

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Disruption of Pastoral Nomadism: The Impacts of Russian Colonialism on the Kazakh Steppe during the 19th and 20th Centuries*

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Abstract

This study examines the multifaceted impacts of Russian colonization on the Kazakh Steppes during the 19th and 20th centuries. The colonization process caused significant destruction in various fields in the region, including migration routes, livestock herds, socioeconomic life, trade networks, housing and dietary patterns of nomadic communities. Russian expansionism, aimed at establishing control over the steppe, led to the blockage of ancient migration routes and the restriction of nomadic economic resources. The blockage of migration routes, forced transition to capitalism, forced sedentarization and interaction with sedentary life transformed the livestock herds of the nomads. Socio-economic life and trade were restructured by the Tsardom for reasons such as integration into the Russian Empire market, change of commercial centers and concentration of wealth. The changing structure of pastoral nomadism also led to transformations in housing and diet. Comprehending the complex dynamics of Russian colonialism on the Kazakh Steppe will reveal the destruction of nomadic life by scrutinizing the historical and contemporary sociocultural landscape of the region.

Keywords

Kazakh Steppe, Russian colonialism, sedentarization, pastoral nomadism, Russian colonizers, settler colonialism.

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Konargöçer Yaşamın Tahribatı: 19. ve 20. Yüzyıllarda Rus Sömürgeciliğinin Kazak Bozkır Üzerindeki Etkileri*

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Öz

Bu çalışma 19. ve 20. yüzyıllarda Rus Sömürgeciliğinin Kazak Bozkırları üzerindeki çok yönlü etkilerini incelemektedir. Sömürgeleştirme süreci, konargöçer toplulukların göç yolları, hayvan sürüleri, sosyoekonomik yaşamı, ticaret ağları, barınma ve beslenme kalıpları da dâhil olmak üzere bölgede çeşitli yönleriyle göçer iktisadi yaşam üzerinde önemli tahribatlara yol açmıştır. Bozkır üzerinde kontrol kurmayı amaçlayan Rus yayılmacılığı, kadim göç yollarının tıkanmasına ve konar-göçer iktisadi kaynaklarının kısıtlanmasına yol açmıştır. Göç yollarının tıkanması, zorla sömürge ekonomisine geçirilme, yerleşik yaşam tarzına zorlanma ya da yerleşik yaşamla etkileşim kurulması konar-göçerlerin hayvan sürülerini de dönüştürmüştür. Sosyoekonomik yaşam ve ticaret ise Rus İmparatorluğu pazarına entegrasyon, ticari merkezlerin değişimi ve servet yoğunlaşması gibi nedenlerle Çarlık tarafından yeniden yapılandırılmıştır. Konargöçer yaşamın değişen yapısı barınma ve beslenme biçimi üzerinde de dönüşümlere yol açmıştır. Kazak Bozkır üzerindeki Rus sömürgeciliği kaynaklı karmaşık dinamikleri anlamak, bölgenin tarihsel ve çağdaş sosyokültürel manzarasını mercek altına alarak konargöçer yaşamın maruz kaldığı tahribatı ortaya çıkaracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kazak Bozkır, Rus sömürgeciliği, yerleşikleştirme, pastoral göçebelik, Rus yerleşimciler, yerleşimci sömürgecilik.

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Introduction

The Kazakhs, who established a khanate around the *Shu* (*Illy*) River in the 15th century, were divided into administrative units as ‘Senior, Middle and Junior’ Juz with their increasing population, and in 1724-1725, they faced difficulties with Kalmyks’ raids from the east and requested help from the Tsardom (LeDonne 163-164). Taking advantage of this attractive offer from the Kazakh steppes, which Peter had pointed to as a target, the Tsardom took Abu’l-Hayr Khan and the Junior Juz under her protection in 1731 and Middle Juz in 1845. The Senior Juz, on the other hand, had a tough time under Kalmyk domination until 1756, and then was disturbed by the Kokand Khanate’s efforts to settle in the Yedisu Region, was annexed by the Tsardom in 1824 (Levshin 108). Naturally, this process was not accomplished without resistance or political struggle, and uprisings in the Kazakh Steppe, notably the Kenasari Khan Rebellion, continued till 1868.

The Kazakh Steppe, a vast and historically significant region inhabited by pastoral nomads over four millennia, underwent intense transformation in the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of Russian colonialism and the influx of settler/colonizers. The Russian Empire’s intense interest in steppe paved the way for a process of expansion and territorial control that brought one and a half million Russian settlers to the region by the end of the 19th century, thus changing the social, cultural and economic fabric of the region (Cameron 19). While the advance of Russian colonialism into the Turkic world, particularly the Kazakh Steppe, and the resistance to this advance have been frequently discussed from the perspective of political history on a region basis, the sociocultural sphere in the context of the interaction of settlers and nomadic life has not been given much focus.

The pastoral nomadism, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Kazakh Steppe, has faced significant challenges due to Russian colonial policies. Ranges and ancient migration routes, once used to sustain nomadic livelihoods and facilitate trade, were blocked due to administrative boundaries set by the Tsardom, which seized political sovereignty, and access to settlements that had been used for centuries for pasture and winter pasture became difficult or captured by settlers. Nomadic economy, which traditionally relied on the mobility of their herds, has either lost its ability to move freely in the steppe due to settlement efforts and settlers’ appropriation

of pasture lands as virgin lands, or has been sustained with restrictions. It should be noted that the destruction of the steppe and the nomadic way of life developed in three stages in this respect. The first of these is the process of forced capitalization of the steppe, which constitutes the subject of the study and refers to settler colonialism (1822-1916), while the other stages consisted of the forced sedentarization carried out by Stalin during his collectivization (1926-1939) and Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Campaign (1954-1964). New statutes introduced by colonial rule changed the borders of the steppe, and new trade and border agreements between China and Russia were implemented without regard to ancient migration routes, and land enclosed by agricultural policies began to swallow up vast pastures.

The appropriation of the Kazakh Steppe by Slavic settlers also produced profound changes in the socio-economic structure of the region. Colonial policies aimed to integrate the steppe into the larger markets of the Russian Empire, which allowed for the creation of new trading centers and new areas or transfers of wealth. Amidst intense changes involving new means of transportation, roads, new taxation systems, Kazakh nomads tried to take measures to adapt to the market-oriented economy and transform their way of life accordingly. Therefore, Russian colonialism, which began in the 19th century and reached its peak in the 20th century, and the destruction caused by Slavic settlers on the nomadic life in the Kazakh steppe marked the beginning of the movement of forced capitalization (Engels 21) that would spread first to the steppe and then to the whole of Turkestan, just like the enclosure of the lands used by the peasant as common cultivation and planting areas in the British Enclosure Movement.

Colonization of the Kazakh Steppe

The Kazakh Steppe has long been the site of fierce struggles over the control and utilization of its expansive grasslands. The Russian Empire's policies on the steppe have once again pitted nomads against sedentary societies in a profound struggle for existence, much like their relations with China. From the late 19th century onwards, waves of Slavs from European Russia migrated into the Kazakh steppes. The main motive of the settlers in this migration, which was quite dangerous for them, was based on the simple basics of gaining their freedom and free land. The Tsardom, on the other hand, considered the nomads living in the steppe as obstacles in the process of colonization and

pursued the dream of turning the Kazakhs into agricultural peasants on the basis of military, topographical and sociocultural reports prepared for years on the steppe. This impulse, which continued during the Soviet period, especially after 1928 with Stalin, resulted in major changes in the culture and economy of Kazakh society. Russia's presence in the Kazakh Steppes before Leonid Brezhnev should be analyzed in different stages and be considered within the general policy of Russian expansion to the east. The first phase, from the mid-16th century to 1830, was one of containment, defense and commercial ventures rather than control, whereas from the mid-19th century onwards it included the neutralization of the steppe, and the second phase, from the 1880s to 1914, involved the colonization of the region and the planned or unplanned direct settlement of settlers by the Tsar (Wendelken 72). Setting aside the large populations exiled to the steppe by Stalin between 1926 and 1939 as a result of collectivization and the Gulags, the third and final phase was the 'Virgin Lands Campaign' (1954-1964), marking the most intensive wave of settler migration during the Soviet era.

The stages and processes of colonization of the steppe are directly related to the Kazakh and Russian sides' rapprochement influenced by a number of developments and the conflicts of interest that arising from this situation. In the 17th century, the emerging Kalmyk threat to the Kazakh Juzes from the east forced them to ally with Russians, and this pressure brought about the first intensive contact in terms of relations (d'Encausse 115). The idea of spreading Russian influence into the steppe by taking advantage of the situation turned into political approach with Peter I's idea that 'the Kazakhs hold the key to all of Asia and must be protected' (Hayit 62). It can be seen that the Russian side, inclined to evaluate the newly established relations and to develop a policy accordingly, basically produced two perspectives on the Kazakh steppe. The first one is the compilations including Colonel Kostenko Lev Feofanovich (*Srednia Aziya I Vodvorenije v nei Russkoy Grazhdanstvennost*) and K. Kaufmann (*Turkestanskiy Sbornik Sochinenij i Statej*), which reflect the military perspective and report on the region. The other is the data left historians and ethnographers such as Kharuzin Alexei Nikolayevich and Alexei Iraklijevich Levshin, which reflect an academic perspective. While military reports fed a policy based on annexation until the 18th century, the ideas put forward by Levshin, in particular, formed the basis of the harsh colonization policies of the 19th century, although this was not the result he expected.

In 1868, when the Tsardom officially annexed the steppe, the region was administratively divided into three oblasts. Sir Derya and Semirechye (Yedisu) were subordinated to the Turkestan Governorate, Uralsk and Semey to the West Siberian Governorate (Wendelken 77). The administrative structure was subdivided into units, producing *uyezd* (уезд) and *volost* (во́лость) in smaller parts downwards in the designated regions (Cameron 26). The administrative and judicial conflicts of interest created by the territorial division were one of the catalysts of ethnic disputes in the struggle of Kazakh against settlers, who were declared ‘Inorodets’ (инородец) within the Russian subjects (Slocum) and had fewer rights than Russian citizens (Brower). The year 1891 marked the most powerful step towards the colonization of the Kazakh Steppe, when the Steppe Statute united Turgay, Uralsk, Akmolinsk and Semey into Governor-Generalship of the Steppes (Olcott, *The Kazakhs* 78). The most objectionable aspect of Steppe Statute for Kazakh nomads was Article 119 and 120, which included the nationalization of lands designated as ‘surplus’ at the Tsardom initiative and the distribution of these lands among the settlers. According to the statute, the number of Kazakhs in the designated areas was multiplied by thirty and subtracted from the total land area, and all surplus land was designated as ‘*izlishki*’ (излишки) (Olcott, *The Kazakhs* 78). Although this calculation may seem to be problematic for sedentarism based on agrarian economy, it created serious resource utilization problems for nomadism based on pastoralist economic foundations that divided people and animal to land rather than land to people.

Accurately determining the number of settlers the administratively subjugated Kazakh Steppe received during the early period remains challenging. Thus, although it is not possible to find data from before 1896, when the Resettlement Administration was established, it can be assumed that the first migrations averaged between 300,000-500,000, considering that in the 1897 census, Russians accounted for 12% of the steppe’s population, approximately 600,000 people (Demko 76). This number increased rapidly in 1891 because of peasants fleeing the Great Famine in European Russia (Johnson). In addition, the establishment of the Resettlement Administration after 1896 and the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway to Omsk, which the settlers considered the gateway to the steppe, led to a significant increase in the number of settlers, and by 1911, Russians accounted for 40% of the steppe population (Demko 77).

For the Russians, the settlers in the steppe were divided into three large groups. The first group were those who were to be settled directly by the Tsardom, whose number was limited by law and who had to pay off all their debts before being allowed to settle. In this respect, those representing the second group were probably those from the first group who wanted to be relieved of their huge debt burden by transfer, and this was an important factor that increased the number of irregular settlers who could not pay their debts. Given the lack of harvest during the 1891 famine, it is not difficult to imagine how large this group would have been. The last group was those who were allowed to migrate to other regions after the abolition of peasant serfdom by Alexander II on February 18, 1861, but could not find a foothold there and tried their luck in the steppes instead of returning to European Russia (Wendelken 79). The Tsardom rulers divided the settlers into *starojili* (Старожилы/old settlers) and *novoseli* (новоселы/new settlers), using the establishment of the Resettlement Administration as a milestone, while Kazakhs referred to them as *qarashependiler* (black coast) or *kelsimseker* (intruders, invaders) (Cameron 36).

The migration of settlers to the steppe was chaotic though it was also systematic owing to the Tsardom control. The settlers in the first group owning sufficient money sent ‘scouts’ to the region to select land that they could rent from the Kazakhs, while the poorer settlers in the second group not having the money to rent or buy seized what they perceived to be vacant and untouched land belonging to nomads migrating between pasture and winter (Siegelbaum 31-58). This behavior of the settlers naturally gave rise to serious problems in terms of land, water and livestock use rights in the steppe, and threats such as increased population, interaction and poor conditions in the migration areas, epidemics and difficulties in accessing materials to meet the need for shelter. Moreover, settlers, expecting to encounter agriculturally “fertile and rich” lands, became more combative and aggressive in their dealings with Kazakh nomads due to the drastically changing climatic structure of the steppe in the 19th century (Moon 2010). Although the establishment of the Resettlement Administration included punitive measures against illegal migration or the repatriation of settlers who migrated illegally, these were rarely implemented or mostly ignored. Therefore, instead of resolving problems between settlers and nomads or enforcing laws, the government, therefore, directly encouraged migration

to West Siberia and further east, giving settlers free or discounted tickets to use the Trans-Siberian Railroad (Demko 74). Despite various incentives, it is estimated that between 1896 and 1916, following the establishment of the Resettlement Administration, 22% of settlers were unable to withstand the harsh conditions of the steppe, including the unforgiving climate and challenges in adapting agricultural practices, ultimately returning to European Russia (Demko 84).

Establishment of Administrative Borders and Blockage of Migration Routes

Following 1868, the establishment of Russian control over the steppe marked a period in which the dynamics and policies of the 18th century were largely abandoned in terms of relations. Prior to the domination of the steppe, the Tsardom policies were intended for non-interference and preserving local autonomy or keeping them busy with conflicts of interest among the tribes. Particularly during the reign of Catherine II (1729-1796), this non-intervention was mostly aimed at encouraging the nomads to sedentarism and expecting them to become “civilized” from their own point of view. Nevertheless, in the changing political situation, establishing dominance over the steppe required a sustainable order for the Tsardom economy by creating administrative units. In this regard, Levshin’s report played a fundamental role in abandoning the effort to settle the nomads and establishing a reliable structure by Russification the region through settlers.

Even though Levshin emphasizes that agricultural land cannot be extracted from the steppes, his view on nomads were uncompromising and unequivocal. Asserting that the steppe was chaotic, anarchic and uncivilized, Levshin described nomadic animal husbandry as meaningless and unproductive, and the nomads as groups that were willing to make peace neither among themselves nor with others and did not want to live under the rule of Russia or any other state authority (Levshin 51-52). Levshin also criticized the ‘civilization’ effort during Catherine’s reign, arguing that the construction of schools and mosques and the settlements designed for the nomads were abandoned (Levshin 125). Directly linking this situation with steppe and the way of life of nomads, Levshin stated that while all people lived under a satirized despotism, the Kazakhs, owing to their pastoral nomadism and the infertility of their lands, led an agricultural, non-hierarchical life (Levshin 127). The most important feature that distinguishes their report

from the others is that Levshin argued that it was impossible to sedentarize the nomads in the steppe and that the Kazakhs could benefit the empire by being left as rich sheepherders rather than creating poor farmers. In this respect, although Levshin did not idealize colonization, it is clear that he caused an awakening that radical decisions had to be taken regarding the steppe. Hence, the presence of 'reliable' settler farmers became a crucial issue for the Tsardom in order for agricultural to be practiced. The fact that the colonization process limited the migration activities of the nomads was also a consequence of the policies to be carried out within this framework.

The limitation of migratory activities can be started with the involvement of the Cossaks, the first 'European' group to arrive in the region before colonization. In exchange for land ownership and autonomy, the Cossaks carried out military-border protection activities in the north-western part of the steppe in direct subordination to the Tsar, creating a kind of defensive, settlement and outpost line, which was later named the Siberian Line (Demko 39). Two important events in three stages turned migration activities into a field of intense struggle for the Kazakhs in the 19th century. The first of these was the 1822 Statute of Siberian Kirghiz (*Ustav o Sibirskih Kirgizah*), by Mikhail Speransky (1772-1839). In terms of content, the Statue proclaimed direct the Tsardom rule in the Kazakh steppes through bureaucracy and formed the basis for the Statutes of 1868 and 1891. The 1822 Statute introduced administrative division for the first time in the steppe and laid out a comprehensive rulebook that included towns and township, land development projects, taxation, education and social issues, and aimed to settle the nomads (Wendelken 75). As Levshin emphasizes, although this statute was not successful in terms of sedentarization, the administrative divisions it introduced marked the beginning of the enclosures on the migration routes after the Kazakh Juzes came completely under the Tsardom rule.

The 1868 Statute, expressing the administrative structure of the colonization process, contained the most important regulations in terms of blocking migration routes. According to the statute, Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk Oblasts, which were administered as military possessions of western Siberia, and Uralsk and Turgay Oblasts, which were administered by the Internal Affairs, were separated by strict territorial boundaries, despite the objections of individuals such as Nikolai Andreyevich Kryzhanovsky (1818-1888),

the Governor of Orenburg, and in some of the separated regions, nomadic and sedentary elements were brought together, narrowing the passability (Olcott, "The Settlement" 13). It should be noted that the main reason for the Tsardom governors' opposition to the statutes was that they would lose their authority and regional initiative and would have to delegate power to the civilian ministries of the center. Furthermore, the Governor General appointed the administrator of each administrative region, oblast and uyezd, while volosts and auls were to be removed from their constituencies, subject to approval (*Otchet Po Revizii Turkestarskogo Kraya* 38-39). Although this arrangement in the administration was considered as a step towards disrupting the clan order and bonding among the nomads, the fact that the same clans remained together in divided administrations created a situation that gave them an advantage in choosing the rulers.

The most important impact of the statutes on the blockage of migration routes was the land use regulations. The three main areas designated for the nomads within administrative divisions were pasture (*yaylak*), winter pasture (*kışlak*) and cultivated land. Accordingly, the volost administrator was to designate a winter pasture area in each aul, including structures such as lodging, barns and warehouses, with permits; in uyezds, administrator was to determine and allocate the necessary pasture parcels for the entire region; and in the case of cultivated land, the head of the household cultivating the land could turn it into private property (*Otchet Po Revizii Turkestarskogo Kraya* 236-237). Considering the decisions taken on land use, it may seem that the structure of Kazakh Steppe and the situation of nomadism were taken into consideration. It is, however, not possible to say whether the designated pasture and winter lands were on the migration routes and the structure of the herds of animals to be driven to pasture on the specified lands was taken into account. In addition, there was no regulation on the use of the lands confiscated by the settlers until 1891, nor did it an application for the obstacles created by the fences and bars drawn by the settlers on the administratively divided migration routes. Concerning it is reasonable to say that proposing controlled migration routes at certain distances for nomads and encouraging private ownership of the lands to be cultivated had any other purpose other than trying to promote sedentarization of nomads. The difficulties that both statutes created for the migration manifested themselves in the judicial situations that arose in

the use of land, which were also determined by the statutes. For instance, Morrison reports that in a land use dispute with injuries that occurred just before the 1906 Statute, the court ruled against the nomads based on the testimony of only six settlers, while a hundred people testified (Morrison, “Peasant Settlers” 391).

The nascent administrative boundaries established by the statutes had a restrictive impact on all migratory activities in the northern and central parts of the Kazakh steppe, from the Sir-Derya to the Caspian, from the Mangistau to the *Ustyurt*, and from the *Elek* to *Sarisu*. Kazakh nomads who spent the harsh winter in the central and southern regions had to travel long distances to reach the vast pastures of the northern regions using ancient migration routes. Indeed, for long-distance migrations (meridional), these distances reached 1000-1500 kilometers, while for nomads following the south-north route, even reaching the Turgay region from the Sir-Derya required 600-800 kilometers (*Aziatskaya Rossiya* 158-159). Yet, the internal borders established by the statutes did not allow nomads who did not want to spend the summer months in the south among dry grass and mosquitoes to spend the spring in the north-west such as Turgay and Kostanay.



Map 1. Rangeland in Kazakh Steppe (Kerven et al. 3)

For the nomads who were able to reach the transhumance areas, settling at distances from each other and making efficient use of the land where they could graze their herds was again not possible due to the statutes. While rivers, wells or lakes where herds could drink water between ranges played a crucial role in determining migration routes, settlers’ fencing off the areas

they seized or intensively shifting water resources to unproductive lands for agriculture led to the search for new and uncertain migration routes over limited resources. In parallel, the restriction of nomadic mobility has also paved the way for overgrazing in the same area by the herds, depleting resources in a short period of time and related ecological imbalances.

After the establishment of internal borders through statutes, a second obstacle to the blockage of migration routes emerged with the establishment of external borders. The Treaty of St. Petersburg (1881) (Петербургский договор) or the Treaty of the Ili Region (Договор об Илийском крае) between the Qing Dynasty and the Russian Empire established an official Sino-Russian border roughly between present-day East Turkestan and Kazakhstan (*Russko-Kitayskiye Otnosheniya 1689-1916* 54). According to the treaty, a large part of the Ili Region was left under Qing rule, while Uyghurs and Kazakhs living the region were given a choice and, the right (Article 3) to take Russian or Qing citizenship (*Russko-Kitayskiye Otnosheniya 1689-1916* 55). The exchange of citizenship led to a significant migration movement, especially to the south of the eastern part of the Kazakh Steppes. However, as with the regulations of statutes, the demarcation of external administrative boundaries added a further burden to the enclosure of important migration routes that could take centuries to form. With the Ili Region Agreement, migration from the East Kazakhstan to East Turkestan between the Irtysh, Emin and Ili Valleys was blocked by state borders and military checkpoints. Concordantly, both internal and external demarcation of borders played the most important role in blocking the migration routes of nomads by the end of the 19th century and laid the foundation for the problematic of the use limited resources between settlers and nomads in the use of fertile northern regions.

The Reorganization of the Means of Production and the Entry of Capitalism into the Steppe

The arrival of settlers and merchants to the Kazakh steppes brought by Russian colonialism, the establishment of a new administrative order by defining internal and external borders severely restricted the migratory mobility of the nomads. This restriction had a significant impact on the size and diversity of livestock herds, which had to be kept in a delicate balance due to the narrowing of migratory mobility and to increased interaction with sedentary settlers. The basic livestock husbandry approach of the steppes

is mainly based on raising different and compatible livestock, both small ruminants (sheep, goats) and cattle (horses, cattle, camels). Although the animal husbandry required certain rules between winter and spring pastures for its sustainability, the dynamic nomadic pastoralists quickly adapted to the challenges of restrictions and new market opportunities brought by Russian colonization (Ferret 187).

Kazakh nomads, with shorter migration distances following the change in land use patterns, tended to intensively add cattle to the composition of their herds in addition to sheep-goats and horses, especially in the northern regions, which could be migrated over short distances. This tendency, which had not been very common in the 18th century before the arrival of Russian colonialism in the steppe, became the main determinant of the composition of animal herds in the coming centuries within the demand balance of the new Russian markets. Cattle are very difficult animals to migrate over long distances, unlike the usual patterns of nomads, and their eating habits are quite different from those of sheep and goats (Khazanov, *Nomads* 46-47). Although cattle, which tend to live on pastures rather than graze on large pasture, make a difference, their density in the herds of Kazakh nomads on the steppe has increased by 20% in most regions (Cameron 37). The increase in the percentage of cattle in the herd composition and the narrowing of migration distances led Kazakh nomads to give up their camels, which they decorated with *asmaldyks*, or to remove them from the herds as they were no longer needed (Kostenko, *Turkestanskiy* 340). Due to restriction of long-distance migration, nomads had to supplement their labor force for daily or seasonal work. Therefore, the need to add 7-8 cattle or 10-12 horses for every 6 camels to the herds in proportion to the required labor force was one of the factors contributing to the transformation of herds (Kartaeva 99).

The haystack created to replace the pastures lost due to the increase in cattle production also had an impact on the duration of pasture and winter pasture use. If we consider the substitutes created for hay production as winter pastures, it was inevitable that the periods spent in these areas were prolonged (by almost 3 months) and the range chosen for pasture was shortened, leading to a shortening in the periods spent there (Martin 80-83). The transhumants started to breed cattle with short-distance migrations due to the change in the duration of pasture and wintering, but in winter

they had to create different routes in order to find suitable pastures for cattle grazing, and depending on the harshness of the winter, they could migrate to more southern regions and Kyzylkum in the same season (Kartaeva 110-111). Reducing the weight of camels in the herd composition or removing them altogether with shorter migratory activities created differences not only in terms of migration distances but also in terms of trade for the nomads. The removal of camels from the equation led to the transformation of caravan-type trade in the steppe, bringing markets close to centers or seasonal fairs to the fore. In a relative situation, more cattle were produced for the Russian markets, and the abandonment of ancient traditions was effective in the transformation of animal husbandry into a direct market-oriented product breeding. This dependency and the new market often enabled the nomads who turned to cattle breeding to sell their livestock before winter came and to overcome the difficult conditions of the winter months more easily. The distinctive features of the steppe brought cattle breeding to a tremendous level, and in 1908, 400,000 head of cattle and more than 6,000 tons of meat were exported from Semirechye and parts of the Sir-Derya to European Russia (Demko 186).

The restriction of migration following the enactment of statutes, along with the rise in cattle numbers –particularly in the northern regions of the steppe– does not appear to have been a unilateral decision by the nomads. Although the addition of cattle to herds partially eliminated the need for migratory mobility during the cold winter months, it increased the amount of fodder needed. According to Olcott, the right to private ownership of cultivated land introduced by the Steppe Statute and the intense demand for cattle generated by Russian markets were not coincidental. The Tsardom introduced these statutes in order to restrict long-distance migratory mobility and to allow households to keep more livestock, thus making cattle-raising nomads more dependent on Russian markets and increasing the amount of pasture land that settlers could seize. In this respect, it is possible to say that the privately owned cultivated lands permitted by the law were the haystacks created by the nomadic activities in order to feed their cattle. Therefore, although cattle breeding entered the steppe out of necessity, it became a capital product of the Russian markets and damaged the balance of herd ownership among the nomads. While the number of herds in the steppe enhanced day by day, the number of people owning

herds diminished, in a way, it started the process of monopolization of herd density around the *bai*, internal conflicts due to disputes and livelihood imbalance (Olcott, *The Kazakhs* 99). This is in line with Salzman's argument that when nomads were not egalitarian in their organization, conflict arose, often directly linked to interaction with neighboring states (Salzman 29).

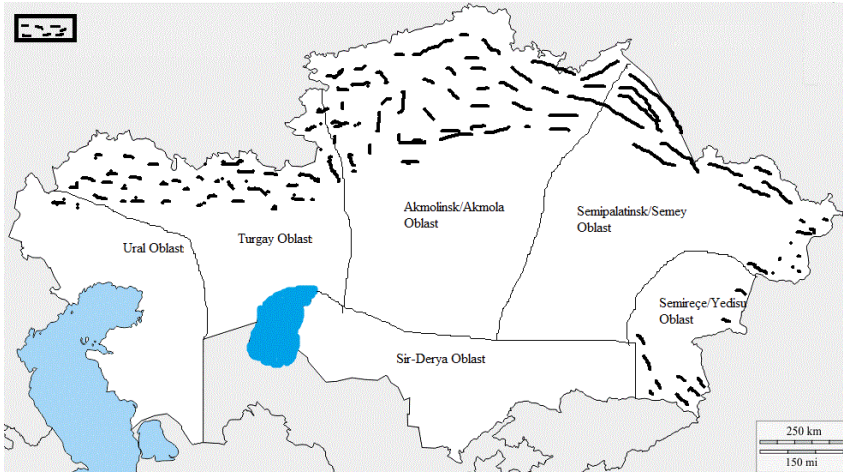
The transformation of herd components by nomadic pastoralist and the addition of marketed species such as cattle naturally led to differences in the size of herds. In nomadic husbandry, the size of herds has been directly related not only to the number of animal but also to many other factors. As Khazanov ("The Size of Herds") points out, while the lowest limit of herds is 'subsistence', the upper limit may vary with ecological factors related to the environment, the type of animals, annual weather conditions, seasonal changes, gender and age composition of herds. In this respect, the size of herds transformed under the impact of Russian colonialism has been rearranged as the use of pasture land has changed and issues such as hay production have entered the equation. On a family rather than large scale, İogann Gotlib Georgy (1729-1802) estimated that in the late 18th century, a fairly well-off Kazakh family had a herd of 30-50 horses, 100 sheep, 15-25 head of cattle, 20-25 goats and a few camels (Georgy 125). By the end of the 19th century, a family in the northern regions, such as Akmolinsk, was reported to be able to survive on 5 horses, 10 rams-sheep and 6 cattle (Slotvsov 23-24). Leaving aside the period in which the data was collected and whether they were able to meet the minimum size required for sustainability, it can be observed that *yurts*, especially in the northern region, have shrunk at the family level and even become significantly poorer. In addition to this, the decrease in diversity also shows how densely populated the northern regions have become with nomads who used to be located as far away from each other as possible in pasture areas.

Following the arrival of Russian colonialism in the steppe, herds transformed under the impact of restricted migration activities had an effect not only on the types of livestock but also on the amount of livestock owned and their number per family. In this respect, cattle breeding, which became a capital product, increased the number of animals available on the steppe more than ever before at the beginning of the 20th century, whereas the number of grazing animals declined in inverse proportion. While the increase in the

amount of livestock herds gathered around the bai, the ability to migrate long distances with shrinking of the yurts and the decrease in the number of livestock revealed the ability to migrate as a sign of existence. The fact that the nomads, who divided people and herds to the land rather than land, were squeezed into much more limited areas due to administrative boundary arrangements, and that the yurts were located at closer distances to each other with fewer herd animals, created problems that caused hardship for animal husbandry. As herds were transformed due to migration constraints, the introduction of black sheep breeds and horse breeds, especially Orlov Trotter, brought by settlers from European Russia to the north of the steppe brought new problems such as the hybridization of sheep and horse breeds that had been breeding in the steppe for centuries. In addition, the limitation of nomadism and the intensification of agriculture in the region did not have a negative impact on its own. Developments such as the expansion of agriculture and fodder production facilitated large-scale cattle breeding, enabling livestock production on a scale unattainable through traditional pasture grazing. In the central and southern regions, sheep and goats maintained their importance in herds. Cattle breeding was able to keep the impact of settlers away from the southern regions, as the trade link on which small cattle breeding depended was much closer to markets including Bukhara and Khiva, and easier to reach. In the long term, however, agricultural areas were expanded not only on grassland but also through forested areas. The destruction of forests, which would have prevented the desert heat or sand winds from the south of the steppe, negatively affected both the remaining pastures and the newly cultivated areas (Kunhenn).

Colonial Trade and Its Impact on Socioeconomic Structure

In the mid-18th century, the Russian colonization of the Kazakh steppe and the arrival of settlers led to significant changes in nomadism. In the early 20th century, the fertile areas in the north, especially in the Akmolinsk region, where the settlers occupied and concentrated, became a completely fertile area. Destroyed by the impact of the introduced statutes, nomadism also showed its socio-cultural and socio-economic effects intensively and rapidly upon the entry of colonial trade.



Map 2. Colonizers Areas where settlers spread in the Kazakh Steppe until 1905 (Demko)

Prior to the colonial regime, trade between the Tsardom and the Kazakh Steppes was characterized by a very limited trade in precious metals, grain and, in turn, a limited trade in livestock. At the peak of Russian expansionism in the early 19th century, however, the changing commercial structure turned the steppe into a transit point for products to be transported to the depths of Asia, Iran and finally to the Chinese market (Noda 215-216). Nonetheless, the traditional trade routes established on the steppe during this period were carried out through caravan trade, and the transportation of goods to the Caspian via the Idyll River, Bukhara or further east via the steppe could take two to three months and was quite costly (Olcott, *The Kazakhs* 59). The caravan trade, which became more troublesome for the nomads under the new administrative structure, and the disposal of camels in the northern regions also imposed serious burdens on the time and cost ratios in trade. Moreover, the seasonal cycle of the existing caravan trade networks created difficulties in terms of trade fluidity.

Rapid measures were taken to overcome the difficulties of the caravan trade and the obstacles that the colonial regime itself had imposed on the steppe. Besides the settler farmers, the workshops established by Russian merchants who realized the potential of the steppe and came from European Russia to cities such as Orenburg, Orsk, Ural and Semipalatinsk had the greatest impact

on social transformation. These workshops enabled the immediate production of metal products to be sold to the Kazakhs, as well as the processing and rapid transfer of valuable skins from the steppe to European Russia (Campbell 84). The other longer-term investment was the Trans-Siberian and Orenburg-Tashkent Railroad projects, which would cement Russian dominance in both the steppe and Turkestan. The completion of railroad construction completely removed traditional methods from the mainstream trade routes. It is interesting to note that despite the development of all means of production and transportation, the commercial volume of meat, wool, leather, goat hair, and other products imported from the steppe to European Russia from 1858 to 1862 was almost three times that of raw cotton imported from Bukhara and Khiva (Morrison, *The Russian* 17). Although the amount of cotton imported after 1863 tripled and its value increased tenfold, as Morrison emphasizes, this was not enough for anyone to argue that the steppe was occupied for livestock (Morrison, *The Russian* 19). Nevertheless, Russia's colonial benefits from the steppe can be traced in a wide variety of ways, from leather production to the contribution of the plant diversity collected in the region to the Russian chemical industry (Penati 2023). In this regard, it is an important indicator that the Tsardom, after accessing Bukhara and Khiva cotton, encouraged cattle production in the north of the steppe and parceled out certain areas of exploitation that would continue in the USSR period.

As the Russian colonial trade continued to advance across the steppe, the nomads who lost their pasture lands or whose migration routes were restricted tried to compensate for this situation with partial agriculture, hunting, fishing and trade expansion. However, it should be noted that agricultural activities were widespread among the impoverished Kazakh in the auls, and agriculture was practiced on the banks of rivers or lakes, but not on their own land. As Levshin (380) points out, these agricultural activities did not mean the transition to sedentation, but it should not be forgotten that the preference for crops that yielded results in a short time, such as millet, allowed them the use traditional methods such as taking as much of these crops as they needed and burying the rest in the ground when they migrated in terms of practicality. The innovations brought by the colonial regime, or in other words, the difficulties for the nomads, new production systems, administration and consequent transformation with destruction, had a profound impact on the nomadic family and clan

structure. According to recent studies analyzing the destruction from a socioeconomic perspective, this transformation is thought to have taken place in a very short period of 10-12 years, and the rapid change had irreversible consequences on the social structure (Guirkinger and Aldashev). With the arrival of settlers on the steppe, increased competition for resources individualized property rights among nomadic families and clans, reduced communal grazing areas, introduced communal measures for extended families, and expanded the use of individual land and labor among nuclear families (Aldashev and Guirkinger 413). Thus, Russian colonialism's rapid introduction of labor and labor force into the steppe led to the development of wage-labor relations, both among Kazakhs who abandoned traditional nomadism in the workshops of the northern regions and among nomads themselves. According to Aldashev and Guirkinger (2017), this change in labor and labor force was directly related to the population pressure created by the settlers and the agricultural technology they brought with them. The introduction of tools such as hay making, rain irrigation, iron ploughs and harrows into agriculture, together with increasing population pressure and technological intensification, made the private property regime more attractive to nomads, and thus the exploitation of land resources in the new order brought by the colonial regime triggered individualization at the family level with its private-social returns (Aldashev and Guirkinger 415).

The transformation brought to the steppe by agriculture and trade shortened the migration distances of the nomads, which had been restricted by statutes, due to dependence on trade. In combination with the individualization of labor and workforce and the shrinkage of auls brought about by increasing competition in land and water use, the socio-economic status of the nomads, who had once pursued a common purpose and life at a certain level, was profoundly disrupted. While the richer nomads were able to engage in the cattle trade centered on haystacks and fodder, those who endeavored to carry on with small ruminant farming tried to continue their migration activities over shorter distances and with more limited resources. Therefore, in addition to the pasturelands lost to settler occupation by pastoralist nomads who could not integrate into the Russian trade, the settler occupation created the difficult task of finding new pastures against the жұт/Juts, a drought in the steppe that annually caused the loss of more than 100,000 animals per year (Olcott, "The Settlement" 19). Thus, the

nomads struggling with Russian colonization gradually lost their influence and herds, while nomads more dependent on Russian trade and could only afford to keep growing herds were able to prosper. Between 1902 and 1913, the population of the downsized and struggling nomads decreased by 8-9%, their herds were lost, and they were forced to wait in line in front of the Resettlement Administration for a handful of lands that had once been theirs in smaller auls (20).

The migration restricted by the regulations, hand in hand with the development of trade, reduced the migration needs of the nomads in the northern regions considerably, and the new market dependencies and the fabrication of the products required for animal husbandry and the implementation of market relations caused the animal husbandry, which was carried out for subsistence, to be fulfilled the concern of producing a capital product in the steppe. The issues of family and clan unity that have emerged from the traditional pastoral nomadism since ancient times have been destroyed by individualization and the struggle to capture limited resources through the market. As the development of colonial trade unlocked socioeconomic transformation, market-oriented Russian currency-based cash-based exchange and complex market instruments such as taxation became part of nomadic life. This was part of the forced capitalist transformation of society, which aimed to impoverish a large part of the population, while simultaneously dispossessing/settling one part of the population. The imposition of new administrative systems, tax regimes and land ownership models weakened the authority of traditional clan administrations, thus eroding autonomous structures and power dynamics, starting with family and auls (Kindler 30). Deprived of their traditional means of production, the nomads were deprived of their traditional knowledge and cultural practices as they integrated into the Russian economy. The loss traditional production disrupted the subsistence system and led to a socioeconomic transformation from self-sufficiency to wage labor and dependence on Russian markets.

Conclusion

The Kazakh steppe, which has been home to the pastoral nomadism for centuries, underwent an intense process of interaction and transformation in the 19th and 20th centuries with the Russian colonization and settlement of settlers on the steppe. This destructive transformation led to the restriction

of the traditional migratory activities of the nomads, the transformation of animal herds, the diversification of trade, and both socioeconomic and socio-cultural differentiation. Until the early 19th century, the relationship between the Tsardom and the steppe was one of containment, defense against raids from the steppe and various commercial ventures rather than controlling the region. However, the Russian Empire, which changed her approach after 1830 and aimed to conquer the steppe in a colonialist scheme, intended to neutralize the region and create a colony based on her own descendants. This triggered an influx of settlers into the Kazakh steppe that lasted until around 1964, creating a struggle between sedentary and nomadic life.

After the fall of the Kazakh Juzes one by one, new statutes and administrative regulations were introduced to bring a colonial order in the steppe. While the statutes divided the steppe into Russian-type administrative divisions, settlers and nomads were squeezed into certain areas with new borders within the same administrative divisions. The Tsardom, gaining new lands and new neighbors as she moved deeper into Asia, signed the Ili Region Treaty with the Qing Dynasty in order to determine her external borders while determining her internal borders with new statutes, causing the connection of today's East Turkestan with the Kazakh steppe to be disrupted. The border restrictions imposed by statutes and international agreements limited most of the migration activities in the north-south direction from the Sir-Derya to the Caspian, from Mangustau to Ustyurt, from Elek to Sarusu and narrowed the migration distance considerably. The establishment of the Sino-Russian border also eliminated the permeability between the Irtysh, Emin and Ili valleys, which represented the ancient migration routes of the nomads over much longer distances.

The restriction of migratory activities led to changes in the size and composition of herds, especially in the northern regions, where nomads interacted more frequently with settlers. Unable to migrate over long distances, nomads have been seen to abandon their traditional habits such as camel breeding with the reemergence of long-distance migrations and the inclusion of species such as cattle, which can be migrated over shorter distances and which can also be transferred to the Russian market. Although the addition of cattle to the herds made the nomads more dependent on the Russian market within the framework of the feed-straw connection to

the settler agriculturalists, it caused a significant increase in the number of animals on the steppe, but significantly reduced the number of free grazing animals. Cattle breeding, becoming a market commodity rather than a struggle for subsistence, was concentrated on the *bai*, impoverishing families in small auls who had to divide more limited land. In addition, the introduction of black sheep breeds and horse breeds such as the Orlov Trotter, brought by settlers from European Russia, created problems such as the hybridization of centuries-old breeds of sheep and horses.

The nomadic way of life, which complements the rules that follow each other in a sequence and order starting from daily work to seasonal activities, has lost the pastures where it roamed freely under the influence of Russian colonialism and has been dragged into the struggle for land and water use by being squeezed into oblasts and uyezds where people are divided into land. This struggle has seriously disrupted both socioeconomic and socio-cultural balance. Increased competition for resource using individualized property rights among the nomads, narrowed common grazing areas, and expanded the use of individual land and labor. The transition from the traditional struggle for subsistence to the process of capital production and labor has also led to the destruction of the concepts of family and clan unity that the nomadic way of life had shaped over centuries. As the development of colonial trade unlocked socioeconomic transformation, the use of Russian currency, new forms of taxation and complex capital market instruments became part of everyday life. The new order brought by the colonial regime weakened clan administrations through the way taxes were collected and the authority with which they were transmitted, while issues such as land ownership eroded the autonomous structures of the steppe, starting with the family. Deprived of their traditional means of production, the nomads moved away from their ancient knowledge and cultural practices as they became more integrated into Russian colonialism, disrupting the lost traditional production subsistence system and accelerating socioeconomic transformation in favor of Russian rule by replacing it with wage labor and dependence on the Russian market. Therefore, Russian colonialism in the Kazakh steppe in the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in the transformation of the steppe in accordance with the interests of the Russian administration, thus creating an important example of settler colonialism and causing the transformation of nomadic life at the level of destruction.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study.

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