



HISTORICAL-CULTURAL FIELD/ ТАРИХИ-МӘДЕНИ БАҒЫТ/  
ИСТОРИКО-КУЛЬТУРНОЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ

*Medieval History (Archeology)/ Ортағасырлық тарих (археология)/  
Средневековая история (археология)*

Article

## Kazakhstan Studies: global research discourse and local narratives

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
*History of Kazakhstan, Kazakh studies, historiography, foreign researchers, interview, history, culture, narratives, discourse, international associations (CESS, ESCAS).*

IRSTI 03.20.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.32523/2664-5157-2025-1-26-48>

This article explores the contributions of foreign scholars to the study of Kazakhstan, emphasizing their role in deepening understanding of its historical and contemporary context within a global framework. It examines Kazakhstan's historiography from the perspective of Western academic discourse. By employing diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, these scholars enhance research on Kazakhstan's historical and sociocultural dynamics, focusing on its ethnic diversity, cultural heritage, and geopolitical significance.

Using qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews with international historians specializing in Kazakhstan, this study aims to identify key themes of their research and explore future directions. Between May 2024 and February 2025 six interviews were conducted, one of which involved written responses to a questionnaire. The interviewees were distinguished scholars from the United States, Canada, Italy, and Japan, all recognized experts in the region's history. Free from the ideological influences of Soviet historiography, they possess advanced knowledge of Central Asian languages, have conducted extensive research in Kazakhstan's archives and libraries, and maintain professional connections with Kazakhstani scholars.

The interviews, conducted in English, followed a structured questionnaire. The majority of these interviews were conducted at prominent international conferences organized by the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) and the European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS). However, conducting these interviews posed challenges. The intensive conference schedules made arranging in-person meetings with

scholars and effectively coordinating discussions difficult. Additionally, some interviewees were slow to respond to email inquiries, limiting the completeness of the dataset.

This study demonstrates how the research conducted by these scholars not only advances academic study of Kazakhstan but also integrates local narratives into global scholarly discussions. Their contributions help train a new generation of researchers in Kazakhstani history and culture. Organizations such as CESS and ESCAS play a crucial role in fostering academic exchange and promoting scholarship in Kazakhstan. The insights from these interviews reflect a growing international interest in Kazakhstan's history and culture, underscoring the valuable contributions of foreign scholars in enriching academic discourse and global perspectives on the region.

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### **Қазақстантану: жаһандық зерттеу дискурсы және жергілікті нарративтер**

**Аннотация.** Бұл мақалада шетелдік зерттеушілердің Қазақстанды зерттеуге қосқан үлесі, олардың өңірдің тарихи және заманауи контексін жаһандық көріністе терең түсінуге ықпалы талданады. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстан тарихының тарихнамасын батыстық зерттеу дискурсы призмасы арқылы қарастыруға бағытталған.

Әртүрлі теориялық-әдіснамалық негіздерді қолдану арқылы ғалымдар Қазақстанның тарихи және әлеуметтік-мәдени динамикасын зерттеудегі ғылыми тәсілдерді айтарлықтай байытады. Олар елдің этникалық әралуандығын, мәдени мұрасын және геосаяси маңызын қамтиды.

Сапалық зерттеу әдістерін, соның ішінде Қазақстан тарихын зерттеумен айналысатын шетелдік тарихшылармен тереңдетілген сұхбаттарды пайдалана отырып, негізгі тақырыптарды, жүргізілген зерттеулердің жекелеген нәтижелерін және зерттеу перспективасын анықтау мақсаты қойылды. Қазақстан тарихы бойынша шетелдік мамандармен сұхбаттар 2024 жылдың мамырынан 2025 жылдың ақпанына дейін жүргізілді. Барлығы 6 сұхбат алынған, оның бірі сауалнама сұрақтарына жазбаша жауап түрінде ұсынылған. Сұхбаткерлердің географиясы АҚШ, Канада, Италия, Жапония

Received 13 November 2024. Revised 15 November 2024. Accepted 23 February 2025. Available online 30 March 2025.



**For citation:** N.N. Abdinassir, S.I. Kovalskaya Kazakhstan Studies: global research discourse and local narratives // Turkic Studies Journal. 2025. T. 7. №1. С. 26-48. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.32523/2664-5157-2025-1-26-48>

елдерін қамтиды. Сұхбатқа қатысқан тарихшылар – Қазақстан тарихы бойынша әлемдік деңгейде мойындалған мамандар. Олар түрлі советологиялық стереотиптер мен «жанрлық жад» деп аталатын әдіснамалық шектеулерге негізделмеген. Сонымен қатар, олар орыс тілінен бөлек, Орталық Азия халықтарының тілдерін меңгерген, Қазақстан архивтері мен кітапханаларында ұзақ уақыт жұмыс істеген және қазақстандық ғалымдармен тығыз кәсіби байланыстар орнатқан.

Сұхбаттар ағылшын тілінде алдын-ала дайындалған анкета-сауалнама негізінде өткізілді. Олардың басым бөлігі Орталық Азияны зерттейтін ғалымдардың Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) және European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS) қауымдастықтары ұйымдастырған маңызды халықаралық конференциялар барысында жүргізілді. Алайда сұхбат алу барысында белгілі бір қиындықтар туындады. Мысалы, конференция бағдарламасының жоғары қарқындылығын ескере отырып, зерттеушімен жеке кездесуді келісу, қолайлы уақыт табу және сұхбатты тиімді ұйымдастыру едәуір қиындық тудырды. Сол сияқты, онлайн-сұхбат жүргізу де оңай болған жоқ, өйткені барлық сұхбаткерлерден электрондық пошта арқылы жедел жауап алу мүмкін болмады.

Мақалада бұл ғалымдардың ғылыми қызметі академиялық зерттеулерді тереңдетіп қана қоймай, жергілікті нарративтерді жаһандық зерттеу диалогтарымен байланыстыратыны көрсетілген. Бұл өз кезегінде Қазақстан тарихы мен мәдениетін зерттейтін жаңа буын зерттеушілерінің қалыптасуына ықпал етеді. Сонымен қатар, Орталық Еуразияны зерттеу қоғамы (CESS) және Орталық Азияны зерттеу жөніндегі Еуропалық қоғам (ESCAS) сияқты ұйымдар Қазақстан туралы зерттеулерді ілгерілету мен ғылыми алмасуды дамытуда маңызды рөл атқарады. Осы сұхбаттарға негізделген қорытындылар Қазақстан тарихы мен мәдениетіне деген халықаралық қызығушылықтың артып келе жатқанын, сондай-ақ шетелдік зерттеушілердің академиялық орта мен Қазақстан туралы қоғамдық дискурсты байытудағы маңызды үлесін айғақтайды.

**Кілт сөздер:** Қазақстан тарихы, қазақстантану, тарихнама, шетелдік зерттеушілер, сұхбат, тарих, мәдениет, нарративтер, дискурс, халықаралық қауымдастықтар (CESS, ESCAS).

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### **Казахстановедение: глобальный исследовательский дискурс и локальные нарративы**

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируется вклад зарубежных исследователей в изучение Казахстана, их роль в формировании глубокого понимания исторического и современного контекста региона в глобальной перспективе. Данное исследование

представляет собой попытку изучения историографии истории Казахстана сквозь призму западного исследовательского дискурса. Благодаря использованию различных теоретико-методологических основ, ученые значительно обогащают научные подходы к изучению исторической и социокультурной динамики Казахстана, охватывая его этническое разнообразие, культурное наследие и геополитическое значение.

Используя качественные методы исследования, в том числе глубинные интервью с зарубежными историками, занимающимися изучением истории Казахстана, мы попытались выявить основную тематику и отдельные результаты проведенных исследований, а также дальнейшие перспективы изучения. Интервью с зарубежными специалистами по истории Казахстана были проведены в период с мая 2024 по февраль 2025 года. Всего было проведено 6 интервью, одно из которых было представлено письменными ответами на вопросы анкеты. Страны проживания наших интервьюеров, их география достаточно широка – США, Канада, Италии, Япония. Опрошенные историки – всемирно признанные специалисты по истории региона. Они лишены разного рода советологических отягощений, так называемой «памяти жанра», помимо русского языка, владеют языками народов Центральной Азии, часто и подолгу работали в архивах и библиотеках Казахстана, имеют активные профессиональные связи и контакты с казахстанскими учеными.

Интервью проводились на английском языке на основе составленной анкеты-опросника. Большинство они были проведены во время значимых международных конференций, организованных ассоциациями центральноазиатских исследователей CESS и ESCAS. При проведении интервью встречались определенные трудности. Например, учитывая высокую интенсивность программы конференции, согласовать личную встречу с ученым, найти подходящее время и эффективно организовать беседу представляло собой значительную сложность. Аналогично, проведение онлайн-интервью также оказалось затруднительным, поскольку не удалось получить своевременные ответы по электронной почте от всех интервьюеров.

В статье показано, как их научная деятельность не только углубляет академическое изучение, но и связывает локальные нарративы с глобальными исследовательскими диалогами, тем самым способствуя формированию нового поколения исследователей истории и культуры Казахстана. Кроме того, такие организации, как Общество Центрально-Евразийских исследований (CESS) и Европейское общество центральноазиатских исследований (ESCAS), играют важную роль в содействии научному обмену и продвижению исследований о Казахстане. Выводы, сделанные на основе этих интервью, показывают растущий международный интерес к истории и культуре Казахстана, значимый вклад зарубежных исследователей в обогащение академической среды и общественного дискурса вокруг нашей страны.

**Ключевые слова:** история Казахстана, казахтановедение, историография, зарубежные исследователи, интервью, история, культура, нарративы, дискурс, международные ассоциации (CESS, ESCAS).

## Introduction

This study examines the research interests of American and European scholars, with a particular focus on historians, in relation to Kazakhstan. While many researchers from diverse disciplines have included Kazakhstan into their broader analyses of Central Asia, such

contributions often provide a more general perspective. The primary value of this article lies in its focused exploration of Kazakhstan and its history through the lens of contemporary European historians, who have built upon the foundational work of earlier studies.

Their contributions to the study of Kazakhstan are significant not only for their academic value but also for their implications for understanding the region's historical and contemporary developments within a global framework. From a historiographical perspective, European and American researchers, particularly historians, have played a crucial role in documenting Kazakhstan's history across various historical periods. Their works have had a substantial influence on scholarly interpretations of Kazakh history and identity, shaping both academic discourse and public perceptions influencing both academic discourse and public perceptions.

A substantial body of literature on foreign historiography exists, with scholars such as K.L. Esmagambetov<sup>1</sup>, M.T. Laumulin, B.M. Suzhikov, K.R. Nesipbaeva, G.B. Byrbaeva, S.I. Kovalskaya, and others providing comprehensive analyses (Esmagambetov, 1992; Laumulin, 1994; Suzhikov, 1997; Nesipbaeva, 1999<sup>2</sup>; Byrbaeva, 2005; Kovalskaya, 2007). However, the present study is distinguished by its employment of an interview-based methodology, thus providing a novel perspective and contributing to the study of foreign historiography.

The present article primarily focuses on the contributions of historians, including contemporary researchers, who have introduced innovative methodologies and theoretical frameworks to the study of Central Asia, with a particular emphasis on Kazakhstan. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, these historians enhance the analysis of the sociocultural dynamics within the region. Additionally, the integration of diverse academic backgrounds, encompassing anthropology, sociology, history, and political science, among European scholars, has been demonstrated to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of Kazakhstan's ethnic diversity, cultural heritage, and geopolitical significance. The incorporation of global perspectives into Kazakh studies facilitates the connection between local narratives and broader academic discussions. Such analyses contribute to international scholarship by situating Kazakhstan within wider historical and cultural contexts. The engagement of international researchers can enhance stimulate interest in Kazakh studies among local scholars, thereby fostering a new generation of researchers who may either build upon or critically reassess existing narratives. This scholarly exchange has the potential to enrich academic discourse within Kazakhstan itself.

Before discussing the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS), it's important to highlight the contributions of Dr. John Schoeberlein. As a distinguished anthropologist specializing in Central Asian studies, Dr. Schoeberlein has made significant contributions to the understanding of the region's ethnic, social, and political transformations, particularly in the post-Soviet era (Schoeberlein-Engel, 1995). During the challenging 1990s, John Schoeberlein's compilation *Guide to Scholars of the History and Culture of Central Asia* (1995) was particularly influential. Amid limited resources, Schoeberlein recognized the value of Central Asian scholars alongside Western researchers, providing a crucial platform that elevated regional scholarship. His work bridged local and global academia, promoting Central Asian studies at a time when such efforts were both essential and challenging. Through his leadership in establishing and developing CESS, he has had a lasting impact on academic collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

<sup>1</sup> Yessmagambetov K.L., 1999. Foreign Historiography of the History of Kazakhstan (from Ancient Times to the Early 1990s). Doctoral dissertation. Almaty. 294 p.

<sup>2</sup> Nesipbayeva K.R., 1999. Modern Anglo-American Historiography of Russian Expansion and Colonization of Central Asia (17th - Early 20th Century). Doctoral dissertation abstract. Almaty. 52 p.

In this context, the CESS and the ESCAS exemplify platforms that facilitate scholarly exchange and promote in-depth research on Kazakhstan. Established in 2001, CESS aims to enhance the understanding of Central Eurasia through interdisciplinary collaboration among scholars from various fields. The society organizes conferences, workshops, and publications to support research on the region's complex historical and cultural dynamics. Similarly, ESCAS was founded in 2005 to foster academic dialogue and cooperation among scholars of Central Asia, particularly in Europe. The society organizes conferences, provides a network for researchers, and publishes scholarly works that contribute to the discourse on Central Asian studies.

A recent conference held in Almaty brought together esteemed scholars from around the world, primarily from Europe, fostering enriching dialogues on various aspects of Kazakhstan studies. The authors, being members of these societies, participated in the conference and engaged with leading experts in the field. The authors of this article have both contributed extensively to its development. One of the authors N. Abdinassir conducted interviews, processed data, and analyzed findings, while a conceptual and methodological analysis were carried out under the guidance of Professor Kovalskaya. This process involved an in-depth analytical review and refinement of the research framework.

Interviews with scholars revealed their motivations for researching Kazakhstan and their interests in its rich history, culture, and contemporary dynamics. These discussions highlighted a growing international focus on Kazakhstan, underscoring the significant contributions of foreign researchers in deepening global understanding of the country. Additionally, these insights emphasize the critical role of organizations such as CESS and ESCAS in facilitating scholarly collaboration and advancing research on Kazakhstan. (CESS, 2024: URL).

In her analytical review, *Foreign Archival Kazakhstanics*, Kovalskaya S.I. systematically categorizes foreign scholars who have studied the Soviet East into four distinct groups. This classification is based on several key criteria, with the unique characteristics and contributions of each group discussed individually. The scholarly orientation of Central Asian researchers is significantly shaped by regional influences, extensive practical fieldwork, and the longstanding traditions within academic or family institutions that shape each researcher's professional outlook (Kovalskaya, 2006).

(1) The initial group of researchers consists of former military personnel and colonial administrators, who, after extended service in state or monarchical positions, engaged in systematic studies of the Soviet East. This category also encompasses their descendants and individuals who held various positions across Eastern regions before returning to their home countries to pursue careers as Orientalists; (2) The second group of foundational contributors to Central Asian studies comprises Turkic intellectuals and emigrants from Soviet Russia and neighboring regions. These individuals, whose perspectives were often complex and debated, played a substantial role in shaping Central Asian scholarship from outside the Soviet sphere. Their viewpoints, deeply informed by personal experience and cultural ties to the region, enriched historical and ethnographic studies, bringing valuable insights into Central Asia's social and cultural dynamics; (3) The third group consists of emigrants, primarily to the United States, who often specialized in Oriental and Turkic studies. Their academic work, deeply influenced by previous generations of Central Asian emigrants, has substantially influenced contemporary research methodologies. This group includes Soviet-born scholars with strong backgrounds in Oriental studies, whose insights continue to enhance scholarly understandings of Central Asia's cultural and historical complexities; (4) The fourth group of researchers is notable for being less constrained by *genre memory*, a term denoting the

refers to inherited narrative frameworks or ideological constraints that often shaped earlier perspectives on Soviet and post-Soviet studies. Unlike prior generations, who sometimes viewed the USSR through a narrow ideological lens, scholars in this group generally approach the region without the rigid stereotypes of ideological alignment. This group comprises scholars from the post-WWII through post-Cold War period, who build upon the foundational work of earlier researchers while offering their distinct insights.

Many members of this group are highly educated, fluent in Russian, and often proficient in Turkic languages, which enables them to conduct in-depth research. Their work primarily focuses on contemporary dynamics and socio-political transformations in Central Asia, providing a balanced and informed perspective on the region (Kovalskaya, 2006: 63-79).

To refine our research scope, the focus will be specifically on historians within this group, as their expertise provides valuable insights into the historical complexities Kazakhstan. The objective is to explore the historical and cultural narratives of Kazakhstan by examining the contributions of these historians, emphasizing the factors that have shaped its modern development. This targeted approach enables a more comprehensive engagement with their scholarly work, highlighting the region's historical evolution.

### Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, integrating semi-structured interviews and historiographical analysis to examine the contributions of foreign scholars to the study of Kazakhstan. The research framework is shaped by extensive participation in international academic conferences and direct engagement with leading experts in the field. While writing the dissertation the authors actively participated in major interdisciplinary conferences, including the RAI 2024 Conference at Senate House, London, which focused on *Anthropology and Education*, as well as the CESS Annual Conference (June 6-9, 2024) at the Center for Regional Studies, Turan University, and the Joint CESS-ESCAP Conference (January 8-10, 2025) in Lisbon, where discussions centered on *Geopolitics, Migrations, and Identities in Central Eurasia*. Additionally, engagement with the International Interdisciplinary Conferences in Debrecen, Hungary (2021–present) provided access to diverse historiographical traditions and methodologies, strengthening the study's comparative perspective. This research environment not only enabled the authors to conduct individual interviews but also facilitated focus group discussions, enriching the data collection process and supporting the interactive nature of qualitative inquiry (Mason, 2002). This methodological flexibility is supported by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), who highlight that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives in depth while maintaining a structured framework for discussion. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed through thematic analysis, a widely adopted method for identifying key patterns and insights within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The research is structured around expert interviews with scholars representing various historiographical schools and periods, ensuring a multi-perspective approach. Given the time-sensitive nature of academic interviews, strategic scheduling was prioritized, however, the quality of responses took precedence over quantity. Qualitative methods are particularly effective in capturing the detailed experiences and motivations of individuals, as emphasized by Creswell (2017) and Patton (2015) who argue that qualitative research provides rich, contextualized narratives that enhance understanding of complex social phenomena. (Creswell, 2017) and (Patton, 2015). This approach ensures that each interview provides

substantive insights rather than a merely accumulating data. The interview methodology was carefully adapted to accommodate to the scholars' diverse academic backgrounds, methodological traditions, and historiographical frameworks, allowing for a balanced and representative analysis.

The research draws on insights from leading scholars in the field, each of whom contributes distinct perspectives on the historiography of Kazakhstan. Sarah Cameron examines Soviet policies and their devastating impact on Kazakh society, particularly the famine of the 1930s (Cameron, 2018). Jeff Sahadeo focuses on migration, empire, and identity formation in Central Asia (Sahadeo, 2007). Niccolò Pianciola explores agrarian transformation, collectivization, and demographic shifts in Kazakhstan during the late imperial and Soviet periods (Pianciola, 2009). Ian Campbell analyzes imperial governance, settler colonialism, and the legal structures shaping Kazakh customary law (Campbell, 2017). Ron Wiley utilizes ethnographic sources to reconstruct local perspectives on governance and resistance. Jin Noda employs multi-archival research from Russian and Qing sources to examine Kazakh mobility, legal transformations, and border dynamics (Noda, 2016). Together, these scholars provide a multifaceted understanding of Kazakhstan's historical evolution within the broader context of Eurasian geopolitics.

Moving forward, this study acknowledges the potential for further developing the interview approach into a more narrative-driven and focused format. With additional time for in-depth analysis, future research can provide a more comprehensive reflection on historiographical trends, particularly regarding Kazakhstan's evolving role in global historical discourse. This methodological evolution will ensure a more rigorous, reflective, and engaged academic exploration, reinforcing the significance of oral histories and expert interviews in historical scholarship.

The interviews conducted for this research were structured around several key themes to capture a comprehensive understanding of foreign historians' perspectives on Kazakhstan. Each theme was supported by targeted questions designed to elicit detailed responses and gather sufficient information: (1) Background Information: Interviewees provided basic information about their academic affiliations and research areas; (2) Motivation for Study: Participants discussed their initial interest in Kazakhstan's history and culture identifying the unique aspects that attracted them to the field. This section explored both personal and academic motivations; (3) Research Impact: Scholars reflected on how their work contributes to the broader understanding of Central Asian history. Specific questions encouraged them to share significant experiences that shaped their research perspectives; (4) Research Environment: Interviewees described the regions where they conducted research, the archives and institutions they accessed, and any funding sources that supported their studies. This section aimed to provide insights into the logistical aspects of conducting research; (5) Key Topics: Participants highlighted major themes in Kazakhstan's historical study, including influential historical events that shape the country's modern identity. This section contained questions that prompted discussions on current research trends; (6) Future Directions: Finally, scholars shared their perspectives on potential future research avenues and questions they hope to explore, allowing for an understanding of evolving scholarly interests.

In addition to individual interviews, focus group discussions were conducted to foster a collaborative environment where researchers could exchange views on Kazakhstan and articulate their motivations for studying the region. These discussions provided insights into how their scholarly work contributes to Kazakhstan's historiographical discourse, highlighting potential contributions to a deeper understanding of the country's complexities.

By sharing diverse perspectives, participants emphasized the importance of their findings in informing contemporary narratives about Kazakhstan and enhancing its representation in global scholarship. This collective approach enriched the research, enabling a nuanced exploration of the historical significance of Kazakhstan and its implications for future studies.

## Research background

### *Information about interviewees*

Dr. Sarah Cameron is a leading historian specializing in Kazakhstan and the Soviet experience, with a focus on environmental history, famine studies, and the demographic impact of Soviet policies. Her work has been instrumental in analyzing the Kazakh famine of 1930-1933, examining its causes, consequences, and connections to Stalinist collectivization and forced sedentarization.

Her book, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (2018), provides a comprehensive account of the famine's impact on Kazakh society, integrating archival evidence, oral histories, and demographic data. She highlights how Soviet policies reshaped Kazakhstan's ethnic and demographic landscape, offering a broader global perspective on these historical events.

As an associate professor at the University of Maryland, Cameron explores Central Asian history within Soviet and post-Soviet contexts. Her research also addresses the environmental consequences of Soviet agricultural policies, particularly water mismanagement and ecological degradation. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, she bridges environmental and social history, demonstrating how Soviet-era decisions continue to shape contemporary Central Asia.

Widely recognized in academic circles, Cameron contributes to discussions on the long-term effects of Soviet policies on national identity, resilience, and Indigenous populations. Her scholarship not only enhances historical understanding but also informs contemporary debates on regional development, environmental challenges, and in Central Asia, and the and the enduring impact of political regimes on Indigenous communities and environments (Cameron, 2023: URL).

(2) Dr. Jeff Sahadeo is a historian and political scientist specializing in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, with a focus on migration, colonialism, and interethnic relations. As an Associate Professor at Carleton University, he directs the Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (EURUS), where his research examines Soviet colonial policies and their lasting impact on Central Asian societies, particularly in Uzbekistan. He also explores post-Soviet migration trends, analyzing the evolving relationships between Russian and Central Asian communities in urban centers such as Moscow and Leningrad. His book, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent in Tashkent, 1865-1923*, provides a comprehensive analysis of Russian colonization in Central Asia, detailing its effects on Tashkent's socio-cultural landscape. As a co-editor of *Everyday Life in Central Asia*, he contributes to discussions on how ordinary Central Asians adapted to political and cultural shifts. His research connects historical processes to contemporary issues of ethnic identity, migration, and environmental challenges in the region.

Sahadeo, a widely recognized figure in both academic and policy circles, has published extensively on Soviet nationality policies, migration, and cross-cultural interactions. His work underscores the enduring influence of Soviet rule on Central Asian societies, offering insights into the region's evolving identity and demographic dynamics today.

(3) Dr. Niccolò Pianciola is an Italian historian and scholar, particularly known for his work on Central Asian history, with a focus on Soviet policies affecting nomadic populations. His research often examines the Soviet Union's social engineering policies, including forced collectivization and sedentarization, which had devastating effects on Kazakh nomadic communities. Pianciola's research has been instrumental in analyzing the impact of Stalinist policies on widespread famine, migration, and social upheaval in Kazakhstan during the early 1930s. His analyses suggests that while these policies were intended to «modernize» Kazakhstan, they resulted in significant loss of life and cultural disruption. He has engaged in scholarly debates on whether these policies constituted ethnic persecution or genocide (Pianciola, 2022: URL).

(4) Dr. Ron Wiley has dedicated his career to the non-profit sector, and has spent the past 30 years working with Resource Exchange International, Inc. (REI, Inc.), an international humanitarian service organization headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA. He currently serves as the Central Asia Director for REI, Inc. In addition to his leadership role at REI, Inc., Wiley is an Associate Professor of International Relations at Kazakh-American Free University, in Oskemen, Kazakhstan. He is also involved in the establishment of Samarkand International University of Technology in Uzbekistan, where he plays a key role in recruiting international faculty. As Central Asia Director for REI, Inc., Wiley fosters partnerships between REI, Inc. staff, volunteers and their Central Asian counterparts aiming to «build people to build nations». His work involves collaborating with governments and institutions to train professionals in strategic sectors critical to the region's development ((Wiley, 2024: URL).

(5) Dr Ian Campbell is an American historian specializing in pre-Revolutionary Russia and Central Asia, with a particular focus on the Kazakh steppe. He earned his B.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Since 2012, he has been a faculty member at UC-Davis. His first book, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire* (2017) was shortlisted for the Central Eurasian Studies Society's Book Prize in History. His research explores imperial governance, settler colonialism, and borderland violence, with a focus on Kazakh customary law and late 19th-century legal transformations (Campbell, 2017).

(6) Dr. Jin Noda is a Japanese historian specializing in the 18th-19th century history of Kazakhstan and its interactions with the Russian Empire and Qing China. He is a professor at the Research Institute of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. His work is based on multi-archival research, incorporating Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources. He has collaborated with leading Kazakh scholars and institutions, including the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, the Institute of Oriental Studies, and the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. His research focuses on Kazakh mobility, geopolitical dynamics, and legal history, particularly the integration of Kazakh customary law into Russian and Qing legal systems (Noda, 2016).

### Analysis

This section commences with a discussion of Sarah Cameron's responses, in which she offers valuable insights into the historical and cultural intricacies of Kazakhstan. These insights serve to illuminate her research trajectory and its broader implications within the field. According to her replies: (1) Background Information: Sarah Cameron grew up in the area surrounding Washington, D.C., with strong international influences, as her mother holds dual citizenship, including New Zealand. This global perspective was further cultivated through study-abroad

programs during her college years. Following her undergraduate studies, Cameron joined the Peace Corps and spent two years in the Russian Far East, where she developed a deep interest in Soviet history and the experiences of peripheral Soviet regions. Observing firsthand the distinctions between Soviet influence in the Russian Far East and Moscow significantly informed her subsequent academic pursuits.

(2) Motivation for Study: According to her, Cameron's interest in Kazakhstan arose from an academic gap: Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan, remains under-researched in Western scholarship. While previous studies had largely focused on Uzbekistan, often generalizing Central Asia through its lens, Kazakhstan's distinct historical trajectory remained insufficiently examined. Furthermore, the country's comparatively open archival access, in contrast to the more restrictive conditions in Uzbekistan, where foreign researchers frequently require Foreign Ministry approval, provided an opportunity for more direct engagement with primary sources. These factors made Kazakhstan a particularly compelling focus of research.

(3) Research Impact: Sarah Cameron's research makes substantial contributions to the understanding of Central Asian history, with a particular emphasis on Kazakhstan's complex relationship with migration. She demonstrates that Kazakhstan's historical trajectory has been profoundly shaped by successive waves of migration, a phenomenon she regards as both distinctive and analytically significant. Beginning with pre-Soviet settlers in the late 19th century, Kazakhstan has witnessed multiple influxes of diverse populations, including Soviet-era special settlers, deported ethnic groups, and participants in the Virgin Lands Campaign, which brought Koreans, Kalmyks, Chechens, and others to the region. Cameron underscores the extent to which these migratory movements have continuously reshaped Kazakhstan's national identity. In the post-Soviet period, programs such as Kandas have facilitated the return of ethnic Kazakhs, even as Russians, Ukrainians, and Germans have continued to emigrate following the Soviet Union collapse. At the same time, she highlights a resurgence of Russian ethnic migration to Kazakhstan, reinforcing the country's pivotal role in regional migration dynamics. Outward migration, particularly to China, has further shaped Kazakh society, demonstrating the far-reaching implications of these demographic shifts.

Sarah Cameron's *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* explores the catastrophic famine of the 1930s and its enduring consequences. She highlights the challenges of reconstructing the experiences ordinary Kazakhs, as the available records are predominantly derived from Soviet archives, which offer a state-mediated perspective. By uncovering the policies that precipitated the famine and analyzing their broader ramifications, Cameron brings attention to a painful yet essential part in Kazakhstan's history. Her work illustrates the ways in which power structures influence both the documentation and the collective memory of historical events (Cameron, 2018).

Sarah Cameron's current project, focusing on a later historical period, incorporates a broader range of sources, including oral histories, which enhance her exploration of migration as a lens for understanding Kazakhstan's historical evolution from a predominantly nomadic society into a crossroads for various cultures and communities. Through her work, Cameron underscores the enduring impact of migration on Kazakh culture and society, constructing a nuanced narrative of resilience and transformation.

(4) Research Environment: Sarah Cameron's archival research for her first monograph was extensive, encompassing multiple locations within Kazakhstan and beyond. She conducted foundational research at both the Presidential and State Archives in Almaty, where she accessed former Communist Party documents and national security records. The Abay Library in Almaty provided rare collections of newspapers and journals from the 1920s and 1930s,

offering insight into the sociopolitical climate of the period. Additionally, she consulted archives in Moscow, including the Russian State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and another major archive, to incorporate Soviet-era records into her study. For her research on the Aral Sea crisis, Cameron conducted regional research in the archives of Kyzylorda, a region directly affected by the environmental degradation of the Aral Sea. These archives provided invaluable in documenting local perspectives on the socio-economic and ecological transformations resulting from the shrinking Aral Sea. The records facilitated her analysis of displacement, migration patterns, and the adaptive strategies of affected communities. Presently, Cameron's sources extend to the Scientific Archives and the Archive of the Academy of Sciences in Kazakhstan. She has also conducted oral history interviews with residents of the Aral region, including individuals who relocated in the 1970s and 1980s as the environmental crisis intensified. Through these accounts, she has explored personal and community-based perspectives on migration, which significantly enriched her understanding of the lasting impact of the Aral Sea disaster. Additionally, she incorporates U.S.-based sources on the post-Soviet period to examine the influence of international actors during Kazakhstan's transition.

Sarah Cameron identified several significant and underexplored topics that hold potential for further foreign research on Kazakhstan. One such subject is the Virgin Lands Campaign, which involved a Soviet-era agricultural initiative aimed at cultivating previously unused land in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian regions. Cameron noted that, despite its historical significance, this campaign remains insufficiently explored in the context of Kazakh and Soviet history.

(5) Key Topics: Another crucial area inquiry is the Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement, which emerged in response to Soviet nuclear tests near Semipalatinsk. Cameron highlighted this movement as the largest grassroots mobilization of its kind in the Soviet Union. While Chernobyl disaster is widely recognized, the Nevada-Semey movement has received comparatively little scholarly attention, making it a compelling area for further exploration. She also highlighted the enduring legacy of this movement and its relevance to contemporary social and environmental activism in Kazakhstan.

Additionally, Cameron emphasized the history of the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan as a pertinent research topic, in light of contemporary geopolitical developments and the evolving nature of Russian-Kazakh relations in Central Asia. She argues that a deeper understanding of the historical influence of the Russian diaspora could provide valuable insights into the contemporary ties between the two nations.

Additionally, she noted the historical migration between Kazakhstan and China, particularly the movement of Kazakhs between Kazakhstan and Xinjiang. This migration has had complex cultural, social, and economic implications for both regions, meriting further scholarly attention.

(6) Future Directions: Regarding her future research ambitions, Cameron expressed a keen interest in revisiting the demographic impact of the Kazakh famine of the 1930s, a topic she previously examined. She suggested that while previous studies established the catastrophic scale of the famine, she advocates for more granular demographic analyses, such as district-level population studies, to deepen our understanding of its effects. She mentioned the importance of regional demographic research in capturing the full scope and impact of this historical event. In the context of ethnodemography, she acknowledges the work of Kazakh demographer Makash Tatimov as foundational for the study of demographic shifts in Kazakhstan. Cameron calls for further demographic studies to examine the long-term implications of historical events on Kazakhstan's multiethnic composition. She also noted the

international resonance of the Aral Sea crisis highlighting how global audiences readily grasp its significance due to its parallels with other environmental disasters.

These research directions underscore the evolving landscape of Kazakhstani historical studies and highlight pressing questions that Cameron hopes will inspire future scholarship.

**Background Information:** Dr. Jeff Sahadeo is a Canadian academic affiliated with Carleton University, where he serves as an Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (EURUS). His academic research primarily focuses on the historical and contemporary sociopolitical dynamics within Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. His work highlights migration, colonialism, and interethnic relations, with a particular focus on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

(2) **Motivation for Study:** Dr. Sahadeo's interest in Kazakhstan and Central Asia was initially sparked during his university studies in the Soviet period. At that time, the lack of available information on Central Asian countries intrigued him, motivating him to investigate how the Soviet Union managed its relationships with these republics. As he delved deeper into the subject, he became particularly interested in the impact of Soviet colonial policies on Central Asia and in the ways Kazakhstan maintained its distinct cultural identity while navigating modernization processes from the 19th century onward. The Kazakh experience of balancing nomadic traditions with broader societal transformations remains one of the most compelling aspects of his research.

(3) **Research Impact:** Dr. Sahadeo believes his work contributes significantly to global understanding of Central Asia's post-Soviet evolution, with particular emphasis on Kazakhstan's resilience and adaptability. His observations of the Kazakh people, especially the younger generation, highlight the nation's dynamic transformation and the rapid shift in national identity since the post-Soviet period. Through his visits, including a notable 2011 trip to Almaty, he observed Kazakhstan's identity consolidation, an ongoing process distinct from that of other post-Soviet states. His research captures both the historical and contemporary dynamics, exploring Kazakhstan's ethnically diverse society, its relationship with Russia, and its unique place in the broader Central Asian region (Sahadeo, 2007).

(4) **Research Support:** His work is funded by several prominent organizations including Canadian research institutions and the Open Society Institute, which provide essential support for his in-depth studies of the region. His ethnographic research relies extensively on oral histories, which capture the lived experiences of local people and provide insight into significant cultural and social transitions.

(5) **Key Topics:** Dr. Sahadeo's research focuses on key aspects of Kazakhstan's historical and modern identity, with particular attention to issues such as water scarcity, socio-economic disparities, and the geopolitical balance between Russia and China. His work examines Kazakhstan's responses to challenges such as the Aral Sea crisis and ethnic diversity, both of which have shaped national cohesion. The periods of famine and political repression under Stalin have left a profound impact on Kazakhstan's collective memory, an area of particular interest in his research. Notably, he has observed that while some young Kazakhs, as he noted at Nazarbayev University in 2017, view Stalin in a positive light, perspectives on the Soviet legacy outside Kazakhstan often diverge, highlighting generational and regional variations in historical interpretation.

(6) **Future Directions:** Dr. Sahadeo seeks to expand his research on Kazakhstan's ethno-demographic landscape and national identity evolution. He is particularly interested in how Kazakhstan navigates its geopolitical position amid contemporary global challenges, especially in relation to tensions between Russia and Ukraine and the growing influence of

China. The Aral Sea remains a focal point of his work, symbolizing the environmental and socio-economic issues. Through his ongoing research, he aims to analyze how Kazakhstan's society adapts to both internal and external pressures, striving to balance that respects heritage preservation with modernization.

To complement the series of interviews with leading experts on Central Asia, the author conducted an interview with historian *Niccolò Pianciola*, whose research on Soviet and Central Asian history provides essential perspectives on forced migration, demographic shifts, and the socio-environmental consequences of Soviet policies. In this interview series, Pianciola's insights, as the final expert interviewed, enriched the study as a whole with his reflections on complex historical and social themes.

(1-2) Background Information and motivation for study: *Niccolò Pianciola*, currently a historian specializing in Central Asian and Soviet history, brings extensive expertise and perspective to the study of Kazakhstan's historical landscape. His engagement with Soviet history in the late 1990s as a student at the University of Turin, Italy. Initially considering a focus on Italian international connections, he was ultimately drawn to Soviet history under the influence of Professor Marco Buttino, renowned for his book *Revolution in Reverse*. This intellectual shift led him to explore a relatively underexamined topic: The Great Famine in Kazakhstan, an event with profound implications for both Central Asia and the Soviet Union.

(3-4) Research environment and current study focus: In pursuit of primary sources, *Pianciola* conducted archival research in Moscow, in the Central Archives, before expanding his work during his PhD studies at the University of Naples. His doctoral research broadened to encompass Tsarist colonization in the Kazakh Steppe, with a comparative analysis of the Kyrgyz Steppe. This work marked the beginning of his examination of early Soviet history through a colonial framework, analyzing policies of reform and decolonization.

After this period, *Pianciola's* research interests evolved towards borderland studies and migration, leading to a co-authored volume on post-migration in Eurasia, which held significant relevance for Kazakhstan. His focus expanded to examine interactions between the Russian Empire and Central Asia, including Eastern Turkestan (modern-day Xinjiang, China), especially during his ten-year tenure as a professor in Hong Kong. This geographical shift led *Pianciola* to develop comparative studies on the social history of Russian and Chinese borderlands from the late 19th century to the post-World War II period, an area that remains central to his current work.

(5-6) Personal experience and key topics: In terms of fieldwork experience, *Pianciola* first conducted research in Kazakhstan in 2003, a period marked by economic challenges in the region. Despite these challenges, he found Kazakhstan's archival resources to be more accessible than those of other post-Soviet countries. His work facilitated collaborations with prominent Kazakh scholars, including historian and politician N. Masanov and historian Zh. Abylhozhin. Later, during a research period at Nazarbayev University, *Pianciola* expanded his archival work investigations at institutions such as the Presidential Archives, the Central Republic Archive, and State Archives, as well as various regional repositories.

Throughout his career, *Pianciola* has utilized both anthropological and historical research methodologies, publishing significant work on issues such as the Aral Sea crisis. His approach combines archival sources with oral history methodologies, providing a nuanced perspective on the social and environmental challenges facing Central Asia.

Accordingly, incorporating an interview with Professor Campbell would provide valuable insights to enrich our research. Campbell's main contribution lies in addressing the critical issue of knowledge and power, specifically how power influences the formation of knowledge about the region.

(1) Background information: Professor Ian Campbell specializes in pre-Revolutionary Russian history, focusing on imperial governance over non-Russian subjects. His work emphasizes Russian administration in Central Asia, particularly in the Kazakh steppe. A native of Michigan, he earned his B.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, before completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard's Davis Center. Since 2012, he has served as a faculty member at UC-Davis. His first book, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire* (2017) was shortlisted for the Central Eurasian Studies Society's Book Prize in History. His current research examines Russian borderland violence and Kazakh history through the framework of settler colonialism.

(2) Motivation for study: Campbell's interest in Central Asia began with Russian language courses at university, which led him to explore the Russian Empire as a multiethnic society. Influential works by Virginia Martin and Adrienne Edgar highlighted the scarcity of Western scholarship on Central Asia, inspiring him to contribute to the field. Approximately two decades ago, a new generation of historians gained access to Central Asian archives, producing groundbreaking research that further shaped his intellectual trajectory. Seeking deeper engagement, he pursued studies in Turkic languages, enrolling in a CASA program with a scholarship. Despite challenges in practicing Kazakh, he continues to study and read the language, crediting Aliya Kuryshzhanova and Zaure Batayeva for their support. His intellectual curiosity was also shaped by *National Geographic*, which introduced him to diverse cultures and landscapes from an early age. His intellectual curiosity was also shaped by National Geographic, which introduced him to diverse cultures and landscapes from an early age. He views Kazakhstan as both a paradigm and a case study, analyzing railroad expansion, economic transformations, and cultural interactions in the late Russian Empire. His research increasingly focuses on pastoral nomadic and settled agricultural communities, examining their economic and social developments over time.

(3) Research Impact: Campbell's scholarship bridges economic, social, and military histories, exploring imperial governance, cultural exchanges, and colonial dynamics in Kazakhstan and beyond. Drawing on archival sources, military records, and memoirs, he provides new perspectives on power relations within the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. His research reframes Kazakhstan's historical significance, contributing to broader discussions on colonial administration and resistance.

(4) Research Support: He conducted extensive research at Kazakhstan's Central State Archives, which limited his ability to access other regions. Prior to his arrival, he relied on Sarah Cameron's expertise to refine his research agenda. Kazakh students assisted in organizing his visit, while logistical support was provided through a U.S. government scholarship and the U.S. Embassy. His collaborations with leading Kazakh historians Gulmira Sultangaliyeva and Zhanat Kundakbayeva have been instrumental, and he actively follows the work of emerging scholars in the field.

(5) Personal experience and key topics: Upon arriving in Kazakhstan, Campbell was struck by contrast between Almaty's lively spring and St. Petersburg's long winter. Adjusting to new academic environments presented challenges, particularly in archives where staff attitudes could be unpredictable. Despite these obstacles, he emphasizes Kazakhstan's untapped research potential, advocating for its study within a global framework rather than in isolation. Comparing Kazakhstan to British imperial studies in Australia and Canada, he encourages the application of imperial history methodologies to explore the region's unique yet globally interconnected past. He also notes a shift in post-Soviet scholarship, where nationalist perspectives increasingly shape academic discourse. He encourages a critical yet balanced approach, prioritizing archival research in constructing nuanced historical analyses.

(6) Future Directions: Campbell conducted six months of research in Russia and Kazakhstan for his first book, utilizing archival sources in Almaty and Moscow. However, increasing restrictions on access to Russian archives have led him to shift his focus to Kazakhstan and Poland for future research. His recent book, *Bleeding Edges*, explores military history, while his next project will examine Soviet Russian approaches of memoirs and documentation. He has a particular interest in the work of Aibubi Duysebayaeva and other young scholars specializing in visual documentation. For early-career researchers, Campbell offers several key recommendations: Read widely before assuming a discovery has been made; Share your ideas, even if they're not fully developed – scholarship is a process of growth rather than perfection; Engage deeply with archival sources, as meaningful research is rooted in primary sources; Overcome language barriers by focusing on engagement and persistence; Respect and learn from fellow scholars, since historical research is a dialogue, not a solitary pursuit.

Campbell believes Kazakhstan holds immense potential for historical discoveries. He underscores the importance of situating one's research within broader academic discourse, striving to make Central Asian history accessible to a broader audience while connecting local narratives to global frameworks.

Professor Jin Noda, the next interviewee, provided his responses in written form, offering valuable insights into his research on Kazakh history and its broader significance in Eurasian studies.

(1) Background Information: Professor Jin Noda, a researcher at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, developed an interest in Central Asia during high school, sparked by the collapse of the Soviet Union – an event that challenged the fixed narratives in his textbooks. This early curiosity evolved into a scholarly pursuit of the 18th and 19th century Kazakh history, with a particular focus on Kazakh interactions with the Russian Empire and Qing China.

(2) Motivation for Study: His fascination with nomadic pastoralism, a way of life very different from that of Japan, led him to Central Asian studies. Unlike traditional world history, which often marginalize Kazakhstan, he views it as a central player in Eurasian interrelations. What fascinates him most is the adaptability and mobility of nomadic societies, a defining characteristic of Kazakh history.

(3). Research Impact: Professor Noda's research provides a refined understanding of Kazakh-Russian-Qing relations, emphasizing Kazakhs' role as intermediaries in Eurasian history. His approach is multi-archival, comparing sources from different perspectives. Additionally, he applies interdisciplinary methods, collaborating with environmental scientists to analyze historical climate data. His research challenges Western-centric narratives and argues for a more integrated perspective on Central Asia's place in global history.

(4). Research Environment: Professor Noda has conducted extensive research at Kazakhstan's Central State Archive and the Central Academic Library in Almaty, working in collaboration with institutions such as KazNU and the Institute of Oriental Studies. He acknowledges Prof. Meruert Abuseitova, who facilitated his research stay, and Prof. Klara Khafizova, a leading Sinologist and research collaborator.

Fieldwork in northeastern Kazakhstan, particularly at Junghar archaeological sites such as Ablait, deepened his understanding of how geography influenced Kazakh history. One of the primary challenges remains the fragmented nature of archival sources, requiring extensive effort to reconstruct historical narratives.

(5). Key Research Areas: Professor Noda's research focuses on Kazakh-Russian-Qing relations and diplomatic interactions. Kazakh customary law and its integration into late

19th-century imperial legal systems. Environmental history, integrating climate data into historical studies. Kazakh mobility and adaptability, essential to understanding their historical resilience. He also observes a strong interest from both Kazakh scholars and the wider public in his work, as his methodology and sources offer perspectives distinct from those prevalent in Kazakhstani historiography.

(6). Future Directions: Currently, his research is shifting toward the legal transformations of the late 19th century, examining how the Russian and Qing Empires incorporated Kazakh customary law into cross-border legal frameworks. His advice to early-career scholars straightforward: gather as much historical material as possible – strong research begins with a solid foundation.

In addition, he emphasizes the importance of challenging Eurocentric narratives and encourages future historians to integrate Kazakh history into global historical discourse.

### *Humanitarian Approach to Research on Kazakhstan*

An examination of the motivations underlying the diverse group of scholars and experts who have dedicated themselves to the study of Kazakhstan, reveals that many of these individuals first developed an interest in the region during their student years, leading to sustained academic pursuit. Their research has been guided by the professional demands of their respective fields. However, certain individuals, such as Ron Wiley, became intrigued by Kazakhstan out of personal interest rather than professional necessity. Their engagement with the country's culture, languages, and history, despite lacking formal academic specialization in the field, provides a unique perspective. This raises an important question: what drives such personal curiosity about Kazakhstan, and how do non-specialists contribute to the broader study of the region?

*Dr. Ron Wiley*, has spent over 30 years in the non-profit sector, primarily with Resource Exchange International, Inc. (REI, Inc.) where he currently serves as the Central Asia Director. Dr. Wiley brings a unique humanitarian perspective shaped by his extensive work in this region. His insights provide a valuable perspective on Kazakhstan's socio-cultural development, particularly in the context of international service and cross-cultural cooperation.

Background Information: Dr. Ron Wiley, Central Asia Director for Resource Exchange International (REI, Inc.), has devoted over 30 years in the non-profit sector. Initially trained in agriculture and plant breeding, he shifted his focus following a formative visit to the Soviet Union in 1991, during which he travelled to Moscow, Tashkent, and Almaty. This experience exposed him to Kazakhstan's ethnic diversity and cultural complexity, leaving a lasting impression. He was struck by the Kazakhs' hospitality and warmth, inspiring a strong personal connection to the region. In 1994, he returned to Kazakhstan with his family, immersed himself in the Kazakh language, taught English, and engaged in rural community projects, particularly in micro-enterprise and microfinance.

Motivation for study and research impact: Guided by his Christian faith and curiosity about different cultures, Wiley's early encounters with Kazakhstan reshaped his understanding of Central Asia, encouraging him to contribute to the country's development. He committed to teaching Kazakh, which strengthened his bond with local community and provided insight into Kazakhstan's unique cultural heritage. Initially invited by KIMEP University in Almaty, Dr. Wiley's research on restorative justice and community-based conflict resolution involves extensive fieldwork across regions such as Taldykorgan and Oskemen. His workshops and interviews document Kazakh cultural traditions in conflict resolution, offering critical insights into Kazakhstan's heritage and community values.

Research Environment and Future Directions: Dr. Wiley gathered cultural resources from bookstores and KIMEP University, enriching his research with traditional Kazakh narratives. Wiley's research highlights role of Uyat (shame) in Kazakh society and explores restorative justice practices, particularly among kandas (ethnic Kazakh repatriates) from China, who retain strong traditional values. These insights deepen the understanding of indigenous Kazakh social practices. Wiley aims to explore the experiences of kandas from Mongolia and address challenges faced by urban Kazakh youth, examining how traditional values contribute to community cohesion in contemporary Kazakh society modern settings.

## Results

This study highlights the diverse research contributions of foreign scholars and experts in advancing the historiography of Kazakhstan. Sarah Cameron examines migration and demographic shifts, emphasizing the long-term effects of forced settlement and repatriation. Jeff Sahadeo investigates colonial governance and identity formation, establishing a link between Soviet policies to contemporary socio-political dynamics. Niccolò Pianciola focuses on forced collectivization and environmental transformations, demonstrating the socio-economic consequences of Soviet rule. Ian Campbell investigates imperial legal systems and settler colonialism, providing insights into Russian governance over Kazakh lands. Jin Noda reconstructs Kazakh-Qing-Russian relations, challenging narratives that marginalize Kazakhstan within Eurasian history.

Beyond academic historiography, Dr. Ron Wiley provides a non-traditional perspective, analyzing restorative justice, cultural values, and the experiences of Kandas repatriates through a humanitarian and community-based lens. His work underscores the role of non-specialist contributors in shaping the understanding of Kazakh identity and traditions.

The study further highlights the potential for expanding interview-based research into a more narrative-driven format, facilitating a deeper exploration of intellectual trajectories, cross-disciplinary connections, and alternative research perspectives. By prioritizing depth over breadth, this approach will further contribute to a more integrated understanding of Kazakhstan's history within broader global and comparative frameworks.

## Conclusion

The collective insights Sarah Cameron, Jeff Sahadeo, Niccolò Pianciola, Ian Campbell, Jin Noda and Ron Wiley provide a comprehensive and multi-perspective analysis of Kazakhstan's historical development. Each scholar approaches the subject from a distinct angle, contributing to a broader understanding of migration, governance, legal transformations, environmental challenges, and identity formation in the region. Their works enhance historiographical discourse on Kazakhstan and integrate it into the broader context of Eurasian and global history.

A key distinguishing feature of these scholars' research is their lack of historiographical constraints or the «memory of the genre» that often shapes domestic narratives. Unlike Kazakhstani historians, who may work within established frameworks influenced by national historiography, post-Soviet perspectives, or institutional paradigms, these foreign researchers engage with Kazakhstan's past through comparative, multi-archival, and interdisciplinary approaches. This enables them to introduce new methodologies and challenge dominant interpretations, providing fresh perspectives on key historical processes.

Sarah Cameron's research foregrounds migration as a central force in Kazakhstan's history, tracing its effects from the pre-Soviet period through Soviet policies to present-day repatriation programs. Her ability to examine both demographic shifts and environmental crises, such as the Aral Sea disaster, adds complexity to understanding Kazakhstan's social and economic transformations (Cameron, 2018).

Jeff Sahadeo focuses on colonialism, interethnic relations, and post-Soviet identity formation, emphasizing Kazakhstan's adaptability within shifting political landscapes. His comparative framework highlights the legacies of imperial rule and their continuing influence on contemporary national identity, particularly in relation to Soviet memory and socio-political change (Sahadeo, 2007).

Niccolò Pianciola's scholarship provides an important foundation for understanding Tsarist and Soviet policies toward Kazakhstan, particularly through the lens of forced migration, collectivization, and economic restructuring. His research challenges existing narratives by exploring the broader Eurasian context of migration and borderland policies, linking Kazakhstan's experience to Russian and Chinese administrative strategies. His reliance on archival sources, rather than state-imposed historical frameworks, allows for a more independent and comparative perspective.

Ian Campbell examines Kazakhstan through the prism of imperial governance and legal transformations, offering insights into settler colonialism, military administration, and legal pluralism on the Kazakh steppe. His integration of Russian, Kazakh, and Western historiographical traditions enables a more comparative and balanced analysis of how Russian imperial policies shaped local governance and legal adaptations (Campbell, 2017).

Dr. Ron Wiley's engagement with Kazakhstan reflects a deep personal and professional commitment. Since his first visit in 1991, he has spent decades immersed in the country's culture, language, and traditions through his work in education and community development. His research on restorative justice and conflict resolution highlights the enduring strength of Kazakh heritage in shaping community life. By exploring the experiences of Kandas repatriates and urban youth, Wiley bridges historical tradition with contemporary realities, offering valuable insights into how cultural values evolve in a changing world. His work stands as a testament to the power of cultural understanding and enduring human connections.

Jin Noda, working across Russian, Qing, and Kazakh archives, reconstructs Kazakhstan's role as a geopolitical mediator in Eurasia. His work on nomadic mobility, diplomatic interactions, and legal history challenges conventional portrayal of Kazakhstan as a passive periphery, instead positioning it as an active agent in regional power dynamics. His comparative approach, which avoids the constraints of Soviet-era historiographical traditions, allows for a more nuanced and objective reconstruction of the region's past (Noda, 2016).

Together, these scholars bring Kazakhstan's history into global conversations, moving beyond regional narratives to examine its historical role within imperial, colonial, and migratory contexts. Their methodological flexibility, unbound by historiographical traditions or institutional constraints, enables them to challenge established interpretations, incorporate transnational comparisons, and introduce new conceptual frameworks to the study of Kazakhstan.

In the context of future research, the interview-based approach applied in this study demonstrates considerable promise for further development. Refining this approach into a more narrative-driven format would allow for deeper engagement with historiographical trends and intellectual trajectories, fostering a richer and more reflective understanding of Kazakhstan's historical transformations. Prioritizing quality over quantity, this study underscores the need for continued scholarly dialogue, methodological innovation, and

comparative analysis to further integrate Kazakhstan's history into broader Eurasian and global historiography.

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