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THE LAND QUESTION IN KAZAKH PERIODICALS AND DATA FROM STATISTICAL EXPEDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (Early 20th Century)

The article examines the specific ways in which the land question in Kazakh society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was raised in the press, in conjunction with the materials of the statistical expeditions conducted by the Russian Empire in the Steppe Regions. The aim of the study is to determine the scholarly and cognitive content of the data collected in the course of imperial statistical research and their practical function within the colonial administrative system, as well as to analyze the experience of the Kazakh national press in transforming these data into a system of arguments aimed at defending the integrity of Kazakh lands and the historical interests of the people.

The article focuses on the specific features of the statistical expeditions' study of the Kazakhs' traditional land-use system, economic structure, pasturelands, the location of winter and summer pastures and seasonal migration routes. It demonstrates that the ethnographic, economic, and statistical data collected by these expeditions, on the one hand, constituted a valuable body of primary sources for the study of the socioeconomic history of the Kazakh Steppe and, on the other, served the administrative and colonial interests of the imperial authorities in the process of re-demarcating land resources, determining the extent of so-called "surplus land", and designating territories for settlers. In this context, imperial statistics are interpreted not merely as an instrument for the production of scholarly knowledge, but also as a mechanism for surveying, classifying, and governing colonial space.

Keywords: Kazakh press, journalism, land issue, ideology, expeditions, colonization, land use.

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Қазақ мерзімді басылымдарындағы жер мәселесі және Ресей империясының статистикалық экспедицияларының деректері (XX ғасырдың басы)

Мақалада XIX ғасырдың соңы мен XX ғасырдың басындағы қазақ қоғамындағы жер мәселесінің мерзімді баспасөз беттерінде көтерілу ерекшеліктері Ресей империясының Далалық облыстарда жүргізген статистикалық экспедицияларының материалдарымен өзара сабақтастықта қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – империялық статистикалық зерттеулер барысында жинақталған мәліметтердің ғылыми-танымдық мазмұны мен отарлық басқару жүйесіндегі қолданбалы қызметін айқындау, сондай-ақ қазақ ұлттық баспасөзінің аталған деректерді жер тұтастығы мен халықтың тарихи мүддесін қорғауға бағытталған дәлелдер жүйесіне айналдыру тәжірибесін талдау.

Мақалада статистикалық экспедициялардың қазақтардың дәстүрлі жер пайдалану жүйесін, шаруашылық құрылымын, жайылымдық кеңістігін, қыстау мен жайлаудың орналасуын және маусымдық көші-қон бағыттарын зерттеу ерекшеліктеріне назар аударылады. Экспедициялар жинақтаған этнографиялық, шаруашылық және статистикалық мәліметтер, бір жағынан, қазақ даласының әлеуметтік-экономикалық тарихын зерделеуге мүмкіндік беретін құнды деректік кешен қалыптастырса, екінші жағынан, жер қорын қайта межелеу, «артық жер» көлемін анықтау және қоныс аударушыларға арналған аумақтарды белгілеу барысында империялық биліктің әкімшілік-отарлық мүдделеріне пайдаланылғаны көрсетіледі. Осыған байланысты империялық статистика ғылыми білім өндіру құралы ғана емес, отарлық кеңістікті тану, жіктеу және басқару тетігі ретінде бағаланады.

Түйін сөздер: қазақ баспасөзі, журналистика, жер мәселесі, идеология, экспедициялар, отарлау, жерді пайдалану.

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Земельный вопрос в казахских периодических изданиях и данные статистических экспедиций Российской империи (начало XX века)

В данной статье рассматриваются специфические способы освещения земельного вопроса в казахской периодической прессе конца XIX – начала XX века в контексте материалов статистических экспедиций, проводившихся Российской империей в Степном крае. Цель исследования – определить научно-познавательное содержание данных, собранных в ходе имперских статистических изысканий, и их практическую функцию в рамках колониальной административной системы, а также проанализировать опыт национальной прессы по преобразованию этих сведений в систему аргументации, направленную на защиту целостности казахских земель и национально-исторических интересов.

В работе проанализированы особенности изучения статистическими экспедициями традиционной системы землепользования казахов, экономической структуры хозяйств, а также сезонных миграционных маршрутов, зимовок и яйлау. Исследование демонстрирует, что этнографические, экономические и статистические данные, собранные экспедициями, с одной стороны, сформировали ценный массив первичных источников по социально-экономической истории казахской степи, а с другой – служили инструментарием имперских властей при перераспределении земельных ресурсов, определении так называемых «излишков земли» и отводе территорий для переселенцев. В данном контексте имперская статистика интерпретируется не только как инструмент научного познания, но и как механизм обследования, классификации и административного управления колониальным пространством.

Ключевые слова: казахская пресса, журналистика, земельный вопрос, идеология, экспедиции, колонизация, землепользование.

Introduction

The land issue has been a subject of continuous debate in the Kazakh periodical press. A substantial body of research by journalists and scholars comprehensively analyzes the Russian Empire's colonization of Kazakh lands and its aggressive policy of assimilating the national language and traditional culture. Within this context, the Alash movement effectively leveraged periodical publications to mount ideological and educational resistance against imperial doctrine, aiming to preserve national territory, language, and identity.

As Koshkinbai Yelikbayev (2022) notes in his article “The Kazakh People and the Land Issue” published in *Ontustik Kazakhstan*, the land question was inextricably linked to the preservation of national identity, traditional lifeways, and statehood. The Alash leadership, spearheaded by figures such as Alikhan Bokeikhanov, advocated for the sustainable use of land and natural resources to benefit the local population. Similarly, Meirim Bakytzhanova (2021) highlights that the *Qazaq* newspaper played an instrumental role in bringing the land issue to the forefront of public discourse, with Alash intellectuals placing strong emphasis on safeguarding Kazakh territory and prioritizing indigenous interests.

By 1923, the magazine *Kyzyl Qazaqstan* had outlined key objectives in land reform, science, and education. The periodical's core mission was to enlighten the population, raise literacy rates, disseminate scientific knowledge, and facilitate open discussion on agrarian matters, thereby guiding peasants through the complexities of public life (Qaiyrbekova, 2023). In analyzing the ideological legacy of Alash-Orda, contemporary scholars underscore Akhmet Baitursynov's pivotal thesis: the ownership and governance of land determine the very survival of the nation (Qadyr, 2023). Furthermore, *Arqa Aqshamy* has published extensive accounts of Bokeikhanov's participation in F. Shcherbina's statistical expedition, which surveyed the Kazakh steppe, clan structures, and pastoral land distribution. Bokeikhanov's empirical research aimed to demonstrate that the Kazakhs possessed no “surplus land” while underscoring the unique economic logic of nomadic pastoralism (Berikkyzy, 2026).

Land relations occupy a particularly important place in the history of Kazakhstan. Within the traditional economic system of Kazakh society, land was not just an economic resource; it constituted the spatial foundation of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism, a historical homeland, and the core of the system of seasonal migration. Consequently,

changes in the Russian Empire's land policy during the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries had a direct impact on the socioeconomic structure of Kazakh society (Shonanuly, 1995; Qul-Muhammed, 1998).

The administrative reforms of the 1860s-1890s incorporated the Kazakh lands into the imperial system of governance and laid the foundation for the reorganization of land relations through state-imposed legal norms. As the resettlement of peasants from the interior provinces of the Russian Empire intensified, identifying the land reserves to be allocated to settlers became one of the principal tasks of the imperial administration (Bekhozhin, 1964; Shonanuly, 1995). Against this background, the Expedition for the Study of the Steppe Oblasts, headed by F. A. Shcherbina, operated from 1896 to 1903. The expedition covered 12 uyezds in the Akmola, Semipalatinsk, and Turgai Oblasts and collected statistical, economic, and ethnographic data on the Kazakh pastoral economy (Campbell, 2011).

The expedition investigated the clan composition of the Kazakhs, their settlement history, livestock husbandry, agriculture, hayfields, water resources, land-leasing practices, subsidiary occupations, and household budgets. Its findings were subsequently published in the multi-volume work *Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use, Collected and Compiled by the Expedition for the Study of the Steppe Oblasts*.

The historical significance of the expedition's materials can be understood from two perspectives. On the one hand, they provide invaluable evidence for the study of the traditional economy of Kazakh society, its systems of land use, and patterns of adaptation to the natural environment (*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*, 1898-1909). On the other hand, these data were employed to calculate the amount of land required for Kazakh pastoral households, while the remaining territories were incorporated into the resettlement land reserve (Campbell, 2011). Consequently, the expedition's records cannot be interpreted independently of the administrative purposes for which they were originally produced.

This issue became a central subject of debate in both the Kazakh national and regional periodical press of the early 20th century. For the Kazakh intelligentsia, questions of land allotment norms, settler land parcels, the transition to a sedentary way of life, and the preservation of the nomadic pastoral economy were inseparable from the historical future of the Kazakh people. By contrast, Russian-language newspapers published in Omsk, such as *Irtysk* and *Omich*, presented the land question from the per-

spective of administrative governance, resettlement, and economic utilization.

The aim of the study is to determine how the land question was interpreted within imperial and national discourses on the basis of materials from the Russian Empire's statistical research expeditions and publications in the periodical press. To achieve this aim, the study analyzes the reasons for organizing the expeditions, the administrative use of their data, Alikhan Bokeikhan's participation in these studies and his scholarly and journalistic activities, as well as debates concerning the land question in the Kazakh press.

Research materials and methods

The primary empirical basis of this study comprises four distinct groups of sources: the periodical press of the Kazakh intelligentsia. The first group includes the newspapers *Turkistan Ualayatyryn Gazeti*, *Dala Ualayatyryn Gazeti*, and *Qazaq*, alongside the journal *Aiqap*. These publications provide critical insights into land relations, imperial resettlement policies, shifts in the Kazakh nomadic and agrarian economy, and the socio-political positions of the emerging national intelligentsia (Atabayev, 2000).

Imperial-regional press: The second group consists of the Omsk-based newspapers *Irtysk* and *Omich*. These periodicals published extensive coverage on the resettlement movement, new colonial settlements, agricultural transformation, land development, transport networks, trade, and regional administrative governance. Analyzing these materials reveals how land policy was framed within imperial and regional socio-political discourse.

Official statistical records: The third group comprises multi-volume materials compiled by the statistical research expeditions of the Russian Empire. These documents offer systematic empirical data on demographic indicators, livestock counts, seasonal pasturage (winter and summer grazing grounds), hayfields, arable farming, water supply, land tenure patterns, and household economic budgets (*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*, 1898-1909).

Scholarly and publicist heritage: The fourth group includes the academic publications and publicist writings of Alikhan Bokeikhan. Given his direct participation in the imperial statistical expeditions, his work serves as a crucial analytical bridge, illustrating the continuity between official statistical data and the national socio-political press (Bokeikhan, 2016).

The study applied the principles of historicism, objectivity, systematic analysis, and historical-comparative analysis. In addition, the methods of source criticism, content analysis, and comparative interpretation were employed. Publications in the periodical press were regarded not as direct reproductions of historical facts, but as assessments of those events by a particular editorial board or social group.

Furthermore, the ideology of the imperial era was disseminated to Central Asian countries through various periodical publications. The article *Coverage in the periodical press of Tsarist Russia of the colonial policy on Kazakh lands* looks at this topic. It uses the *Turkestan Collection* for this. The *Turkestan Collection* is a set of documents from 1867 to 1939. It has 594 volumes of material (Zhakyp et al., 2024). A plethora of material exists pertaining to the expansion of the Russian Empire. Kotlyar and Lymar address the issue of land protection in more detail in their articles. (Kotlyar & Lymar, 2023) To illustrate this point, one need only consider her article *Imperial Statistical Research in the Kazakh Steppes (Late 19th–Early 20th Centuries): Outlining Mobile Communities and their Boundaries*, Zhanar Jampeissova shows that the Russian Empire undertook comprehensive studies of the population, economy, livestock farming, land use, mobile territories, the composition of Kazakh communities, and administrative boundaries during that era (Jampeissova, 2016). At the same time, the works of Russian researchers of the XIX century, which tell about the Institute of marriage and family of Kazakh society, the norms of traditional law and the socio-economic context, allow us to imagine the social situation at that time (Baudiyarova, et al., 2026). Also, researchers reviewed the traditional Kazakh rural nomadic way of life, the system of land use and the culture of life (Alimbay, et al., 2023) and paid more attention to published materials of expeditions organized by the royal administration (Alimbay, 2019).

Historiography of the study

The land question in late 19th- and early 20th-century Kazakh society, the resettlement policy of the Russian Empire, and their representation in the national periodical press have been examined in Kazakhstanian historiography across several interconnected research strands. This historiographical body can be broadly categorized into imperial, Soviet, and post-independence periods. Across these stages, the underlying source base and conceptual frame-

works evolved in response to the specific political and ideological demands of each era.

Research conducted during the imperial period was based primarily on the materials of statistical expeditions led by F. A. Shcherbina, P. P. Rummyantsev, V. K. Kuznetsov, as well as those led by P. Khvorostansky and P. Skryplev and organized by the Resettlement Administration. These works accumulated extensive data on Kazakh land-use practices, economic structure, livestock numbers, the extent of pasturelands, the location of winter and summer pastures, and seasonal migration routes. The collections *Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use* were published for individual uyezds of the Akmola, Semipalatinsk, and Turgai Oblasts and were supplemented with tables, maps, and descriptions of economic activities. However, these works cannot be regarded solely as neutral scholarly studies. Their practical objective was associated with calculating the land allotment norm required for the Kazakh economy, identifying “surplus land” on this basis, and establishing the resettlement land reserve. Thus, alongside producing scholarly knowledge about the Kazakh Steppe, imperial statistics also served as an instrument for its administrative classification, demarcation, and adaptation to colonial governance.

In Soviet historiography, the land question was examined primarily from the perspective of the tsarist government’s agrarian policy, peasant resettlement, and the intensification of class relations. Researchers linked the declaration of Kazakh lands as state property, the establishment of resettlement land reserves, and the crisis of the nomadic economy to the socioeconomic consequences of colonial policy. Although these works accumulated a substantial body of factual material, the activities of the Kazakh intelligentsia aimed at protecting the integrity of Kazakh lands and the debates in the national press were generally assessed within the framework of the concept of “bourgeois nationalism”. As a result, Alikhan Bokeikhan’s work as a scholar-statistician and the approaches to the land question articulated in the journal *Aiqap* and the newspaper *Qazaq* were not fully examined as independent subjects of scholarly inquiry.

The works of B. Kenzhebayev, Q. Bekhozhin, U. Subkhanberdina, T. Qozhakeev, and Q. Atabayev are of considerable importance to the study of the history of the Kazakh periodical press. These scholars made a significant contribution to establishing the history of the development of pre-revolutionary Kazakh publications, identifying their genre and ideological characteristics, and systematizing news-

paper and journal materials. In particular, the bibliographic indexes and annotated collections compiled by U. Subkhanberdina made it possible to use *Dala Ualayatynyn Gazeti*, *Aiqap* and *Qazaq* as historical sources. Nevertheless, in the earlier studies, the land question was generally considered as one of the social issues raised by these publications, while its substantive connection with imperial statistical research was not subjected to a specific comparative analysis.

Following Kazakhstan's independence, the historiography of the land question developed along new methodological lines. In the works of K. Nurpeis, M. Koigeldiev, and other researchers, the political history of the Alash movement, the idea of national statehood, and the position of the Kazakh intelligentsia against colonial land policy received renewed assessment. Research into Alikhan Bokeikhan's scholarly legacy has demonstrated that his participation in F. A. Shcherbina's expedition influenced the formation of his views on the land question. In contemporary research, the expedition materials are regarded as a comprehensive source for the study of the history of the traditional economy, ethno demography, ethnography, historical geography and toponymy. At the same time, the existing historiography indicates that materials from the periodical press and data from statistical expeditions have generally been studied separately from one another. Although a number of works have examined the differences of opinion between *Aiqap* and *Qazaq* regarding the question of land settlement, the ways in which these publications adopted and reinterpreted imperial statistical concepts have not been sufficiently explored. Moreover, there are few comprehensive studies comparing the discourse on land in *Turkistan Ualayatynyn Gazeti*, *Dala Ualayatynyn Gazeti*, and the national press with the positions expressed in Russian-language regional newspapers such as *Irtys*, *Omich*, *Golos Stepi*, and *Stepnoi Krai*. Therefore, studying materials from the periodical press in conjunction with expeditionary statistics makes it possible to identify the contrasting positions of the imperial authorities and the Kazakh national intelligentsia on the land question. The historiographical novelty of the present study lies in examining, in their interrelationship, imperial statistics as a mechanism of colonial governance and the national press as an intellectual space that adapted this statistical knowledge to the defense of the Kazakh people's land rights and national interests.

The intersection of land, knowledge and power has become an important theme in the study of Rus-

sian imperial expansion in the Steppe and Central Asia. A number of studies have explored how land, statistical practices and local knowledge became interconnected within the broader framework of imperial governance. V. Martin (Martin, 2010) explores the relationship between land, political power, the land rights of the Chinggisid elite in nineteenth century Kazakh society through the case of Syrymbet, while M. Mespoulet (Mespoulet, 2001) examines the development of statistics in the Russian Empire and its role in state administration and the production of knowledge. D. Moon (Moon, 2013) analyzes the Russian Academy of Sciences' expeditions to the Steppe, as well as agricultural expansion, land use and social consequences of the transformation of the Steppe. A.C. Metcalf (Metcalf, 2005) highlights the role of intermediaries and local knowledge in colonial processes, whereas P. Michaels (Michaels, 2003) demonstrates how knowledge-based and administrative practices could become instruments of imperial governance in Central Asia.

Discussion

The Kazakh-language periodical press emerged in the second half of the 19th century. *Turkistan Ualayatynyn Gazeti* began publication in 1870, followed by *Dala Ualayatynyn Gazeti*, which ran from 1888 to 1902. Although these periodicals served as official administrative organs, their unofficial sections routinely featured materials on the economy, everyday life, cultural customs, and social transformations of Kazakh society (Bekhozhin, 1964; Atabayev, 2000).

While reflecting the information policy of the imperial authorities, these official publications simultaneously preserved vital historical data on the socioeconomic processes within the Kazakh Steppe (Subkhanberdina, 1992). This media landscape was further complemented by Russian-language newspapers such as *Irtys*, *Omich*, *Stepnoi Krai*, and *Golos Stepi*. Oriented toward the Russian-speaking administrative milieu, urban residents, settlers, and regional interest groups, these publications generally framed the land question through the lens of peasant resettlement, agricultural expansion, and regional administration.

A comparative analysis of these national and regional publications reveals that the land question was articulated within two distinct discourses. In the Kazakh-language press, land was conceptualized as an ancestral homeland and the cornerstone of national identity. In contrast, Russian-language news-

papers predominantly framed land as an economic resource and an object of state-sponsored resettlement and agricultural utilization.

The founding of the journal *Aiqap* in 1911 and the newspaper *Qazaq* in 1913 inaugurated a new phase in Kazakh public discourse. Periodical media transitioned from mere channels of official information into an active public forum dedicated to debating land rights, educational reform, political representation, and the nation's future (Bekhozhin, 1964; Atabayev, 2000).

By the late 19th century, mounting agrarian pressure in the European provinces of the Russian Empire accelerated the state policy of peasant resettlement to eastern regions. Under these circumstances, the imperial government recognized an urgent need for comprehensive economic and statistical surveys of the Steppe Region (Shonanuly, 1995; Campbell, 2011).

The Shcherbina Expedition, which operated from 1896 to 1903, was aimed at determining the forms of land use among the Kazakhs, the characteristics of their economic activities, the dependence of livestock husbandry on the natural environment, and their land requirements (*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*, 1898-1909). The expedition materials covered clan composition, the formation of villages, livestock husbandry, agriculture, haymaking, water sources, land leasing, subsidiary occupations, trade and household budgets.

These data formed a statistical base that provided a detailed description of the socioeconomic conditions of Kazakh society. However, the administrative objective of the expedition was also clear: to calculate the amount of land required for the Kazakh economy and to incorporate the territories beyond that amount into the resettlement land reserve (Campbell, 2011; Shonanuly, 1995).

Under the conditions of a nomadic economy, land requirements could not be measured solely in terms of permanent settlement. Seasonal movement between winter pastures (qystau), spring pastures (kokteu), summer pastures (zhailau), and autumn pastures (kuzeu), together with water sources, hay productivity, livestock numbers, and climatic conditions, constituted an integrated economic system (*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*, 1898-1909). Therefore, the concept of "surplus land" was not a neutral statistical indicator, but became an administrative category of imperial land policy (Shonanuly, 1995).

Alikhan Bokeikhan's participation in the Shcherbina Expedition had a significant influence on his subsequent scholarly and journalistic activities.

As a member of the expedition, he studied the economic system of Kazakh society, its clan structure, traditions of land use, and the impact of the natural environment on the nomadic economy (Bokeikhan, 2016; Zhiyenalina, 2006).

This experience enabled to analyze the land question through specific statistical indicators, household budgets, land allotment norms, and geographical characteristics. The expedition materials demonstrated that the Kazakh lands were not empty or unoccupied territory. Areas that were not used during particular seasons were also integral components of the system of migration routes, watering places, pastures and hayfields (*Materials on Kyrgyz Land Use*, 1898-1909).

A. Bokeikhan later used these scholarly data to criticize land policy. He assessed the repeated reduction of the amount of land left to the Kazakhs after the Shcherbina norm as follows: "The land previously left to the Kazakhs according to the Shcherbina norm was repeatedly reduced and diminished, and a new norm was introduced for the nomadic Kazakhs..." (Bokeikhan, 2016).

His criticism was directed not only at the amount of land but also at the principle used to determine the land allotment norm. Applying the same standard to regions with different natural and economic conditions failed to take into account the specific characteristics of the nomadic economy (Bokeikhan, 2016). Thus, in Bokeikhan's journalism, imperial statistics became an instrument for substantiating the historical and economic rights of the Kazakhs to their land.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the intensification of resettlement policy led to a reduction in the traditional pastures and economic space of the Kazakhs. These changes were discussed from different perspectives in the national and regional press.

Aiqap and *Qazaq* linked the land question to the future of Kazakh society. Their pages featured debates on the transition to a sedentary way of life, agriculture, communal land use, private ownership, resettlement policy, and land allotment norms.

In the newspapers *Irtys* and *Omich*, these issues were presented from the perspective of accommodating settlers, establishing new villages, bringing land into economic use, and administrative decisions. The same issue acquired different meanings across these information spaces: the national press associated land with the historical homeland, while in the regional press approached it as an object of administration and utilization.

The journal *Aiqap* raised the land question as one of the principal problems facing Kazakh society. Some of the journal's authors believed that, in order to avoid losing their land, the Kazakhs needed to establish sedentary settlements, adapt to agriculture, and secure the land legally.

This position arose not from a complete rejection of the traditional nomadic economy, but from the need to preserve the land under changing administrative and legal conditions. Therefore, the idea of sedentarization in *Aiqap* was regarded both in terms of economic modernization and as a strategy for legally securing the land (Atabayev, 2000; Qul-Muhammed, 1998).

In the newspaper *Qazaq*, the land question acquired a systematic sociopolitical character. Akhmet Baitursynuly, Alikhan Bokeikhan, Mirzhakyp Dulatuly, and other authors regarded land as a fundamental condition of national life.

A. Bokeikhan believed that a mass and rapid transition of the Kazakhs to a sedentary way of life could undermine the natural and economic foundations of nomadic livestock husbandry. He also approached the allocation of land as private property with caution, because economically vulnerable households might be compelled to sell or lose their land (Bokeikhan, 2016). He therefore supported preserving the possibility of communal land use and giving priority to meeting the needs of the local population.

A distinctive feature of the newspaper *Qazaq* was its combination of political demands with statistical evidence. Natural conditions, livestock numbers, pasture rotation, household budgets and migration distances were used to substantiate the Kazakhs need for land (Bokeikhan, 2016).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Omsk was an important center for the administration of the Steppe Region and the organization of resettlement policy. In this regard, the newspapers *Irtys*, *Omich*, *Stepnoi Krai* and *Golos Stepi* are considered important sources for studying the administrative and information space of the region.

In these publications, the land question was considered not from the perspective of national rights, but in connection with the settlement of migrants, the development of agriculture, the establishment of new settlements, and land utilization. Their materials demonstrate the administrative and economic content of resettlement policy, as well as how the Kazakh Steppe was represented within imperial discourse.

Although *Irtys*, *Omich*, *Stepnoi Krai* and *Golos Stepi* did not directly express the internal perspective

of Kazakh society, they make it possible to study regional public opinion. Therefore, they should be regarded not as alternatives to the Kazakh national press, but as complementary comparative sources.

The connection between the Shcherbina Expedition and the periodical press was not limited to the reproduction of statistical data. For the imperial administration, statistics served as an instrument for measuring, recording and governing the Kazakh Steppe (Campbell, 2011). The national intelligentsia reinterpreted these data and used them to substantiate the historical and economic need of the Kazakhs for land (Bokeikhan, 2016).

Alikhan Bokeikhan was a figure who connected these two spheres. During the expedition, he acquired professional statistical methods and later applied them in the national press to criticize land policy (Zhiyenalina, 2006). The newspapers *Irtys* and *Omich*, in turn, demonstrated how statistical and administrative knowledge was interpreted within regional public opinion.

The same body of source material was used with different political purposes: within the imperial sphere, it served to substantiate resettlement and land utilization, whereas in the national press it became evidence in support of the protection of land.

The differences of opinion between *Aiqap* and *Qazaq* have often been interpreted as a fundamental disagreement. However, the ultimate objective of both publications was the same – to preserve Kazakh lands.

Aiqap proposed a transition to a sedentary way of life and the legal securing of land under the changed legal conditions. Taking into account the specific characteristics of traditional livestock husbandry, *Qazaq* gave priority to avoiding a hasty mass transition to sedentary life and to protecting land on a communal basis (Bokeikhan, 2016). The difference lay not in the objective, but in the economic and legal means of achieving it.

In the press of the early 20th century, the land question developed from an agrarian problem into a national and political issue. This was influenced by the fact that land was the principal productive resource of the Kazakh economy and served as a historical homeland and social space, that the loss of land led to impoverishment and social changes, and that the land question became connected with the idea of political autonomy (Shonanuly, 1995; Qul-Muhammed, 1998).

For this reason, the newspaper *Qazaq* considered the land question in connection with the national future. Statistical data from the Shcherbina Expedition

concerning land allotment norms became an argument in the press aimed at protecting the people's historical territory and political rights (Bokeikhan, 2016).

The newspapers *Irtys*h and *Omich* reflected the imperial-regional dimension of this process. Their materials shed light on the administrative and informational environment in response to which the national discourse on land was formed.

Results

The findings of the study support following conclusions:

First, the materials of the Shcherbina Expedition constitute a unique source for studying the land-use system and socioeconomic structure of Kazakh society. At the same time, they served as an administrative instrument used to establish land allotment norms under the conditions of resettlement policy (Campbell, 2011).

Second, the Kazakh periodical press did not limit itself to conveying information about land policy, but developed a national interpretation of it. Although *Aiqap* and *Qazaq* proposed different ways of preserving the land, their common objective was to prevent the Kazakh people from losing their land.

Third, Alikhan Bokeikhan's activities demonstrate the connection between scholarly statistics and national journalism. He used expeditionary data to substantiate the historical and economic significance of Kazakh lands (Bokeikhan, 2016).

Fourth, the newspapers *Irtys*h, *Omich*, *Stepnoi Krai* and *Golos Step*i complement the representation of the land question within the imperial-regional information space. In these publications, land was described as an object of resettlement, agriculture and administrative governance.

Fifth, in the press of the early 20th century, the concept of land developed from an economic category into a national and political category. Land was perceived not only as the foundation of economic life, but also as the spatial basis of national integrity, the historical homeland and future statehood (Qul-Muhammed, 1998; Bokeikhan, 2016).

Conclusion

The land question in Kazakhstan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a complex historical process in which resettlement policy, scholarly and statistical research and the formation of national public thought intersected.

The Shcherbina Expedition collected extensive statistical and ethnographic materials on the traditional land-use system of Kazakh society. Although these data were valuable from a scholarly perspective, they also served the imperial administration's policy of establishing land allotment norms and forming the resettlement land reserve.

The Kazakh press of the early 20th century developed a public and intellectual response to this policy. While *Aiqap* proposed legally securing land and adapting to a sedentary way of life, *Qazaq* gave priority to preserving the distinctive characteristics of the traditional economy and protecting land on a communal basis. Despite their tactical differences, their common objective was to preserve the integrity of Kazakh lands.

Alikhan Bokeikhan connected expeditionary statistics with national journalism and used the results of imperial research to defend the historical and economic rights of the Kazakhs to their land (Bokeikhan, 2016). The newspapers *Irtys*h, *Omich*, *Stepnoi Krai* and *Golos Step*i, in turn, revealed how the land question was represented within the regional-imperial information space.

Thus, not only a source-based but also an intellectual continuity developed between the materials of the Russian Empire's statistical research expeditions and the periodical press. For the imperial authorities, statistics served as an instrument of governance, whereas for the Kazakh intelligentsia, they became scholarly evidence for the protection of land. This process demonstrates how the land question developed from an agrarian problem into the core of a national and political idea.

The view from an ideological perspective, the land issue emerged not only as an administrative and economic task in the colonial governance system of the Russian Empire, but also as one of the ideological foundations for the recognition and organization of imperial space. From this perspective, periodical press materials reflect the emergence of two different worldviews: in the imperial discourse, land is described as an administrative resource that can be managed and redistributed, while in the national discourse, it is interpreted as a historical and social space.

The ideological dimension of the land question is also particular importance in understanding the relationship between imperial statistical practices and colonial governance.

From an ideological perspective, the land question was not merely an administrative or economic issue within the Russian Empire's colonial system,

but also an important component of the ideological foundations through which imperial space was classified and conceptualized.

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