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RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STATISTICAL EXPEDITIONS AND THE FORMATION OF THE SOURCE BASE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE KAZAKH STEPPE: THE CASE OF THE “MATERIALS ON KYRGYZ LAND USE”

Abstract

Purpose. This article aims to conduct a source-critical analysis of the multi-volume publication “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” and to evaluate its significance as a key documentary base for studying the socio-economic and historical development of Kazakh society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Design/methodology/approach. The study applies a qualitative source-analysis approach, combining historical, comparative, and analytical methods. The research examines archival materials collected during imperial statistical expeditions across several regions, including the Syr-Darya, Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, and Turgai oblasts. The methodological framework includes the evaluation of data collection techniques such as standardized questionnaires, field observations, quantitative calculations, and cartographic surveys.

Findings. The findings demonstrate that the analyzed corpus provides comprehensive and reliable data on land use, socio-economic structures, demographic trends, and settlement patterns of the Kazakh population. The materials allow the identification of both regional differences and general trends during a period of significant transformation. Furthermore, the study reveals that the systematic and standardized methods employed ensured high comparability and empirical value of the data, making the source highly relevant for reconstructing historical realities.

Originality. The study contributes to historical and source studies by offering a comprehensive reassessment of the informational and methodological value of “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*.” It highlights the role of imperial statistical expeditions in producing structured knowledge about the steppe and provides new insights into colonial governance and knowledge production processes.

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.

Introduction

In the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Russian colonial expansion in Kazakhstan entered a new and qualitatively distinct stage. During this period, a series of administrative reforms introduced by the imperial government effectively eliminated the political autonomy of the Kazakh population. At the same time, the authorities initiated a scientifically grounded campaign aimed at identifying and confiscating lands officially classified

as “surplus” or “excess” which were subsequently transferred to settler populations.

Within the framework of this colonial policy, a number of large-scale research initiatives were carried out across several administrative regions, including the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, Turgai, Syr-Darya, and Semirechye oblasts. The empirical data collected in these territories were later processed, systematized, and published in the multi-volume series entitled “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” (Tassilova, 2017: 10). Today, the analysis of this corpus

as one of the most important source complexes for the study of the colonization of Kazakhstan provides broad opportunities for identifying and interpreting aspects of national history that remain insufficiently explored.

Before the activities of these statistical expeditions and research teams, no scientific investigations of comparable scale and comprehensiveness had been conducted in the territory of Kazakhstan (Volkova, 1982: 4). Although the expeditions differed in their geographical coverage and chronological scope, many scholars consider them to constitute a unified and interconnected research program. As a result of their work, a substantial documentary corpus titled “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” was produced between 1898 and 1915, ultimately comprising twenty-seven volumes.

This collection includes thirteen volumes compiled by the expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina, seven volumes prepared by the statistical team of P.A. Skryplev, and seven volumes produced by the group headed by P. A. Khvorostanskii. Together, these materials represent the outcome of a large-scale investigation covering the territories of the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, Turgai, and Syr-Darya oblasts, as well as the Fergana and Namangan regions, which are located in present-day Uzbekistan.

The individual volumes within this series vary both in chronological scope and territorial coverage. The expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina conducted research in the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, and Turgai oblasts between 1896 and 1903. The statistical team headed by P. A. Skryplev carried out investigations in the Syr-Darya oblast from 1906 to 1913, while the group led by P. A. Khvorostanskii worked in the Turgai and Ural oblasts between 1904 and 1912. An important feature of this source complex is that the collected materials were not published simultaneously. Instead, the volumes appeared over a prolonged period from 1898 to 1915, reflecting the phased nature and extended duration of the research process.

Literature review

The empirical foundation of this research is formed by materials published between 1898 and 1915 within the multi-volume series “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”. This corpus represents the outcome of a large-scale and systematic statistical survey of the territory of present-day Kazakhstan conducted by several specialized expeditionary teams operating under the authority of the Russian Empire.

Archival documents from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TsGA RK, F. 29, Op. 1, D. 13, L. 65) were extensively employed as primary sources. In particular, materials from a number of archival fonds were introduced into scholarly circulation. Among them are:

№ 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.

Particularly valuable are documents preserved in fonds № 8, № 501, № 317, № 469, № 479 and № 643, which contain extensive materials relating to natural-historical surveys conducted in the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk and Turgai oblasts. These sources make it possible to analyze systematically data on the natural and geographical characteristics of the steppe regions, botanical features of the territory, the historical dynamics of regional development, demographic conditions, and the ethnographic composition of the population (TsGA RK, F. 501, Op. 2, D. 33a, L. 14).

In addition, these archival fonds include important supplementary information regarding the composition, objectives, and logistical support of the expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina, as well as the activities of the Ural–Turgai research team headed by P. A. Khvorostanskii. The availability of such documentation significantly expands the possibilities for a comprehensive study of both the history of scientific

expeditions and the broader colonial policies implemented by the Russian Empire in Kazakhstan.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this research is based on a structured analysis of documentary materials preserved in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the examination of multi-volume expeditionary publications and other published statistical and ethnographic sources reflecting the practices of the imperial colonial administration.

In the course of analyzing the archival materials, several methodological levels were employed in accordance with the objectives and research tasks. First, a system-based approach made it possible to identify internal hierarchies within the administrative and communication structures of imperial governance, as well as to clarify their operational logic, socio-cultural differentiation, and regional specificities. This approach enables imperial institutions of authority to be examined as a complex and interconnected multi-level system.

To achieve the research objectives, a set of general scientific methods was applied, including logical analysis, a structural-systemic approach, generalization and synthesis of empirical data, as well as interpretative analysis of sources. In addition, comparative analysis was employed to identify both similarities and differences in socio-economic and administrative processes across various regions of Kazakhstan.

Results and discussion

The multi-volume publication “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” was produced as the result of a large-scale investigation conducted by specialized research expeditions focused on the study of Kazakh society. Therefore, an examination of this source complex should begin with an analysis of the objectives and historical circumstances that led to the establishment of these scientific expeditions, as well as the methodological approaches they employed in collecting empirical data.

The well-known researcher of traditional Kazakh nomadic society, S. E. Tolybekov, made extensive use of the rich empirical materials generated by these expeditions. He highly valued their scholarly significance while at the same time clearly identifying the underlying political objectives of the research. Tolybekov explicitly acknowledged that the investigations were conducted in the interests of land confisca-

tion for settler colonization and directly 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 underlying mechanisms and practical implementation of the colonial policies pursued by the tsarist government have not yet been fully examined or sufficiently articulated in historical scholarship. The study therefore aims to contribute to the existing scholarship by examining these issues in a systematic manner.

In the scholarship produced within domestic historiography, the resettlement policy implemented in the Kazakh steppe is typically interpreted as a major instrument of imperial colonization. The policy was intended to weaken traditional social structures, advance the process of Russification and integrate the region into the imperial economic system primarily as a supplier of raw materials. Nevertheless, although the colonization of Kazakhstan constituted an overarching strategic objective of the Russian Empire, the ways in which this policy was implemented differed across regions. Such variation was conditioned by geographical factors, strategic priorities, demographic circumstances, transportation infrastructure and the degree of resistance among the local population. Accordingly, the mechanisms and forms of colonization developed differently in different territories.

The publication of “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” emerged within the political and administrative framework of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period marked by the expansion of settler colonization in the Kazakh steppe. Research initiatives undertaken at that time were largely oriented toward determining areas regarded as “excess” land, which could be removed from Kazakh land use and transferred to the resettlement fund.

Accordingly, “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” can be understood as a product of the imperial colonial policy of the Russian Empire. The research expeditions were mainly charged with analyzing the economic life of the Kazakh population, identifying lands regarded as “excess” or “surplus” and facilitating their redistribution to newly arriving settlers.

Through this mechanism, the tsarist administration sought both to establish effective control over the vast territories of the Kazakh steppe and to address the broader resettlement challenges within the empire.

The table presented below illustrates the scale and intensity of the colonization process in Kazakhstan, as reflected in the activities of the research expeditions and statistical teams 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. Skryplev, 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 migration was taking place in Central Russia, a development closely associated with the agrarian crisis that followed the abolition of serfdom. The deepening contradictions within the agrarian sector, together with the growing intensity of peasant unrest, compelled the tsarist government to search for an urgent solution to the resettlement problem. Imperial authorities viewed migration from the densely populated provinces of European Russia to the peripheral regions of the empire as a potential means of alleviating agrarian tensions. Among the territories most actively targeted for peasant settlement was Kazakhstan.

A new phase in the colonization of Kazakh lands began with the adoption of the *Statute on the Administration of the Steppe Oblasts* on 25 March 1891. According to Articles 119 and 120 of this statute, nomadic territories together with their land resources, forests and groves were formally declared state property. At the same time, taking customary practices into account, these lands were granted to the nomadic population for perpetual use (Materials..., 1960: 396).

In practice, this legal framework established state ownership over Kazakh lands while placing the Kazakh population in a position comparable to that of

tenants using land allocated for their livelihood. The first addendum to Article 120 provided that territories regarded as “potentially surplus” with respect to the needs of the nomadic population were to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of State Property. The implementation of this regulation marked an intensification of colonization processes in Kazakh territories. Under this framework, individual Kazakh households were granted designated land allotments, while lands classified as “excess” were transferred to a resettlement fund. These territories were later redistributed among peasant migrants from the central regions of the Russian Empire.

At the same time, imperial authorities actively promoted the settlement of Russian peasants in the empire’s peripheral regions, including the Kazakh steppe, viewing this migration as a strategic instrument for advancing colonial expansion. To manage this process, a number of administrative institutions were created, among them the Main Resettlement Administration tasked with supervising and coordinating resettlement policy.

Amid these wider political transformations, the imperial authorities launched their first major research expedition in 1896 under the leadership of F.A. Shcherbina. The expedition was tasked with determining and defining territories categorized as “ex-

cess” land that could be reassigned to newly arriving Russian peasant settlers (MKZ, 1898: 1).

To carry out this objective, the expedition had to solve several core research tasks. These included, first, an in-depth analysis of the organizational foundations of nomadic economic practices and, second, the systematic classification of the Kazakh population by aul communities, with households distinguished according to their economic types. Third, calculations were required to determine the number of livestock that could be sustained within each type of household. Fourth, appropriate norms for pasture land had to be established for different categories of livestock. Finally, the ethnic and geographical characteristics of the region were to be examined within the context of their historical development. Such work was highly labor-intensive and required a significant level of methodological rigor and responsibility (Tassilova, 2017: 59).

The head of the expedition, F. A. Shcherbina, who later systematized and prepared the *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”* for publication, outlined the goals and objectives of the research by noting that in 1895 the Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties initiated natural-historical and economic-statistical investigations in the steppe oblasts of Siberia. The purpose of these studies was, first, to determine the amount of land required to satisfy the needs of the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) population under existing natural and economic conditions and, second, to identify territories that could be regarded as surplus and therefore made available for resettlement. According to Shcherbina’s own account, the principal aim of the expedition was thus to identify “surplus” lands for inclusion in the resettlement fund and to establish appropriate land-use norms for Kazakh households (MKZ, 1898: 3).

Another participant in the expedition, who later became its head, L. K. Chermak, described the objectives 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 corresponding to these forms of economic practice.” The work carried out by these expeditions ultimately resulted in the publication of the multi-volume collection *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”*.

In his work *“Sedentary Kyrgyz Farmers on the Chu River and Notes on the Route across the Hungry Steppe”*, Chermak also recorded important observations regarding the historical settlement patterns of the region. As he noted: “I was unable to obtain any definite information regarding the time of settle-

ment 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 *“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 valued the materials collected by the expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina and expressed full support for the methodological principles applied in its research (Rumiantsev, 1910).

At the same time, an important role in the organization of the expedition that initiated the compilation of *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”*, as well as in the development of its methodological framework, was played by the well-known statistician A.A. Kaufman. His official field inspections in the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural–Turgai, and Syr-Darya oblasts were intended to determine the objectives and tasks of future research projects led by F. A. Shcherbina, P.A. Skryplev, and P. A. Khvorostanskii, and to define the principal directions of their investigative work (Kaufman, 1905). In his *Reports*, Kaufman provided a detailed examination of the research methods used by Shcherbina’s expedition and subsequently relied on data from *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”* in his own studies of the Russian peasant economy (Kaufman, 1908).

Significant attention has also been devoted to interpretations of tsarist colonial policy proposed by T. I. Sedelnikov, a member of the First State Duma who participated in expeditionary studies of Kazakh territories. Sedelnikov argued that land-management policies implemented in the Kazakh steppe, including the identification of so-called “free lands,” directly conflicted with the interests of the local population. According to his assessment, the actions of the colonizing authorities, which disrupted traditional forms of nomadic economic life, contradicted the socio-economic dynamics of Kazakh society. As Sedelnikov observed:

“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’ when confronted with the needs and demands of the Kyrgyz population itself, including settled agriculturalists. Otherwise, they would have been compelled to sus-

pend the state-sponsored colonization of the steppe, which in recent years had been profitable for ‘truly Russian landowners’, and to undertake a far more complex task” (Sedelnikov, 1907: 5).

Overall, “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” was widely employed in research undertaken by the tsarist administration in connection with the colonization of Kazakh territories, serving as an important methodological and reference source. Issues related to resettlement policies and the land question of the nomadic population were also addressed in the writings of representatives of the Kazakh national intelligentsia. Scholars such as Alikhan Bukeikhan and T. Shonanuly critically analyzed the colonial and exploitative character of the tsarist government’s land policies toward Kazakh territories.

After the establishment of Soviet power, “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” was not widely used in academic scholarship during the early years. Soviet historians generally assessed this source critically and the statistical information contained within it was treated with skepticism, especially in light of the “average calculations” that had been criticized by Vladimir Lenin. Even so, researchers continued to rely on the quantitative data from the MKZ volumes as a source of statistical evidence.

A renewed interest in “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” emerged only in the postwar period, beginning in 1945. Scholars of this period relied extensively 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 researchers 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 concerning livestock breeding, while N. V. Alekseenko attempted to verify the accuracy of the demographic statistics contained in this source through comparison 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 development of ethnographic research on the Kazakh population and introduced a considerable body of factual material into scholarly circulation (Masanov, 1966). His 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. Rumiant-

sev, and A.V.Perepletchikov. Masanov offered a comprehensive assessment of the works produced as a result of these expeditionary studies and the ethnographic materials they contained. While emphasizing the colonial character of the tasks assigned to the expeditions, he simultaneously acknowledged the considerable scholarly value of the extensive statistical data collected during their investigations.

Researcher T. P. Volkova was among the first scholars to conduct a comprehensive source-critical analysis of the materials gathered by the expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina (Volkova, 1988: 172). In addition, she published several significant scholarly articles devoted to the composition of Shcherbina’s expedition (Petrova, 1980: 52) and to the methodological principles used in calculating budgetary and statistical indicators during the expeditionary surveys.

The PhD dissertation by G. A. Ermenbetova, entitled “*Materials of the V. Kuznetsov Expedition in the Study of Land Relations in Kazakh Villages at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*”, offers a systematic comparison of statistical indicators obtained from Kuznetsov’s expeditions and evaluates the reliability of the data through correlation analysis (Ermenbetova, 2002). The materials collected by the statistical team headed by P. P. Rumiantsev during research conducted in Zhetysu were also examined and highly assessed in the works of F. N. Miimanbaeva, who actively used these sources in her own studies (Miimanbaeva et al., 2019: 771).

Nevertheless, the expeditions organized under the direction of P. A. Skryplev, P. A. Khvorostanskii and A. V. Perepletchikov continue to be understudied, since they have not yet been analyzed in a dedicated and systematic academic work.

Based on the research materials prepared by the author (Naziya A. Tassilova), M. Alimbai and G.Orynbayeva, along with A. Abil and A. Kuzembaiuly, carried out a critical examination of the “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” compiled by the expeditionary teams. Their articles in *Bylye Gody* demonstrated significant scholarly potential of this collection of sources (Abil, Kurmangazy, 2021: 1463). These publications likewise draw attention to the importance of N. A. Tassilova’s monograph published in 2017, which provides an extensive analysis of the statistical expeditions and the documentary materials produced through their activities (Alimbai, Orynbayeva, 2019: 341).

Particularly relevant to the present study are the interpretations offered by scholars working outside the post-Soviet academic space, most notably

Ian Campbell, a specialist in the history of the borderlands of the Russian Empire. In his monograph *“Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazakh Intermediaries and Russian Rule on the Steppe, 1731–1917 (2017)”*, Campbell argues that the consolidation of tsarist authority in the Kazakh Steppe, despite periodic uprisings and forms of resistance, occurred gradually and cumulatively over time.

According to Campbell, during the early phase of incorporating the steppe regions into the imperial administrative system, the Russian authorities lacked both a coherent plan for governing these territories and an adequate understanding of their socio-economic conditions and spatial organization. Over time, however, as administrative experience and scholarly knowledge accumulated, more stable conceptual frameworks and cognitive models for the colonial governance and economic appropriation of the steppe gradually emerged (Campbell, 2017: 30).

As Campbell notes, by the eve of the reforms of the 1860s a contradictory situation had developed, characterized by the absence of a coherent and systematic vision for the future administration of the region. The establishment of a more ordered and consistent model of governance required an additional period during which the Kazakh Steppe underwent both institutional consolidation and intellectual “appropriation” within the imperial framework.

Even though the expeditions initiated by the Russian Empire were aimed mainly at supporting colonial expansion, the records and data compiled during their activities serve as a significant documentary foundation for investigating the history of Kazakhstan. In particular, the statistical expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina has been widely utilized in the research of Ian Campbell, who convincingly demonstrates the scholarly significance and source value of these materials.

Table 2

Oblasts and uezds investigated by the expedition of F. A. Shcherbina, 1896-1903

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
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. Vladimirskii 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 uezds, 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 results of the research conducted by expeditionary teams in the Ural and Turgai oblasts were published in Orenburg in the form of volumes of “Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”. The table below lists the publication years of these works, their places of publication and the principal authors involved in their preparation.

Unlike the works prepared by the other two research teams, which were published through a single publishing institution, the volumes produced by the expedition led by F. A. Shcherbina appeared under the imprint of four different publishers. T. P. Volkova explains this situation by noting that the publication of the “Materials...” volumes took place in challenging circumstances. The process was complicated

by the lack of a stable typographical base, frequent changes among editors and authors, shortages of qualified personnel and ongoing financial difficulties. These conditions significantly slowed the preparation of the materials and led to delays in the publication of several volumes.

The materials collected by the research team responsible for compiling 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 presents information on the published volumes of the “*Materials...*” relating to the Syr-Darya oblast, including their years of publication and the principal authors involved in their preparation.

Table 3

Oblasts and uezds studied during the research 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	P. A. Khvorostanskii	Vol.3. Orenburg, 1911
	2. Irgiz	T. I. Sedelnikov	Vol.6. Orenburg, 1913
	3. Kustanai	V. P. Semenov	Vol.4. Orenburg, 1912
	4. Aktyubinsk	N. P. Chevalier	Vol.5. Orenburg, 1912
Ural oblast	1. Ilbishin	P. A. Khvorostanskii	Vol.7. Orenburg, 1914
	2. Ural	T. I. Sedelnikov	Vol.1. Orenburg, 1909
	3. Temir	V. P. Semenov N. P. Chevalier	Vol.2. Orenburg, 1910
Total 2 oblasts	Investigated 7 uezds		7 volumes

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	P. A. Skryplev	1) Vol.1. Tashkent, 1910
	2. Aulieata	P. I. Putilov	2) Vol.2. Part 1. Text. Tashkent, 1910
	3. Perovsk	I. I. Rylov	Vol.2. part 2. Tables. Tashkent, 1910
	4. Kazalinsk	V. A. Yakimanskii	3) Vol.3. Tashkent, 1911
	5. Chu and Talas	V. I. Yuferev	4) Vol.4. Tashkent, 1912
Total			5) Vol.5. Tashkent, 1913
			6) Vol.6. Tashkent, 1915
			Total number of volumes – 6. Volume 2 consists of two parts.

Typographical inconsistencies in the source corpus examined in this study are usually indicated either on the same page where they occur, on the opening

page, or on the final page of the respective volume. In some instances, such remarks are also included in the preface or introductory sections.

The expedition began its research activities with the development of a preliminary research program and a review of available reference literature and encyclopedic publications concerning the Steppe Region. In addition, the researchers relied on reports issued by the governor-general, materials published by local statistical committees, and other legislative and administrative sources. The research program was subsequently refined and adjusted on the basis of practical methodological experience gained during the initial stages of field observation. The program itself was prepared by F. A. Shcherbina.

The expedition's research framework consisted of 17 chapters and 93 subsections and addressed a wide range of topics, including: (1) clan-based organization; (2) the 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 (Kazakh) family; (13) general economic affairs; (14) trade; (15) credit; (16) population needs; and (17) natural and climatic conditions (MKZ, 1908: 3–5).

This research program subsequently served as the methodological foundation for all further investigations conducted within the framework of the expedition. The methodological framework developed by F. A. Shcherbina later served as a methodological guide for statisticians undertaking similar studies.

At the same time, the credibility and neutrality of the data presented in this source were conditioned by several external factors and by practical problems arising during fieldwork. F. A. Shcherbina himself identified a number of difficulties encountered by the expedition throughout the research process, among which the following were particularly significant:

1. the vast territorial scale of the region, which required considerable time and effort for travel;
2. the researchers' limited knowledge of the Kazakh language, which made it necessary to rely on interpreters as intermediaries;
3. insufficient familiarity with the geographical and social conditions of the regions under investigation.

Each of these factors, both individually and collectively, slowed the progress of the research and complicated the timely completion of the work (MKZ, 1898: 2).

The structure of each volume of this source complex generally consists of three principal components: (1) textual analysis, (2) statistical tables, and

(3) cartographic materials. Although the textual sections were prepared according to a unified research program, the internal structure of individual volumes varies. Typically, they include historical descriptions of each uezd, analyses of land use and territorial extent, accounts of geographical and natural conditions, descriptions of the spatial distribution and migration routes of clans and tribes, as well as tables detailing clan and tribal groupings. In addition, the volumes provide information on local economic conditions at the uezd level and offer comparative assessments with other districts.

The descriptive sections of the sources likewise contain detailed information on land use patterns, agricultural and pastoral activities, craft production, the practice of leasing land and the historical trajectories of particular uyezds.

“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use” constitutes a distinct category of written historical source owing to the particular circumstances of its production. Unlike many other documentary sources, it was not created by an individual author but by a collective of researchers. The collection of empirical data was carried out not by a single investigator but by a team of highly qualified specialists.

This source complex was produced by statistical teams and research expeditions that included professional statisticians, agronomists, registrars, topographers, hydrogeologists, and botanists. These specialists were responsible not only for gathering data using specific methodological approaches and research techniques but also for analyzing, systematizing, and preparing the collected materials for publication in the form of a multi-volume printed edition.

An important role in the identification, accumulation, and interpretation of historical and geographical information is played by cartographic sources. Among the most significant materials in this regard are printed and manuscript maps, drawings, and schematic plans, as well as accompanying explanatory descriptions, including those incorporated into broader historical works.

Another key component of the *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”* source complex consists of statistical tables. Tables are included in every volume without exception. In cases where individual uyezds possessed particular characteristics, the basic statistical tables were supplemented by additional tables reflecting these specific regional features.

The table presented below illustrates the types of tables contained in *“Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use”* and outlines the distinctive features of each category.

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.
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 statistical tables emerged from the practical requirements faced by land surveyors and statisticians while addressing specific applied tasks during the course of their research. As a result, the source contains tables that differ significantly in both structure and content. For instance, the aul-level tables include 78 questions that primarily address the economic characteristics of the aul, the location of winter camps, information about the most recent clan head, the approximate age of the aul, the names of nearby water bodies, and population size disaggregated by age and sex. In addition, these tables record data on dwellings, craft activities, the composition of livestock by species and age categories, and the development of animal husbandry and agriculture. Such materials provide valuable information on the settlement patterns of clans and tribes and allow for the reconstruction of the territorial organization of their habitation.

Cartographic sources dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are even more informative in certain respects, as they present concentrated and visually structured data on the physical geography of Kazakhstan, settlement systems, patterns of population distribution and migration, the development of new territories, and the economic and administrative structure of the region. Maps of this period typically contain a graticule, are oriented according to the cardinal directions, include a defined scale, and are based on geodetic surveys conducted using astronomical reference points. At the same time, it should be noted that some of the information presented on

these maps relied on sources that were not always sufficiently verified.

The expansion of cartographic work in the territory of Kazakhstan was closely connected with the intensification of expeditionary activity in the region beginning in the 1820s–1830s. During the expeditions devoted to the study of Kyrgyz (Kazakh) land use, special maps entitled “*Kyrgyz Land Use and Pasture Regions*” were compiled. These maps recorded the boundaries of uezds and identified the main types of pasture lands within the studied territories.

Within the framework of the activities of the Akmolinsk Statistical Team, for example, a map illustrating Kazakh land use in the Akmolinsk uezd was prepared under the supervision of the senior topographer of the expedition, Slavetskii. This cartographic document was produced at a scale of 15 versts per inch.

Maps depicting the historical patterns of clan settlement across the territory of Kazakhstan also possess considerable source-critical value, as they provide important evidence for reconstructing the spatial organization of traditional Kazakh society.

Thus, “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” represents a multi-volume publication in which each volume is characterized by its own thematic focus and specific research methods. Although these works were produced within the framework of a unified overarching objective, their value for the study of the history of the Kazakh ethnos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is particularly significant.

Figure 1
Map showing the tribal settlement of Kazakhs in the Omsk uezd (MKZ, 1902: 274)



Figure 2
Map of the Chimkent uezd of the Syr-Darya oblast. (MKZ, 1908: 643)



It should be emphasized that the emergence of “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” was closely connected with the colonial policy pursued by the tsarist government. This context is clearly reflected both in the content of the source itself and in related legal and archival documentation. At the same time, as a primary historical source covering a wide range of issues related to the history of Kazakhstan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this multi-volume publication constitutes an exceptionally valuable body of evidence. The materials it contains are based on extensive empirical data collected during large-scale research expeditions and therefore provide a substantial foundation for the study of socio-economic processes, land relations and the historical geography of the Kazakh steppe.

Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” constitutes a unique and highly valuable source for the study of Kazakh society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The materials collected by statistical teams and research expeditions contain extensive information on various aspects of the history of the Kazakh ethnos. These include historical and ethnographic data, geographical and climatic conditions, biological and hydrological characteristics, economic activities and household organization, demographic structure and population size, social hierarchy and clan–tribal organization, topographical features and place names, genealogical information, patterns of clan and tribal settlement, and the processes associated with the colonization of Kazakh territories.

In assessing the specific characteristics and scholarly significance of this source complex, several key aspects should be emphasized:

1. the broad geographical coverage of the research, which encompassed the territories of present-day Kazakhstan, including the Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Ural, Turgai and Syr-Darya oblasts, thereby making it possible to reconstruct regional historical processes in a comprehensive manner;

2. although field investigations were not completed across the entire territory of Kazakhstan, the collected materials were systematically processed and published in book form, ensuring their preservation and availability for scholarly use;

3. the researchers responsible for collecting and preparing the materials, from the early stages of the expeditions to the final publication

of the volumes, were highly qualified specialists, including F.A. Shcherbina, Alikhan Bukeikhan, L.K. Chermak, P. A. Skryplev, and P. A. Khvorostanskii, among others, which contributed to the overall scholarly rigor and relative objectivity of the source;

4. after their initial publication, these materials were neither revised nor republished, and therefore have been preserved in their original form; prior to publication, the data contained in the “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” were also compared with earlier statistical sources;

5. as a historical source, the “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” are particularly valuable for the extensive, detailed, and comparatively objective statistical data they contain on the clan and tribal structures of Kazakh society.

It should also be noted that Alikhan Bukeikhan, who directly participated in the preparation of “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*”, made a significant contribution to the scholarly study of his homeland and to the analysis of the clan–tribal organization of the Kazakh people.

Overall, “*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*” represents an important historical source with distinctive characteristics that make it indispensable for the study of traditional Kazakh society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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The authors declare that there are no acknowledgements and no conflicts of interest related to this study.

Author contributions

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