

Communication field in the Russian Empire

Training of employees (in the example of Semirechye)

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Abstract: The article explores the work and training of communication specialists—employees of postal and telegraph institutions—in the Russian Empire during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, with a focus on the distinctive features of employee recruitment in Semirechye. The region's remote location from the empire's central areas, its multi-ethnic environment, and the political and economic conditions of the period had a significant impact on the work of these employees. Members of the local population, including Kazakhs and other ethnic groups, had the opportunity to work in this sector and contributed to the development of communication services.

The Kazakh population primarily held lower-ranking positions in postal and telegraph institutions, and only in rare cases did they rise to official ranks. By the early 20th century, Kazakh officials became prominent in the postal, telegraph, and railway sectors, applying their knowledge in various areas, including the organization of postal services.

INTRODUCTION

The Turkestan region played a pivotal role in shaping imperial perspectives on Russia as a colonial power and served as a critical example of managing a multi-ethnic region within the empire. Semirechye, in particular, experienced significant migration of various ethnic and religious groups, contributing to the region's multinational population and unique socio-political climate. Some contemporaries compared this environment to typical Chinese port cities. In his works, Morrison characterizes the city of Verny and the Semirechye region as a "plural society," a concept borrowed from J.S. Furnivall's studies on colonial Southeast Asia.

Furnivall developed this concept in his monograph *Colonial Policy and Practice*, a comparative study of Burma and the Dutch East Indies. According to this concept, "A plural society emerges where economic forces operate independently of social interaction, except for economic exchange, leading to excessively active or even inhumane economic activity, freed from social norms and conventions. "This framework is useful for understanding the colonial society of the Semirechye region, particularly the urban centers and the unique composition of imperial employees, which do not fit neatly into established categories. Postal and telegraph employees in Semirechye, like other sectors of society, exhibited distinct characteristics, shaped by the specificities of the region. Unlike other colonial centers, Semirechye was not historically a Muslim stronghold, and the city of Verny did not fit the classic colonial model of a military town where European and Asian populations were sharply contrasted (Morrison, 2019).

The expansion of imperial communication systems played a key role in strengthening control and influence of empires over newly acquired territories. Postal routes and telegraph systems were rapidly established across colonial lands. Historical examples show that as military forces advanced deeper into territories, postal and telegraph systems expanded alongside them. For instance, British military commanders would request continuous communication lines for troops in newly acquired territories, as evidenced by a brigadier of the Southern Division writing to the Head of the Postal Department in 1836. Postal employees were integral to supplying and equipping the army with necessary materials (Devyani, 2010, pp. 568-569).

The aim of this article is to review and re-evaluate certain conclusions regarding the training of postal and telegraph employees in the context of a multi-ethnic environment, with a particular focus on Central Asia. One of the primary issues we examine is the ongoing housing crisis. An employee of the Sergievpol Post and Telegraph Office, for instance, frequently had to travel long distances in the early 20th century. It was not until 1892 that the government began to address this problem by providing official apartments for low- and mid-ranking employees, but many still relied on housing allowances (*kvartirnye dengi*), which were often insufficient. There was also an acute shortage of specialists in the post and telegraph offices due to political events, which led to the creation of educational institutions at these institutions to prepare apprentices and relaxed conditions for hiring employees. The management supported these training initiatives, recognizing the need for qualified personnel to improve communications services. Kazakhs tried to enter the post and telegraph sector, but they mostly occupied low-ranking positions. Their promotion to official ranks was rare, highlighting the inequality in employment opportunities based on ethnicity. However, during World War I, when the mass conscription of ethnic Russians into the army created a shortage of personnel, it opened up opportunities for Kazakhs in the postal and telegraph service. These problems taken together illustrate the difficulties

associated with the training and employment of communications specialists in the Russian Empire, including in the context of Semirechye.

A comparison of the results with previous studies on the training and employment of communications specialists in the Russian Empire, particularly in Semirechye, reveals differences from those studies. Firstly, these studies focus on the local context, which sets them apart. The unique characteristics of recruitment and training of employees in Semirechye are often overlooked in broader studies of the Russian imperial communication systems. Second, the multi-ethnic composition of the postal and telegraph service employees. In the early 20th century, Kazakhs primarily held lower-ranking positions, and their number gradually increased. Third, it emphasizes the importance of local knowledge, especially Kazakh, in organizing postal services and contributing to the overall communications infrastructure. In summary, it can be said that a more detailed understanding of the sphere of communications in the Russian Empire, focusing on the specific context of Semirechye, the role of local ethnic groups, and the influence of geographical and political factors, distinguishes it from previous studies.

In preparing this study, various administrative documents, regulations, orders from central and local postal and telegraph institutions, official correspondence, and statistical reports were used. These materials were sourced from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, particularly from collection No. 194, which houses documents of the Verny Regional Post and Telegraph Office of the Turkestan Post and Telegraph District (1872-1917). (CSA RK, F. 194, OP. 1).

Additionally, documents from collection No. 44 of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan - "Semirechye Regional Administration of the Military Ministry"- were also utilized. A comprehensive approach was employed to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the archival documents (CSA RK, F. 44, OP. 1).

Annual reports published by the Statistical Committee in the Overview of the Semirechye Region were also referenced, specifically editions from 1897, 1898, 1900, 1901, and 1905 (Overview of the Semirechye Region for 1897).

Several groups of sources were consulted for this research, including: 1) legislative acts; 2) reference and statistical publications; 3) administrative documentation from central and local communication institutions.

Additionally, the postal directory *Pochtovyy Dorozhnik* was used as a reference to facilitate postal payments. It was first published under the title *Pochtovyy Kalendar* (with editions in 1777, 1796, 1802, 1803, 1808, 1824, 1829, 1841, 1842, 1852, 1863, 1871, 1875, 1880, 1888, 1901, 1904, 1906, 1912, 1908, 1911). After 1871, its content changed, reflecting alterations in postal routes due to railway construction between 1871 and 1875, with some stations being relocated (*Pochtovyy Dorozhnik*, 1875).

The Military Statistical Description of the Turkestan Military District: Dzhungar-Semirechye Border Region was completed under the supervision of General-Major Fedya, the General Quartermaster of the Turkestan Military

District. Recommendations from General Staff directive No. 474 (1908) were incorporated into the study. Among the specialists involved in the research were E. Nedzvetsky, I. Petrovsky, A. Piltz, Gubarevich-Radobylsky, V. Voronkov, V. Vorotnikov, A. Korneev, I. Ivanov, A. Zenkov, K. Egert, Shcherbakov, G. Goltz, I. Tergueusisov, B. Syrtlanov, and I. Zhainafov. Cossack officers E. Petrov, M. Lyapin, Shevyrev, and Horunzhiy A. Erkovsky contributed to documenting the fortresses and routes in Semirechye. Horunzhiy B. Annenkov was responsible for the cartographic work. The study consists of three sections. The military-geographical overview details the geographical characteristics and main routes of the region, as well as providing a military-geographical description (Fedorov, 1910).

A variety of administrative documents reflecting the activities of postal and telegraph institutions are also held in the archives of the Central State Archive of Kazakhstan (collections 194 and 196). Normative acts, organizational and technical documentation, statistical reports from central and local postal and telegraph administrations, and correspondence between the regional administration and postal and telegraph departments were integral to this research.

Historical and Geographical Characteristics of the Semirechye Region

The Semirechye region was bordered by the Semipalatinsk region to the north, China to the southeast, and the Ferghana, Syrdarya, and Akmolinsk regions to the west. Geographically, Semirechye featured mountainous terrain in the southeast and flatlands in the northwest (Severtsov, 1873). The borders of the region were formalized by the Western Siberian and Turkestan General-Governorates in 1870. The boundary began at the Khabar Pass, extended westward along the Tarbagatai Range to the Taldyairyk River, and followed the Ayaguz River. From there, it connected with an unnamed river originating in the Zhamantas Mountains, which flowed into the Baltykora River, forming the boundary between Semirechye and Semipalatinsk, stretching from the northern to southern shores of Lake Balkhash.

The western part of the region was predominantly flat, with sandy and saline plains interspersed with lakes. The most prominent geographic feature was Lake Balkhash, with a length of 640 km and a width ranging from 53 to 85 km. The largest river in the region was the Ili, which flowed from east to west, and was noted for being larger than the Don River. Other major rivers included the Shu, Karatal, Lepsy, Tentek, Urzhar, and Emel, all originating in the snow-capped mountains. These rivers flowed rapidly in their upper courses and slowed as they reached the plains. In addition, numerous smaller streams originated from the mountains, and the local population constructed irrigation channels from these streams for agriculture. However, there were no significant government-led canal systems due to the high costs involved (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1909, p. 4).

In the west, the region bordered the Syrdarya region from the Karabalty River to the Shu River, and the Semipalatinsk region from the Shu River to Lake Balkhash. While some representatives of the Argyn tribe in Semipalatinsk were incorporated into the Karkaraly district, certain maps depicted the region's boundary with Akmolinsk extending from the Shu River to Lake Balkhash. A decree from the Committee of Ministers on June 16, 1895, redefined the southern part of the western boundary, extending it along the Karabalty River to Utysk Pass and then to the Alexandrovsky Ridge and beyond (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1909, p. 5).

The climate of Semirechye varied significantly across the region. In the north, the climate resembled the long, snowy winters of Siberia, while the southern areas had warmer winters with little snow and hot summers, similar to Turkestan. Despite these variations, the climate also changed with elevation: lower regions experienced mild, short winters and long, dry summers, while mountainous areas had long, cold, snowy winters and cool, rainy summers and autumns (Opisanie Semirechenskoi oblasti, 1914, pp. 7-15).

The region's diverse landscape, with its mix of mountains and plains, was well-suited for both livestock farming and agriculture. Additionally, its location along important historical trade routes contributed to economic development, the emergence of major cities, and the rise of trade fairs by the late 19th century (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1908, pp. 39-40).

The formation of Semirechye as a region was closely tied to the administrative reforms of the 19th century. Following the annexation of Shymkent and Aulie-Ata in 1864, the western part of the Ili region was fully incorporated into the Russian Empire. In 1867, under the "Temporary Regulation on the Administration of the Steppe Regions," the Syrdarya and Semirechye regions were established as part of the Turkestan General-Governorate. On March 25, 1891, Semirechye was transferred to the Steppe General-Governorate (Materialy po istorii, 1960). However, a decree on June 11, 1899, returned Semirechye to the Turkestan General-Governorate, effective July 1, along with all of its territorial and geographical subdivisions. The Sergiopol, Kapal, and Alatau districts were incorporated from Semipalatinsk, and the city of Verny became the regional capital, with a military governor overseeing the administration. Initially, the region covered an area of 282,390 square kilometers, but following the St. Petersburg Agreement of 1881, it expanded to 293,970 square kilometers (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1883, p. 4). By 1892, the region's total area had grown to 357,916 square kilometers. Semirechye was bordered by Semipalatinsk to the north, Syrdarya to the west, Ferghana to the southwest, and China to the east and south (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1883, pp. 4-5).

The administrative structure of the region and the establishment of its districts and cities were carried out by orders from the Migration Administration. Most of Semirechye was annexed to Russia between 1846 and 1864, with districts forming throughout the 19th century. Sergiopol was founded in 1847, Kapal in 1848, and Lepsy and Verny in 1855, with Verny

officially becoming a city in 1868. Additional districts, such as Karakol (1869), Pishpek (1878), and Zharkent (1882), were formed later. Initially, the region consisted of five districts: Verny, Kapal, Sergiopol, Issyk-Kul, and Tokmak (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1885). In 1884, Zharkent was added, and in 1878, Tokmak was renamed Pishpek. By 1889, Issyk-Kul was renamed Przhevalsk. In 1899, Semirechye consisted of six districts: Verny, Zharkent, Kapal, Pishpek, Lepsy, and Przhevalsk. In addition to Verny, the region had several administrative centers, including Sergiopol, Kapal, Zharkent, Pishpek, Przhevalsk, Tokmak, Gavrilovsk, and the village of Sofiyskaya.

Following the St. Petersburg Agreement, the region expanded by 12,000 square versts to the east and south. However, not all sources reflected the updated territorial boundaries, resulting in varying estimates of the region's size. For instance, official records from 1906 list the region's area as 347,910, 357,916, or 352,979 square versts, depending on the source (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1907, p. 2). In 1902, administrative changes created new districts, while others were placed under district inspectors, especially along the Chinese border (Obzor Semirechenskoy oblasti, 1905, p. 1). The population was classified into various categories based on residence and social status: Russian settlers lived in urban areas, Cossacks in stanitsas, peasants in rural settlements, and nomadic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in auls and districts.

According to 1900 statistical data, the Verny district was the largest in both area and population. Other notable districts included Kapal, Lepsy, Pishpek, Przhevalsk, and Zharkent. By 1908, the population of Semirechye had grown significantly, from 639,078 in 1883 to 1,067,691 in 1908, an increase of 2.7 times (Fedorov, 1910, p. 103).

	Total	Russians	Kazakh	Tarantchins	Dungans
1908	1067691	149353	802855	68467	20032
1883	639078	61838	539712	16118	9507
Growth	428613	87415	263143	47349	10525
Percentage Growth Over a 25-Year Period	2.7	5.6	1.9	11.7	4.6

Table 1. Population growth in the Semirechye region from 1883 to 1908 (Source: Fedorov, 1910, p. 103).

The majority of the land in the region was utilized by the Kazakhs. However, as the data shows, high-quality, arable lands were allocated to the Cossack army and state ownership. For instance, in 1908, 24,226,013 square meters of land in the Semirechye region were used by the local Kazakh population (89.8%). The area of land confiscated from or rented from the Kazakhs amounted to 1,285,879 square meters, making up 4.8% of the total territory. The best quality, economically viable lands were allocated as follows: 572,566 square meters to the Cossack army (2.1% of the total territory), and 567,026 square meters to state ownership (2.1% of the total territory). Cities,

trade settlements, and other administrative centers occupied 33,349 square meters (0.1%) (Fedorov, 1910, p. 132).

In conclusion, the Semirechye region was known for its historical and geographical diversity. Its administrative structure and territorial division differed from other regions of the empire. The diverse population, consisting of various ethnic and religious groups, undoubtedly influenced the operation of postal-telegraph services, as well as the work and training of their employees.

TRAINING OF POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH INSTITUTION EMPLOYEES

In the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, postal and telegraph institutions employed representatives from various social groups. Between 1851 and 1885, the postal service in the region was overseen by the Head of the Postal Department (Управляющий почтовой частью). This position was responsible for supervising the financial operations of subordinate institutions, publishing regulations on organizing postal services, monitoring the execution of Postal Department tasks by district post offices, and making decisions on hiring and dismissing postal and telegraph employees. Promotions between grades for employees were also authorized by the head. Local heads of postal offices carried out similar duties, though they were limited to a specific district or post station.

The assistant to the Head of the Postal Department or the head of a postal office held positions under which all postal employees were categorized into six grades. Minor employees such as guards and mail carriers were not included in these grades. On average, postal offices had 10-11 staff members.

Postal and telegraph employees were fully supported by the government. In addition to their salaries, they received allowances for uniforms and food. Promotions within ranks were under the authority of the department head, while the Postal or Telegraph Department could further promote employees. In the Telegraph Department, promotions were typically made three times a year: January 1, May 1, and September 11. After the merger of the postal and telegraph departments in 1885, the term "postal-telegraph official" was used until 1918.

In a Postal-Telegraph District, the district was managed by a chief, with two assistants, a secretary, an accountant, and their respective assistants; two senior mechanics, and three junior mechanics. Approximately 14 people worked in the district. Management and coordination were handled by the district head, who was responsible to the head of the Postal and Telegraph Administration. Under his direct supervision were his two assistants, the senior mechanic, and the secretariat. The assistants were in charge of administrative management, control, and disciplinary actions. The senior mechanic oversaw the technical maintenance of the postal-telegraph district (Romashov, 2005, pp. 140-145).

It is also necessary to consider issues related to staffing postal and telegraph offices. Employment was granted upon submission of the necessary documents: proof of identity, an application for employment, and a letter of recommendation (though the latter was not always required). Candidates also needed to provide a certificate of "completion of studies" from a district school or equivalent institution, as literacy was essential for postal workers. The most important document was the examination sheet, which contained information on the candidate's knowledge of the profession. Given that postal-telegraph workers dealt with technical equipment, specialized training was required. Those wishing to join the postal-telegraph service submitted a formal application to the district postal-telegraph chief, along with the necessary documents, after which they were enrolled in local postal-telegraph schools. Classes were held twice a year, in winter and summer, each session lasting five months, with two graduations per year. Courses typically enrolled 30-35 students, and training was free (Romashov, 2005, pp. 154-155). Prospective students were warned that they would not receive housing or financial assistance, although this depended on the specific region and the decision of the district chief. Scholarships were granted to successful students but not earlier than three months after starting school, and women studying postal-telegraph work were not eligible for scholarships.

Upon completing the postal-telegraph training, students took exams in the following subjects: postal operations, telegraph correspondence regulations, and technical skills. On December 25, 1884, the Main Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs approved the examination program for individuals applying for positions as postal-telegraph officers. The telegraphist exams included receiving telegrams in Russian and foreign languages (French and German). The examination board, chaired by the district chief, consisted of instructors, a special assignments officer, and one other official.

A shortage of specialists in postal-telegraph institutions was a pressing issue. As a result, establishing schools alongside each institution and training apprentices became a priority. Those involved in training and preparing specialists received support from management and were often recommended for awards. For example, the Zharkent postal-telegraph office trained five specialists per year in 1915 (CSA RK F. 199 OP. 1 D. 62 L. 190).

Graduates who successfully completed their training were assigned to postal and postal-telegraph institutions with available positions. Newly hired employees were required to take an oath to protect telegraph secrets. The head of the Turkestan Postal-Telegraph District sent instructions to postal-telegraph office heads regarding the personal administration of the oath: "I instruct you to obtain from Vasily Populov signed forms confirming the oath to maintain telegraph secrecy, to expect appointment to a position after studying the service for an indefinite period, and to allow him to begin studying for the position of a postal-telegraph official of the 6th grade. Report to me with the mentioned forms" (CSA RK F. 199, OP. 1, D. 62 L. 310, 310 rev.). Among the graduates taking the oath were also Kazakhs. For instance, on December 13,

1915, the head of the Zharkent postal-telegraph office sent the following report to the head of the Turkestan Postal-Telegraph District: "To the Head of the Turkestan Postal-Telegraph District: I present to Your Excellency a signed oath of Ibrahim Ibatullin, a student at my office, regarding the protection of telegraph secrecy" (CSA RK F. 199, OP. 1, D. 62 L. 500).

To attain higher official ranks, government employees had to pass specific exams, residing at their assigned location for at least three months. Those aspiring to higher ranks submitted requests to their superiors, who compiled the necessary documents and forwarded them to the educational institution. Once the exams were successfully passed, the results were submitted for approval to the director of the national schools (директор народных училищ), who, based on this, would issue the appropriate certificate. Individuals outside government service were not permitted to take the exams. Successful candidates were granted qualifications equivalent to graduating from a higher primary school (CSA RK F. 188, OP. 1 D. 6 L. 284, 284 rev., 285). Postal-telegraph officials were required to complete specialized training and pass exams to receive promotions. For example, officials from the Zharkent postal-telegraph office took their exams in Kulja (CSA RK F. 199 OP. 1 D. 62 L. 57, 58).

Hiring of Communications Sector Specialists

In the 1860s, postal and telegraph workers were no longer primarily recruited from military personnel, retired servicemen, and non-commissioned officers, as had been the case previously. Instead, a new workforce began to emerge, composed of children of petty officials, office workers, artisans, and representatives of the general populace. This shift provided new opportunities for these groups to enter civil service roles (Bazilevich 1927, p.124). In 1868, the practice of hiring wounded officers and non-commissioned officers for postal and telegraph offices was discontinued. However, non-commissioned officers continued to receive preferential treatment when applying for station master positions.

At the same time, legal restrictions were placed on the employment of educated individuals in postal and telegraph offices. For instance, the "Charter on Civil Service" imposed limitations on individuals from merchant families, honorary citizens, artisans, and the general populace. In 1871, the State Council introduced changes to the law. Citizens without ranks who were entitled to civil service were allowed to hold positions up to the 9th class and work as clerks, while those without civil service rights could be hired as junior and senior sorters, as well as office workers, but without the possibility of obtaining a rank or pension. Children of lower-ranking postal workers were only eligible for rankless "office worker" positions, such as sorters and processors. According to the charter issued in 1878, these positions were reclassified as non-clerical but classified services. After more than ten years of service, children of lower-ranking workers could be promoted from sorters and processors to "junior postal employees." It was only in 1885 that individuals

without civil service rights were permitted to advance to the 8th class (Bazilevich, 1927, pp. 131-132).

As a result of the 1884 reform, postal and telegraph offices were merged, and all postal and telegraph employees were classified into the VI rank. In the Russian Empire, lower-ranking officials (VI rank) earned an average of 300 rubles, while the highest-ranking officials (I rank) received 1,200 rubles annually. For example, Ivan Sarimov Govoryutkin, a V rank official at the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office, earned a salary of 396 rubles and an additional 84 rubles for housing from 1903 to 1908. His personal records contain the following information: "Received home education, subjected to the required examination in the sciences at the two-class city school in Przhevalsk for the promotion to the first-class rank, and was issued a certificate on September 19, 1896, No. 74" (CSA RK F. 199. OP.1 D. 15, L. 79, 79 rev.).

In 1884, the annual salary for postal workers and guards ranged from 120 to 300 rubles. However, this was lower than salaries in other sectors and was among the lowest in the civil service. Documents required for employment as a postal worker included: birth certificate, certificate of title or rank (but not a passport), a certificate of no criminal record (from the justice of the peace), a diploma or education certificate, a military service certificate (militia ticket), and a medical certificate. A 1-ruble stamp was required for submitting the job application (CSA RK F.199 OP.1, D. 62 L. 193). During the studied period, the average annual salary of postal workers in Zharkent ranged from 196 to 300 rubles (CSA RK F. 199, OP1, D. 15, L. 1-85), and in Verny and Sergiopol from 200 to 400 rubles (CSA RK F. 188 OP.1 D. 1-7).

To be hired as a postal or telegraph official or inspector, candidates had to meet certain educational qualifications. This meant having more than a primary school education and passing the required civil service exams. Despite meeting these requirements, not all applicants were hired for permanent positions, with some being offered temporary employment (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.6, L. 386, 386 rev.). For instance, Pyotr Ivanovich Tomashovich, a VI rank postal and telegraph official at the Kopal Postal and Telegraph Office (without rank), earned an annual salary of 528 rubles. He graduated from the four-class city schools of Przhevalsk and Kopal (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D.38 L. 9, 9 rev.).

Similarly, Ivan Profimov Gavrin, who worked as an inspector (without rank) at the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office from 1903 to 1910, earned an annual salary of 480 rubles, placing him among the lower-paid employees (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D.15 L. 1, 1 rev.).

Examinations for the position of inspector were conducted exclusively in Samara, Orenburg, and Ufa. Candidates completed their studies in postal and telegraph operations and were tested on subjects such as postal regulations, telegraph correspondence rules, and technical proficiency. Telegraph operators were also examined on receiving dispatches in Russian and foreign languages (French and German). Upon completing the course, candidates were assigned the VI rank, with a salary of 360 rubles per year. Final exams were held in Samara, Orenburg, Ufa, Troitsk, and Nikolaevsk. Slightly better conditions could

be found in newly opened postal and telegraph offices in the Asian part of Russia, where employees were offered benefits such as higher salaries, relocation allowances (ranging from one-third to a full annual salary, depending on the distance and family status), and other incentives.

All officials in postal and telegraph offices were entitled to ranks according to a hierarchical system: 14th class—Collegiate Registrar, 12th class—Provincial Secretary, 10th class—Collegiate Secretary, 9th class—Titular Counselor, 8th class—Collegiate Assessor, 7th class—Court Counselor. Postal and telegraph officials were also granted military ranks, which were often higher than those of other office positions. For example, M.V. Dubinin, the head of the Verny Office, held the rank of Collegiate Counselor, and his assistant, M.E. Fedorov, held the rank of Court Counselor (Pamyatnaya knizhka 1900, pp. 24-25).

One significant issue for postal and telegraph employees was housing. For instance, at the beginning of the 20th century in the Semirechye Region, an employee of the Sergiopol Postal and Telegraph Office commuted from Przhevalsk. It was not until 1892 that the Minister of the Interior authorized the provision of official apartments for lower- and mid-ranking employees in postal and telegraph offices, under certain conditions. In most cases, employees were given housing allowances (up to 30% of their salary), typically amounting to 3-6 rubles.

Postal and telegraph employees also received state allowances several times a year, such as before Christmas, Easter, and in the autumn. The amount of the allowance depended on the employee's experience, rank, the institution's total income, and the policies of the office's leadership. In some cases, the allowance was given to all employees, while in others, it was only provided to selected individuals (Bazilevich 1927, p.134). For example, in April 1914, only nine out of 20-30 employees at the Sergiopol Postal and Telegraph Office received an Easter allowance (Table 2) (CSA RK F. 188 OP.1 6 L 68).

Table 2. Easter Allowance Given to Employees of the Sergiopol Postal and Telegraph Office (April 17, 1914)

(Source: CSA RK F. 188 OP.1 6 L 68)

№	Name and Position	Allowance Amount	Deductions %	Amount Received	№	Name and Position	Allowance Amount
1	Head of the Office, Pervukhin	25	-	2	50	22	50
2	Assistant Head of the Office, Borisov	20	-	2	-	18	-
3	Postal-Telegraph Official (VI rank), Nikitin	10	-	1	-	9	-
4	Postal Workers:	5	-	-	-	5	-
5	Kornev	5	-	-	-	5	-
6	Eremeev	5	-	-	-	5	-
7	Chernov	5	-	-	-	5	-
8	Gryaznov	5	-	-	-	5	-
9	Belyaev	5	-	-	-	5	-
	Total	85	-	5	50	79	50

Postal and telegraph officials typically received their primary education at urban schools or ensign schools (CSA RK F. 188 OP.1 D.12, L.14). Low-ranking officials who had served in postal and telegraph offices for at least five years, and who did not receive additional salary bonuses (with the exception of the Transcaspien region, which was considered financially well-off), were eligible for monthly childcare allowances. These allowances were provided by the committee and the Main Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs, and were sent directly to educational institutions, allowing their children to attend secondary schools such as gymnasiums. The maximum financial support per family was 100 rubles (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 62 L. 526).

The Verny Postal and Telegraph Office, as the provincial center, held a higher rank compared to other communication offices in terms of significance. It served as the main hub for the submission of annual reports from all postal and telegraph offices in the region and was responsible for distributing instructions, government decrees, circulars, and other important documents across the province. Consequently, it had the largest staff, averaging around 100 employees. For instance, in 1916, the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office employed 110 personnel. These included the head of the office (1), his assistant (1), officials (50), mechanics (4), inspectors (6), postal workers (36), and guards and couriers (12). Technologically, the office was also the most advanced in the region.

Table 3: Technical Equipment of the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office
(Source: CSA RK F. 194, OP. 1 D. 132 L. 248, 248 rev, 249)

Equipment Type	In Operation	Reserve
Morse	6	3
Hughes telegraph apparatus (3	2
Complete 4-way BODO	1	-
BODO with Retransmission	1	-

DUTIES OF POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Using the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office as an example, we can examine the main duties carried out by postal and telegraph employees. The employees worked in various departments depending on their roles. The office was divided into the following sections: the administrative section led by the office head and his deputy, the finance section, the transport section, the regular postal section, the registered mail section, the telegraph section, the technical section, the office staff, and the postal workers group.

The head of the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office was responsible for managing the overall operations, ensuring the timely dispatch of correspondence, hiring specialists, and taking full material responsibility for finances and other assets. His key responsibilities included: overseeing all employees' correct and timely execution of postal and telegraph operations, such as the acceptance, dispatch, and delivery of mail and telegrams; ensuring the timely and accurate preparation of periodic reports and general administrative documentation; managing the officials and fairly distributing tasks among them; maintaining the moral conduct of officials; ensuring that subordinate postal stations operated efficiently and that mail was properly dispatched to them; overseeing, in cooperation with warehouse managers, the sums of transfers, deposits, savings, postal stamp advances, and ensuring that all these assets were accounted for; inspecting postal stations; personally safeguarding government and private funds entrusted to the postal-telegraph section, as well as material assets, postal payments, stamps, fees, and official documents. He was also responsible for ensuring timely assistance to the Ile and Kazansko-Bogorodsk postal-telegraph offices (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D. 132 L. 13-13 rev).

The responsibilities of the deputy head of the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office included: supervising the actions of all employees, collaborating with the office head and designated officials to oversee daily checks of postal-telegraph fees and payments, and working with the office manager to audit excess transfer amounts from the Ile and Kazansko-Bogorodsk postal-telegraph offices. He was also responsible for analyzing and checking insured mail received through the post, reviewing and sealing insured mail prepared for dispatch, signing accompanying documents, and ensuring shipments were properly packaged. Additionally, he carried out all directives from the office head and assumed leadership of the office in the head's absence (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D. 132 L. 13-13 rev).

Zharkent, one of the larger cities, became an important communication hub in the Semirechye region due to its postal and telegraph office. In 1914, the office employed 23 professionals, including the office head, his deputy, 8 postal-telegraph officials, 1 inspector, 9 postal workers, and 9 guards and couriers. There were no female employees (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 39 L. 109-110). Of the staff, one official held the I-IV rank, two held the V rank, and six held the VI rank (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 39 L. 240-241).

Additionally, postal and telegraph employees sometimes displayed disrespectful and dismissive behavior towards lower-ranking Muslim staff. For instance, on May 17, 1914, a mailman named Gureev unjustly mistreated a Muslim postman named Khasen Samuev. Despite Samuev filing a complaint through the station elder, no action was taken in response (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 39 L. 279, 280).

KAZAKH EMPLOYEES IN POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES

According to research, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kazakh officials began to work in the postal and telegraph offices - fields that had previously been unfamiliar to them. This sector was not well known among the Kazakhs and was often inaccessible, which explains the small number of Kazakh employees. For example, in March 1901, the head of the Office of the Steppe Governor-General, V.S. Losevsky, requested the head of the Omsk Postal Department, S.I. Uspensky, to appoint Sultan Ablaykhanov-Madalkhan, the son of Sultan Yesh-Mukhammed Suyikogly Ablaykhanov, as a traveling official in the postal and telegraph office. However, the request was denied, as preference was given to individuals with at least two years of experience in the field and with specific knowledge and skills in postal administration (Satenova, 2014).

Similarly, research shows that in the Omsk Postal and Telegraph District, Dosmukhamed Kemengerov, a titular counselor (IV class official), later became a collegiate councilor (VI class official). He served in the postal and telegraph offices in the Akmola and Tobolsk departments (Aitmukhambetov, 2010, pp. 130-131). However, such achievements were rare in Kazakhstan, and most Kazakh officials were primarily engaged in translation and clerical work in various government bodies.

At the same time, Kazakhs made attempts to enter this sector. For example, in March 1901, V.S. Losevsky, head of the Office of the Steppe Governor-General, again requested S.I. Uspensky appointed Sultan Ablaykhanov-Madalkhan as a traveling official in the postal and telegraph office. However, the request was denied for the same reasons—lack of sufficient experience and skills in postal administration (Satenova, 2014).

In Semirechye, the number of Kazakh officials and lower-ranking Kazakh employees in postal and telegraph offices was also very small, and their recruitment was largely linked to the onset of World War I. The mass conscription of the population (mainly ethnic Russians) into the military led to a shortage of personnel in government institutions, including postal and telegraph

offices. Postal and telegraph employees were drafted into the army multiple times a year, which further reduced their numbers and opened up opportunities for people of other nationalities and women to work in these offices.

Unfortunately, there is little information available in the service records of postal and telegraph employees regarding their biographies and careers. One example is Mirkaidar Shanishev, who worked in the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office in 1913 after being transferred from the Old Margelan Postal and Telegraph Office (Fergana region). He was appointed as a VI class official, with an annual salary of 519 rubles. However, his service in Zharkent was short-lived, as his name no longer appeared in the list of employees by the end of 1914 (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 39 L. 193, 200, 209, 210, 213, 213 rev., 214, 214 rev., 215).

Another official, Aldagarov from the Kulja department, was identified as serving in Przhevalsk during the 1916 uprising in Semirechye. Documents reveal the following: "Mr. Aldagarov is currently in the Przhevalsk district, working in a commission for the selection of confiscated sheep from the rebels for the needs of the active army. The work is extremely urgent due to the approaching cold weather. I humbly request that Your Excellency inform the District that Mr. Aldagarov will be immediately assigned back to the postal department after the work in the Przhevalsk district is completed. At the same time, I am sending Mr. Aldagarov an order to return to the office under your control to be sent to his next assignment" (CSA RK F. 194 OP.1 D.132 L. 212, 212 rev.).

Additionally, in 1916, a Kazakh official named Muratov (first name not listed) was identified as a VI class postal and telegraph official in the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D.132 L.248, 248 rev., 249). In the same year, Arkabay Atamkulov was also mentioned as an official in the Verny Postal and Telegraph Office (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D.132 L.85, 248, 248 rev., 249).

Kazakhs were frequently employed in lower-level positions, such as guards or couriers. For example, in 1914, a Christmas bonus was awarded to Akhmetzhan Tusipov (Akhmedzhan Duyusupov), a Kazakh who served as a guard and courier in the Sergiopol Postal and Telegraph Office. He began his service in January 1914 at the age of 20, was unmarried, had no formal education, and was barely literate in Russian. His salary was set at 240 rubles per year. The documents that enabled him to take up this position included a passport issued by the Akchaulinsky Volost in June 1913, a certificate of reliability from the Sergiopol ataman issued in January 1914, a service record, and a signed agreement on maintaining telegraph confidentiality (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.6 L.331, 331 rev.). On November 1, 1914, he voluntarily resigned, and his position was taken by a Kazakh from the Ayagoz Volost, Asylbek Masakbayev (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.6 L.332).

Another lower-ranking employee identified in the Sergiopol Postal and Telegraph Office in 1915 was a guard named Masabayev. During the Easter holiday, a 5-ruble bonus was given to lower-ranking employees, including Masabayev (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.6 L.6 rev.).

In 1915, Musa Saparov (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.185), Abraham Zhagi (Shagi) Akhmetov (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.488), and Ibrahim Ibatulla (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.500) were listed as lower-ranking employees in the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office. Archive documents reveal that Musa Saparov had previously worked as a veterinary guard before joining the postal service. A letter from the Veterinary Inspector of the Semirechye Region to the head of the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office states: "I am forwarding the certificate from the Turkestan Governor-General dated March 17 of this year, granting the right to wear the jubilee medal in memory of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty to the former veterinary guard Musa Saparov. I request that you present this to Saparov, who is now a postman under your office, and send me a receipt" (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.185). Abraham Zhagi (Shagi) Akhmetov was hired by the Zharkent Postal and Telegraph Office in mid-December 1915 (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.488).

Kazakh Yamshiks. Yamshiks, who primarily handled postal transportation on horseback, were often recruited from among the Kazakhs. The main requirement for this position was a certificate of reliability issued by the volost head, and the age range for employment was typically between 20 and 48 years.

Their primary duties included transporting mail and managing the operations of postal stations, such as maintaining stables, workshops, and repairing equipment. To fulfill these responsibilities, they needed strong, durable horses, high-quality harnesses, and wagons or sleds. Yamshiks were expected to be physically fit, disciplined, and knowledgeable about the local climate and geography. Factors that complicated mail transportation in Kazakhstan included harsh winter conditions, long distances between settlements and postal stations, and the need to work outdoors day and night. Additionally, proper care and preparation of horses for long journeys were essential for the productivity of their work.

Like in other regions, parcel delivery was carried out using convoys, and the horses were prepared for about 10 days before the journey. During the first day of the convoy, the horses were not fed. At the second station, one pood (16 kg) of oats was distributed among five horses, and each horse received a small amount of water. The amount of food and water gradually increased as the convoy moved from station to station, and by the end of the journey, the horses were fed and watered freely.

Among the yamshiks of the Bogorodskaya postal station (Verney Uezd), residents of the Kargaly Volost No. 5 village in 1912 were Mamin Tursynbekov, Nurmak Daniyarov, and Abdibai Narbekov from the Botpai Volost (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D.87 L.52). Likewise, in 1912, Beisen Baityubekov and Balykbay Kegushbayev from the Chulak Volost worked at the Karachekinskaya and Chingildinskaya postal stations in the Verney Uezd (CSA RK F.194 OP.1 D.87 L.7).

In conclusion, the employees of postal and telegraph offices in Kazakhstan during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century

provided essential services to local institutions and residents, establishing a clear hierarchical system. Kazakhs primarily occupied lower-level positions in postal and telegraph offices and only rarely became officials. Kazakh officials in the communications sector were rare and were usually employed as translators or clerks.

POST AND TELEGRAPH EMPLOYEES IN MOBILIZATION SERVICE

The primary institution that contributed to organizing mass mobilization in the Semirechye region was the post and telegraph service. Between 1914 and 1916, post and telegraph employees worked intensively, without breaks, delivering lists of individuals subject to mobilization to the relevant addresses and destinations via letters and telegrams. As a result, the leadership of the post and telegraph department requested that its employees be awarded medals (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.9 L. 131, 132, 132 rev.).

An example of the leading role that post and telegraph employees played in organizing mobilization is seen in a report from the head of the Zharkent post and telegraph office to the head of the Turkestan post and telegraph district: "Submitting herewith a list of officials deserving of medals for their efforts in mobilization, I report to Your Excellency that since the beginning of mobilization, from the day the troops departed Zharkent (October 10), the post office has been overwhelmed with work. There was no opportunity to satisfy all the public's requests during the period from morning until 2 p.m. All kinds of postal deliveries to military units, officials, and ranks were issued, and work and reception from them were carried out from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. and even after that time... Calculations were conducted in the books. This intensive work by the postal staff undoubtedly contributed significantly to the mobilization efforts. As for the telegraph department, although the workload during the mobilization increased significantly and the line was overloaded, the staff did not perform overtime duties, continuing their usual shifts with an individual dispatcher despite the strained work conditions" (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 62 L. 180, 180 rev.).

Post and telegraph employees were mandatorily conscripted into the army. Christian citizens who reached the age of 20 were drafted into military service based on their place of residence, and their records were updated annually. For instance, in 1915, a special list was compiled at the Zharkent post and telegraph office, which included individuals born in 1895 who were subject to conscription (CSA RK F. 199 OP.1 D. 62 L.139, 139 rev.). For example, when a circular was issued in 1915 regarding the conscription of individuals born in 1895, Ivanov Georgiy Mikhailovich, a VI-grade post and telegraph official (of peasant origin), was conscripted to serve, despite working in Sergiopol, as his residence was listed as the Kolsovo Volost of Przhivalsky County (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.9 L.105). In one of the circulars: "It is instructed that all officials born in 1896 and later must immediately report to the recruitment section at their

place of service, and natives of the region must provide certificates of exemption from military service” (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.9 L.262).

Similarly, individuals were consistently conscripted into the ranks of the state militia. For instance, in 1915, officials from the Zharkent post and telegraph office, including supervisor Yevdokimov and department head Ivan Podgorny, were included in the militia ranks, with Sergiopol listed as their registration place (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.145).

Correspondence from the Turkestan post and telegraph district to the post and telegraph department heads in Semirechye consistently addressed matters like those found in letters sent to the head of the Sergiopol post and telegraph office: “I inform you that acting Assistant Nikitin Vasily is permitted to continue his duties at the office until his deployment to the troops. Additionally, it is confirmed that in the final settlement with Nikitin, the decree of the Governing Senate on the Shelokhov case, as transmitted to you on October 20, 1914, No. 56, should be taken into account” (CSA RK F.188 OP.1 D.69 L.60).

It is known that Muslims (ethnicity unspecified) also worked in the post and telegraph office. Among the postal workers were Shagi Akhmetov, Khayory Khasan Faziulin, Vatulla Khayrulloviich Khaybullin (it is possible that some of these individuals were Kazakh, but their ethnicity is not confirmed). Kazakhs and Cossacks were not subject to military conscription. However, it is known that some of the aforementioned Muslim postal workers were conscripted, as seen in a letter from the head of the Zharkent district military office to the head of the Zharkent post and telegraph office: “Vatulla Khayrulloviich Khaybullin was assigned to the 13th regular reserve battalion in Perovsk and sent on December 3, 1915, with the list entrusted to me, No. 6229” (CSA RK F.199 OP.1 D.62 L.557).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, post and telegraph employees served local institutions and residents in Semirechye during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, forming a distinct hierarchical system. Their work and recruitment in the region had unique characteristics influenced by the area’s remoteness from imperial centers, its multiethnic environment, and the prevailing political and economic conditions.

The local Kazakhs mainly occupied lower-ranking positions in the post and telegraph offices and were rarely found among officials. By the early 20th century, Kazakh officials began to gain recognition in the postal and railway sectors, often traveling and working across large distances. However, it was rare for Kazakh officials involved in translation and clerical work in the region to achieve promotions or higher ranks.

Moreover, Kazakhs often held lower-ranking positions in the post and telegraph offices, contributing to transportation and communication. In addition to factors like weapons, soldiers, and tactics, key elements of the empire’s policy implementation were logistics and supply (Morrison, 2014,

p.446). During the military campaigns of the Russian Empire in Central Asia in the mid-19th century, the knowledge of the local Kazakhs about the climate and economy was utilized. A. Morrison highlighted the importance of local horsemen, stating, "The key moment was the riders, those who could care for the animals. Without this, the operation would not have had a positive outcome" (Morrison, 2014, p.450). Similarly, the knowledge of the local Kazakhs was applied in various fields, including organizing postal services.

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