type of work was highly labor-intensive and required a considerable degree of responsibility (*Tassilova, 2017: 59*).

The head of research, F.A. Shcherbina, who later systematized and prepared the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” for publication, described the aims and tasks of the expedition by noting that in 1895, the Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties, seeking to improve the organization of resettlement plots in the steppe oblasts of Siberia, initiated natural-historical and economic-statistical research in these territories. The research was intended, first, to calculate the volume of land required to satisfy the needs of Kyrgyz population under prevailing natural and economic conditions and, second, to determine land areas regarded as surplus and therefore suitable for allocation to resettlement. Thus, based on Shcherbina’s own account, it is evident that the primary objective of the expedition was to identify “surplus” lands for inclusion in the resettlement fund and to establish the necessary land norms for Kazakh households (*MKZ, 1898: 3*). Another member of the expedition, who later became its head, L.K. Chermak, formulated the goals of the research in similar terms, emphasizing the need “to determine the types of nomadic households, to define the scale of “traditional” economic activity and to develop appropriate norms for them.” As a result of this expeditionary work, the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” collection was produced. In his book “*Sedentary Kyrgyz Farmers on the Chu River and Notes on the Route across the Hungry Steppe*”, Chermak wrote: “I was unable to obtain any definite information regarding the time of settlement of the Chu region; it is only known that these areas have been occupied for a long time and that the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the present elders lived here, engaging in agriculture” (*Chermak, 1898: 8*).

Researcher T.P. Volkova notes that the first scholar to subject the data contained in the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” to systematic academic analysis was the statistician P.P. Rumiantsev (*Volkova, 1982: 4*). In his work “*The Kyrgyz People in the Past and Present*”, Rumiantsev highly appreciated the value of the materials collected by the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina and explicitly expressed his full agreement with the methodological approach employed in its research (*Rumiantsev, 1910*).

In practice, however, a key role in the formation of the expedition that initiated the creation of the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” as well as in the development of its methodological foundations, was played by the well-known specialist in statistics A.A. Kaufman. His official field visits to the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural-Turgai and Syr-Darya oblasts were aimed at defining the concrete objectives and tasks of future research projects led by F.A. Shcherbina, P.A. Skryplev and P.A. Khvorostanskii, and at determining the principal directions of their investigative work (*Kaufman, 1905*). In his “Reports”, A.A. Kaufman provided a detailed analysis of the methods applied by Shcherbina’s expedition and subsequently drew on data from the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” in his studies of Russian peasant economy (*Kaufman, 1908*).

Particular attention is given to the interpretations of tsarist colonial policy advanced by T.I. Sedelnikov, a member of the First State Duma who took part in expeditionary studies of Kazakh

territories. In his works, Sedelnikov argued that land-management measures implemented in the Kazakh steppe, including the identification of so-called “free lands”, conflicted with the interests of the local population. He emphasized that the actions of the colonizers, which undermined the traditional forms of economic life of nomadic society, stood in direct contradiction to the socio-economic processes unfolding within Kazakh society. As Sedelnikov wrote: “For such ‘authoritative researchers’ and ‘experts’ on the steppe as F.A. Shcherbina and A.A. Kaufman, who were engaged in organizing the entirely unlawful seizure of Kyrgyz lands for resettlement plots, it was highly convenient and advantageous to invoke the ‘specific conditions of nomadic life’ in those instances when they were confronted directly with the needs and requirements of the Kyrgyz themselves, including settled agriculturalists. Otherwise, they would have been compelled to suspend the state-sponsored colonization of the steppe, profitable in recent years to ‘truly Russian landowners’ – and to engage in a far more complex undertaking” (Sedelnikov, 1907: 5).

Overall, this source was used in nearly all studies conducted by the tsarist government in pursuit of the colonization of Kazakh lands, serving as an important methodological and reference tool. Issues of resettlement to Kazakh territories and the land question of nomadic populations were also addressed in the works of representatives of the Kazakh national intelligentsia. Figures such as Alikhan Bukeikhan and T. Shonanuly exposed the colonial and exploitative nature of the tsarist government’s policies toward Kazakh lands in their writings.

It may be noted that in the first years following the establishment of Soviet power, the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” were scarcely used in academic research. Within Soviet historiography, this source was often assessed negatively and the data it contained were treated with skepticism, including in connection with the so-called “average” calculations criticized by Vladimir Lenin. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the quantitative data presented in the “MKZ” were frequently employed in scholarly works as statistical information.

Only in the postwar period, beginning in 1945, did renewed scholarly interest in the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” emerge. Researchers of this era drew primarily on these materials in studies of the land and colonial policies of the tsarist government, the economic conditions of the Kazakh population and agrarian problems. Among the scholars who worked with this source were O.A. Vaganova, Ermukhan Bekmakhanov, B. Suleimenov, A.B. Tursunbaev, L.M. Auezova, T.K. Litvinova, K.M. Tumanshin, S.A. Sundetov and A.B. Geller.

V. S. Chernikov substantiated the reliability of the expeditionary data relating to livestock breeding. N.V. Alekseenko undertook an attempt to verify the accuracy of the demographic data contained in this source by comparing them with other statistical materials (Alekseenko, 1981: 55).

In the historiographical study “*An Outline of the History of Ethnographic Studies of the Kazakh People in the USSR*”, published in 1966, E. A. Masanov systematized the history of ethnographic studies of the Kazakh people and introduced a substantial body of factual material into scholarly circulation (Masanov, 1966). This work provides general information on the expeditions and research teams led by F.A. Shcherbina, P.A. Skryplev, V. Kuznetsov, P.A. Khvorostanskii, P.P. Rumiantsev and A.V. Perepletchikov. Masanov offered an overall assessment of the works produced as a result of expeditionary research and the ethnographic data they contained, emphasizing the colonial nature of the tasks assigned to these expeditions while acknowledging the high scholarly value of the extensive statistical materials they collected.

Researcher T.P. Volkova was among the first scholars to subject the materials collected by the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina to a comprehensive source-critical analysis (Volkova, 1988: 172). In addition, T.P. Volkova published a number of academically significant articles examining the composition of Shcherbina’s expedition (Petrova, 1980: 52), as well as the methods used to calculate budgetary statistics during expeditionary research.

In the PhD dissertation by G.A. Ermenbetova, “*Materials of the V. Kuznetsov Expedition in the Study of Land Relations in Kazakh Villages at the Beginning of the 20th Century*”, indicators obtained from V. Kuznetsov’s expeditions were systematically compared and the reliability of the statistical data was tested through correlation analysis (Ermenbetova, 2002). The materials collected by the statistical team led by P. Rumiantsev during research in Zhetysu were examined and highly evaluated in the works of F.N. Miimanbaeva, who made active use of these data in her studies (Miimanbaeva et al., 2019: 771).

At the same time, it should be noted that the expeditions headed by P. Skryplev, P. Khvorostanskii and A. Perepletchikov have not yet become the subject of a dedicated, comprehensive study.

On the basis of the author’s research materials, M. Alimbai and G. Orynbayeva, as well as A. Abil and A. Kuzembaiuly, undertook a critical examination of the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” compiled by expeditionary groups. Their analyses, published in the journal “Bylye Gody”, demonstrated the scholarly significance of this source (Abil, Kuzembaiuly, 2021: 1463). These articles place particular emphasis on the significance of the monograph by N.A. Tassilova published in 2017 (Alimbai, Orynbayeva, 2019: 341).

Of particular relevance for the present study are interpretations offered by scholars based outside the post-Soviet academic space, most notably the work of Ian Campbell, a specialist in the history of the borderlands of the Russian Empire. In his 2017 monograph “*Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazakh Intermediaries and Russian Rule on the Steppe, 1731–1917*”, the author advances the argument that the

tsarist government's control over the Kazakh Steppe, despite periodic uprisings and forms of resistance, developed in a gradual and cumulative manner and became significantly stronger over time.

Campbell emphasizes that, in the early phase of integrating the steppe regions into the imperial framework, the Russian administration lacked both a coherent plan for governing these territories and an adequate understanding of their socio-economic conditions and spatial organization. However, as administrative and scholarly experience accumulated, more stable conceptual and cognitive models of colonial governance and economic appropriation of the steppe space gradually took shape (Campbell, 2017: 30). As the author notes, on the eve of the reforms of the 1860s a contradictory situation had emerged, marked by the absence of a coherent and systematic understanding of future forms of regional administration. The development of a more ordered and consistent model of governance required an additional period during which the Kazakh Steppe underwent institutional and intellectual “appropriation”.

4. Results

Although the primary objective of the expeditions commissioned by the Russian Empire was colonization, the materials they produced possess substantial informational value for the study of Kazakhstan’s history. In particular, the statistical expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina has been extensively used by Ian Campbell in his research, where the scholarly and source-based significance of this body of materials is convincingly demonstrated.

Table 2. Oblasts and uyezds investigated by the expedition of F.A. Shcherbina, 1896–1903

Oblasts investigated	Uyezds investigated	Members of the expedition who collected materials for the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”	Information on “Materials on Kyrgyz land use” volumes
Akmolinsk Oblast	1. Kokchetav (1896) 2. Atbasar (1897) 3. Omsk (1901) 4. Akmola (1896–1900) 5. Petropavl (1901)	F. Shcherbina B. Baskin A. Dyadichenko V. Vladimirkii N. Dmitriev G. Nyashin I. Gusev A. Darofeev L. Chermak A. Bukeikhanov E. Dobrovol'skii	Vol. 1. Voronezh, 1898 Vol. 2. Voronezh, 1902 Vol. 3. Voronezh, 1902 Vol. 11. Omsk, 1907 Vol. 12. Chernihiv, 1908
Semipalatinsk Oblast	1. Pavlodar (1897) 2. Karkaraly (1898–1899) 3. Zaisan (1900) 4. Ust-Kamenogorsk (1900–1904) 5. Semipalatinsk (1900)	F. Shcherbina L. Chermak N. Dmitriev A. Bukeikhanov I. Tripol'skii P. Kondrat'ev I. Gusev G. Nyashin V. Vardugin V. Kuznetsov	Vol. 4. Voronezh, 1903 Vol. 6. Voronezh, 1905 Vol. 8. Saint Petersburg, 1909 Vol. 9. Saint Petersburg, 1905
Turgai Oblast	1. Kustanai (1898) 2. Aktyubinsk (1898–1899)	F. Shcherbina E. Dobrovol'skii N. Dmitriev G.S. Cherniavskii	Vol.5. Voronezh, 1903 Vol.7. Voronezh, 1903
Total	Budget report for three oblasts	F. Shcherbina	Vol. 13. Saint Petersburg, 1906
In total, three oblasts were investigated.	12 uyezds, 149 volosts. Of these, 50 volosts were studied in Akmolinsk oblast, 77 in Semipalatinsk oblast and 22 in Turgai oblast.	During the course of the research, the composition of the expedition members changed repeatedly.	Total number of volumes – 13.

The “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”, produced as a result of the research teams working in the Ural and Turgai oblasts, were published in Orenburg. The [Table 3](#) below indicates the years of publication of the source, the place of publication and the principal authors.

Table 3. Oblasts and uezds investigated during the expedition led by P. A. Khvorostanskii, 1904–1912

Oblasts investigated	Uezds investigated	Members of the expedition who collected materials for the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”	Information on “Materials on Kyrgyz land use” volumes
Turgai oblast	1. Turgai 2. Irgiz 3. Kustanai 4. Aktyubinsk	P.A. Khvorostanskii T.I. Sedelnikov V.P. Semenov N.P. Chevalier	Vol. 3. Orenburg, 1911 Vol. 6. Orenburg, 1913 Vol. 4. Orenburg, 1912 Vol. 5. Orenburg, 1912
Ural oblast	1. Ilbishin 2. Ural 3. Temir	P.A. Khvorostanskii T.I. Sedelnikov V.P. Semenov N.P. Chevalier	Vol. 7. Orenburg, 1914 Vol. 1. Orenburg, 1909 Vol. 2. Orenburg, 1910
Total 2 oblasts	Investigated 7 uezds		7 volumes

While the materials produced by the last two research teams were published by a single publishing house, the materials collected by the expedition led by F.A. Shcherbina were issued by four different publishers. The reasons for this situation are explained by T.P. Volkova in her study: “The publication of the volumes of the “Materials...” took place under difficult and unfavorable conditions, due to the lack of a typographical base, frequent changes of editors and authors, a shortage of qualified personnel and financial difficulties. These factors hindered the compilation of data and delayed the publication of individual volumes”.

The materials collected by the research team working on the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” in the Syr-Darya oblast were published in Tashkent ([TsGA RK. F. 33. Op. 1. D. 4. L. 6](#)).

The table below provides information on the published “Materials...” volumes relating to the Syr-Darya oblast, including years of publication and data on the principal authors.

Table 4. Oblasts and uezds investigated during the expeditions led by P. A. Skryplev, 1906–1913

Oblasts investigated	Uezds investigated	Members of the expedition who collected materials for the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”	Information on “Materials on Kyrgyz land use” volumes
Syr-Darya oblast	1. Chimkent 2. Aulieata 3. Perovsk 4. Kazalinsk 5. Chu and Talas	P.A. Skryplev P.I. Putilov I.I. Rylov V.A. Yakimanskii V.I. Yuferev	1) Vol.1. Tashkent, 1910 2) Vol.2, Part 1. Text. Tashkent, 1910 Vol.2. Part 2. Tables. Tashkent, 1910 3) Vol.3. Tashkent, 1911 4) Vol.4. Tashkent, 1912 5) Vol.5. Tashkent, 1913 6) Vol.6. Tashkent, 1915
Total			Total number of volumes – 6. Volume 2 consists of two parts.

Typographical shortcomings in the source that constitutes the object of this study are indicated either on the same page, on the first page or on the final page of the volume. In some cases, such remarks appear in the preface or introduction.

The expedition commenced its research activities with the preparation of a preliminary research scheme and a review of reference literature and encyclopedic works concerning the Steppe Region. In addition, it drew upon reports issued by the governor-general, materials published by local statistical committees and other legislative sources. Overall, the research program was later adjusted on the basis of methodological experience gained in practice following preliminary observations. The program was prepared by F.A. Shcherbina. The expedition’s program consisted of 17 chapters and 93 subsections, covering the following themes: 1. Clan-based organization; 2. History of economic auls; 3. Forms of land use; 4. Animal husbandry; 5. Wheat harvesting; 6. Land cultivation; 7. Horticulture and melon growing; 8. Forest and tugai lands; 9. Land leasing; 10. Industry and wages; 11. Taxes and obligations; 12. Characteristics of the Kyrgyz

family; 13. General economic affairs; 14. Trade; 15. Credit; 16. Population needs; 17. Natural and climatic conditions (MKZ, 1908: 3-5).

This program became a foundational framework for all subsequent research activities and the methods employed by F. A. Shcherbina were adopted as a model by other statisticians.

It is evident that the objectivity and reliability of the source were influenced by external factors and a number of practical difficulties. F. A. Shcherbina himself noted the challenges and shortcomings encountered during the research process. Among them, he identified:

1. The vastness of the territory, which required considerable time and effort for travel;
2. The researchers' lack of knowledge of the Kazakh language, which necessitated the involvement of a third party, namely interpreters;
3. Insufficient familiarity with the region under investigation.

Each of these difficulties, both individually and collectively, slowed the progress of the work and hindered its timely completion (MKZ, 1898: 2).

The structure of each volume of this source invariably includes: (1) textual material, (2) statistical tables and (3) maps. Although the textual component of the source was conceived on the basis of a unified program, the volumes were written with differing internal structures. They typically contain historical descriptions of each uezd, analyses of land use, territorial extent, geographical and natural features, the spatial distribution and migration routes of clans and tribes, tables of clans and tribal groupings, and accounts of uezd-level economies and their specific characteristics in comparison with other districts. In addition, the text of each volume necessarily includes information on forms of land use, land cultivation, animal husbandry, crafts, land leasing and the historical development of the uyezds.

The "Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use" represent a distinct type of written source by virtue of their origin. This is due to the fact that the creator of this source was not an individual author, but a collective of researchers. The collection of materials was carried out not by a single person, but by a group of highly qualified specialists.

This body of sources was produced by statistical teams and research expeditions whose members included professional statisticians, agronomists, registrars, topographers, hydrogeologists and botanists. These specialists not only collected data using specific methodologies and research techniques, but also carried out their analysis, systematization and subsequent preparation for publication in the form of a multi-volume printed edition.

A leading role in the identification, accumulation and structural analysis of historical and geographical information is played by the study of cartographic sources. Among the most significant materials are printed and manuscript maps, drawings and schematic plans, as well as the accompanying explanatory descriptions, including those incorporated into historical works.

The second component of the "Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use" source consists of tables. Tables are present in every volume without exception. At the same time, when individual uyezds exhibited particular characteristics, they were supplemented with additional tables reflecting these specific features.

The table below presents the types of tables encountered in the "Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use" and the distinguishing features of each type.

Table 5. Types of tables and their characteristics

Types of tables	Characteristics of the tables and the information concentrated in them
Aul-level tables	These tables present information on the number of auls within each volost, the clan affiliation of the inhabitants of each aul and the location of the aul in relation to surrounding terrain or wells and other water sources. The names of auls, winter camps and summer pastures were not given by name, but were indicated only by registration number and the name of the volost. The tables also contain data on population numbers, the time of settlement in the aul, clan affiliation, numbers of men and women, as well as the types and quantities of livestock.
Community-level tables	These tables include information on the auls belonging to a given community, household economy, animal husbandry and agriculture, land leasing and population size.
Regional tables	These tables provide data on the age structure and age-specific characteristics of the population, literacy levels and household economy
Tables by economic sectors	These tables reflect economic groups, their size, hired labor, crafts and the tools required for economic activities.
Tables on uezd specificity: supplementary and general data	These tables contain additional and general information on the specific features of each uezd.

Types of tables	Characteristics of the tables and the information concentrated in them
Clan and tribal tables: a) settler and nomadic clans; b) the main population of the uezds	a) clans that migrated from other areas and their genealogy; b) the names of each clan and their shezhire (genealogy).

These tables emerged from the practical needs faced by land surveyors and statisticians in the course of their work on specific applied tasks. For this reason, the source contains tables that differ considerably from one another in structure and content. For example, the aul-level tables comprise 78 questions that focus primarily on the economic characteristics of the aul, the location of winter camps, the most recent clan head, the age of the aul, the names of water bodies, population size disaggregated by age and sex, dwellings, crafts, age- and species-specific livestock composition, animal husbandry and agriculture. These aul-level tables make it possible to extract information on the settlement patterns of clans and tribes, and on the territorial organization of their habitation.

Even more informative, however, are cartographic sources from the XIX and XX centuries, which provide clear and concentrated data on the physical geography of Kazakhstan, the system of settlements, patterns of population distribution and migration, the development of new territories, as well as the economic development and political-administrative structure of the region. Maps from this period typically feature a graticule, are oriented according to the cardinal directions, include a scale and are based on the results of geodetic surveys carried out using astronomical reference points. At the same time, it should be noted that some of the information contained in these maps still relied on insufficiently verified sources.

The intensification of cartographic work on the territory of Kazakhstan was directly linked to the expansion of expeditionary activity in the region during the 1820s-1830s. In the course of expeditions examining Kyrgyz land use, special maps entitled “Kyrgyz Land Use and Pasture Regions” were produced, on which uezd boundaries and all major types of pasture lands were recorded. In particular, within the activities of the Akmolinsk Statistical Team, a map of Kazakh land use in Akmolinsk uezd was compiled under the direction of the senior topographer of the Akmolinsk team, Slavetskii. This cartographic material was produced at a scale of 15 versts per inch.

Maps illustrating the history of clan settlement across the territory of Kazakhstan also possess considerable source-critical value.

Thus, the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” constitute a multi-volume publication in which each volume differs in its specific focus and research methods. Although these works were produced within a unified overarching objective, their significance for the study of the history of the Kazakh ethnos in the late XIX and early XX centuries warrants particular attention.

It should be emphasized that the primary factor behind the creation of the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” was the colonial policy pursued by tsarist Russia, a circumstance explicitly reflected both in the source itself and in related legal and archival documents. As a primary source addressing various aspects of the history of Kazakhstan in the late XIX and early XX centuries, these volumes represent a highly valuable body of evidence, based on extensive data collected by research expeditions.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” represent a unique and important source for examining the history of Kazakh society in the late XIX and early XX centuries. The materials collected by research expeditions and statistical teams provide important evidence on various aspects of the history of the Kazakh ethnos, including: historical and ethnographic data; geographical setting and climatic features; biological characteristics and hydrology; economic activities and household organization; demographic structure and population size; social structure and clan-tribal organization; topographical features and place names; genealogy and the spatial patterns of clans and tribal settlement; processes of the colonization of Kazakh lands.

In emphasizing the specific features and scholarly importance of these sources, the following points should be highlighted:

1) The broad geographical scope of research conducted across the territory of present-day Kazakhstan (Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, Turgai and Syr-Darya oblasts), which enables a comprehensive reconstruction of regional historical processes;

2) Although field research in Kazakhstan was not fully completed, the collected materials were systematically processed and published in book form, ensuring the timely publication of the source;

3) The researchers who compiled the materials and prepared them for publication – from the initial stages to the completion of the expeditions – were highly educated specialists (F.A. Shcherbina, Alikhan Bukeikhan, L.K. Chermak, P.A. Skryplev, P.A. Khvorostanskii, among others), which enhanced the overall level of objectivity of the source;

4) Following their initial publication, the sources were neither revised nor republished and thus have been preserved in their original form; prior to publication, the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” were compared with earlier statistical sources;

5) As a historical source, “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” are particularly valuable for the comprehensive, detailed and relatively objective statistical data they contain on clan and tribal structures.

Alikhan Bukeikhan, who participated directly in the preparation of the “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”, made a substantial contribution to the study of his homeland and to scholarly analysis of the clan-tribal organization of the Kazakh people.

The “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” constitute an important historical source, distinguished by their specific features, for investigating traditional Kazakh society in the late XIX and early XX centuries.

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