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## Theoretical and methodological aspects of the social status of bais in Kazakh society

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**Abstract.** The social order of Kazakh society, taking into account its specific features, was determined by both economic and traditional factors. These factors affected the social stratification of the population.

the new formation, affluent individuals, known as bais, began to play an increasingly important role. The status of a bai combined two aspects – an economic and a political one. In the social structure, their economic importance was defined by the size of their property, as wealth was a key factor in achieving a “prosperous and peaceful life”. This, in turn, ensured their political importance and influence. In historiography, there is no universally recognized understanding of the functional differences of bai from other social groups. The available material implies a wide range of interpretations: a bai could be a merchant, a wealthy livestock owner, an entrepreneur who appeared in the wake of economic reforms in the second half of the 19th century. In addition, the term “bai” could be used to refer to any wealthy person, while a social group is an association of people based on common characteristics, they are grouped into one social stratum. This article is aimed to analyze the theoretical and methodological aspects of the social status of baistvo in the Kazakh society.

**Keywords:** social formation; Kazakh society; baistvo; bais; debaization; confiscation; wealth; livestock owners.

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## **Introduction**

The investigation of the phenomenon of baistvo as a political and social category has become relevant due to serious shifts in the humanities and social sciences. On the one hand, the ideology of the Soviet period is being rethought. Historians use various approaches to reveal the nature of the baistvo, its functions and role in the economic development of Kazakhstan.

On the other hand, political rehabilitation of victims of Stalinist repression has turned into a factor contributing to actualization of the issue, thanks to which the historical community has gained access to previously unavailable archives. It has enabled a comprehensive and objective study of key historical problems related to the change in the social structure of traditional Kazakh society during the colonial period and the structural transformations of the early Soviet period.

Within the socio-economic transformations of the Soviet regime, a massive ideological campaign was carried out aimed at justifying the need to “liberate poor people from age-old exploitation, deeply rooted in the bai-feudal system” (Kozina, Dzhumabekov, Apakasheva, 2023: 99).

This fact is of increasing interest in both domestic and foreign historiography, since the phenomenon of baistvo still remains an insufficiently investigated object of research. The uncertainty and poor coverage of this phenomenon are often determined by the tendency to study baistvo only in the context of repressive measures applied by the Bolshevik regime, under which bais became victims of state terror.

Historiography lacks a unified understanding of the functional differences between bai and other social groups. The available materials allow freedom of interpretation: a bai could be a merchant, a wealthy livestock owner, an entrepreneur who appeared in the wake of economic reforms in the second half of the 19th century. Any rich person could also be called a bai whereas a social group involves common features uniting them into one stratum. In this regard, the subject of this article is to identifying the social status of a bai.

In the Kazakh aul, the bais had more power, authority and dominant influence among local residents. During the period of formation of the Soviet power various actions were taken against bais in order to compromise them and subsequent destruction of this part of the aul population, which represented a threat to the new regime.

Today, in the context of revisiting the tragic events of the past and strengthening the policy of historical memory, the issue of restoring justice for the victims of political repression becomes relevant from both scientific and public points of view.

In 2020, under the instruction of the President of the country, a State Commission was established to fully rehabilitate all categories of victims of political repression that took place in the period of 20-50 years of the XX century, including the rehabilitation of the bais.

Based on active rehabilitation practices based on the analysis of extensive archival and official documentation, the official state rehabilitation of victims of political repression opens up possibilities for future initiatives to preserve historical memory and shape national identity.

## **Methodology, methods and materials**

While writing the article the authors applied methods of general scientific research, such as analysis and synthesis, analogy, generalization, a systematic approach, and etc.

The historiographical analysis of the phenomenon of baistvo in the socio-economic development of Kazakhstan enabled us to study the existing experience and scientific research on this topic, evaluate to which extent this problem has been investigated and identify less covered aspects.

The prosopographic research method enabled us to investigate the dynamic changes in a certain period of time with a group of studied objects having common social and political features and characteristics.

A descriptive analysis of the lexeme “bai” was also used, which helped generalize its semantic features.

The analysis was based on Remembrance books and Static reviews of the Semipalatinsk region of the colonial period. This type of sources is of scientific value and allows us to reconstruct sceneries of the everyday life of the Semipalatinsk Kazakhs. Texts from the Remembrance books reveal a lot of nuances of the social structure of a nomadic society.

## **Discussions**

The historical investigation into the phenomenon of baistvo as a special category still remains insufficient in historiography. The institution of baistvo is usually considered in the context of studying the process of formation of the national bourgeoisie, the political and socio-economic modernization of the Kazakh steppe in the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries as well as its results which ended in a major human tragedy and destruction of the nomadic economy.

The phenomenon of baistvo is of certain interest to various experts – historians, orientalists, linguists, cultural scientists, etc. Based on the historiographical analysis of the research on the social structure of Kazakh society, they can be conveniently classified into four categories: imperial, Soviet, Kazakhstani, and foreign ones.

In the studies of the imperial period, the authors considered transformation of the social structure of Kazakh society as a result of the reforms of the 19th century (Meyer, 1865; Gaynes, 1887; Dobrosmyslov, 1902; Kraft, 1900).

There are different points of view in evaluation of the phenomenon of baistvo as a social group in Soviet historiography. Some researchers were of the opinion that formation of baistvo was not related to capitalist relations (Tolybekov, 1971: 505; Zimanov, 1958: 96-97). The other historians believed that baistvo was a new social stratum that appeared only in the middle of the 19th century on the basis of market relationships (Vyatkin, 1974: 298; Shakhmatov, 1951: 18).

In accordance with S. Tolybekov’s estimation, the quantitative indicators of bai farms varied between 2000 or more sheep and over 400 head of cattle. Medium-level farms had about 500 sheep and 100 head of cattle. Small farms included at least 200 sheep and 50 head of cattle (Tolybekov, 1959: 131.).

Ye. Bekmakhanov considered characterization of the bai economy as a frozen phenomenon to be the main disadvantage of the standpoints expressed, whereas it should be considered through the prism of evolutionary development. In his opinion, baistvo, in contrast to the rest of the feudals, was represented by the nascent national bourgeoisie (Bekmakhanov, 1961). At the same time, he points out that it is wrong to relate the social position of all bais to the market, since some bais belonged to the feudal nobility (Bekmakhanov, 1957: 44).

Certain aspects of this topic, including the division of society into two main groups – ak-suyek and kara-suyek, as well as various traditional social categories have been covered in detail in the works of modern historians (Klyashtorny, Sultanov, 1992; Artykbayev, 1997, Abylkhochin, 2022).

The topic of debaization and dekulakization in Kazakhstan in the period from the late 20s to the early 30s of the 20th century has been sufficiently studied by S. A. Zhakishева on the basis of content analysis, mathematical and statistical methods, computer analysis and other modern research approaches (Zhakishева, 2021). The researcher Zhanbossinova A. S. considered the process of elimination of the kulaks and baistvo as a social class from new conceptual positions at the regional level (Zhanbossinova, 2017).

In foreign historiography, there are a number of special studies devoted to investigation into the traditional economy of the Kazakhs and transformation processes in the social structure of 19th - early 20th centuries (Olcott, 1997; Martin, 2009; Sabol, 2003; Rottier, 2003; Kindler, 2017).

Based on a large number of archival sources, foreign researchers trace history of destruction of the traditional economy of the Kazakhs and the famine of the 30s of the 20th century (Witcraft, 2006; Cameron, 2020; Pinciolla, 2019, 2022; Ohayon, 2009).

## **Results**

Kazakh society was significantly differentiated through the livestock-owning system. The wealthy elite of the Kazakh aul was represented by large livestock owners, i.e. bais.

The term “bai” is etymologically of Turkic origin, found in ancient Turkic inscriptions and late medieval Muslim sources. One of the earliest Muslim sources where the word “bai” is mentioned in a person’s name, indicating their social status, according to V. V. Bartold, is Juvaini’s story about Mahmud bai, a Muslim who was the leader of the pagan Kara-Chinese gurkhan (Bartold, 2020).

The famous orientologists-Turkologists S. G. Klyashtorny, T. I. Sultanov refer to the medieval reports of Ibn Ruzbihan, who defines bai as any “influential rich man” who owned a large number of livestock and property, including “wagon houses”. There, the story of Genghisid Muhammad Sheibani Khan was mentioned, to whom the following remark about nomads is attributed, “they make great efforts and cares to collect huge wealth in a short time from breeding sheep, and to get a large fortune from breeding small ruminants in this endless steppe” (Klyashtorny, Sultanov, 2009:237).

A. Bernstam, a Soviet archaeologist and orientalist, who studied the origin, social structure and economy of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia, points to the parallel existence of the words

“bai” and “beg” in the Orkhon script dating back to the 6th – 8th centuries: “... for the period in question, the division of society into rich and poor was an accomplished fact. The rich are called begs and bais. Begs and bais are naturally all those whose titles filled all the inscriptions without exception. In contrast to the rich, there are the people (budun)” (Bernstam, 1946:110).

Tolybekov S. Ye., referring to historical data, argues that baistvo as a social group had existed in the tribes, which later formed the Kazakh nationality, even before the Mongol conquest (Tolybekov, 1971:505).

Based on ethnographic and folklore materials, a well-known representative of the classical school of Russian Oriental studies, A.N. Samoilovich conducted research on the social significance of the words “rich” and “poor” in the Turkic languages and discovered another aspect of the meaning of the word “bai” reflecting religious beliefs. The word “bai”, investigated by A. N. Samoilovich, found a peculiar use in the shamanic ritual of the Altai-Sayan peoples, where it occurs in the form of “bay” and “bayat”. In some cases, it was used as an epithet for high deities such as “Bay Ulgen”, “Bay Karshit”, “Bay Kyrgys”, “Bay Soyot”, and so on. In other cases, “bay” was added to the names of mythical trees such as “Bay terek” and “Bay kaying”, or to the names of mythical birds and animals, for example “Baykush” – “sacred” bird, “bai paga” – “sacred” frog, “baytal” – “young mare” intended for a sacrifice to the deity, and so on. Thus, in the folklore of the Altai peoples, the word “bai” received not only the social meaning of “rich”, but also the meaning of “sacred” (Potapov, 1986:235).

Linguists note the polysemantic character of the word “bai”, which has an adjectival and substantive meaning. In most languages (Kumyk, Bashkir, Karakalpak, Uzbek, Altai, Tuvan), the word “bai” has the meaning of a “rich man”. In the dialects of the Uighur language, it means a “merchant”, in Khakass and Evenki – “fist”, in Karachay-Balkar – “nobleman”, in Turkish – “feudal” (Labazanov, 2014).

In his treatise “Traces of Shamanism among the Kyrgyz”, Ch. Valikhanov discusses such a concept of the traditional worldview as yrim, the performance of certain actions in order to prevent misfortune. Thus, “when giving someone a dress, they keep a button or a tie... they never sell the main animal in the herd – “kut”, so that the good, in this case livestock, does not decrease in this family” (Valikhanov, 2005:150-151).

A rich nomad, in the view of the community, was the chosen one of God, he was called “kut kongan”. The level of well-being of the entire community formed the basis of relations between ordinary community members. Those who were at a disadvantage and in poverty received support and food from their well-to-do relatives. Thus, Zh. Artykbayev points out that in the traditional Kazakh society, wealth was not associated with exploitation and had a kind of sacred meaning (Artykbayev, 1997:209).

S. Zimanov distinguishes two meanings of the word “bai”. In one case, it is used to refer to a rich person in general, “bai” – a rich man, “bailyk” – wealth. It was enough for the farm to have livestock and pasture sufficient to provide consumption and expanded reproduction to be called bai farming. Khans, sultans, biys, tarkhans, seniors – all these were bais, because they owned the best pasture lands and numerous herds. In another case, the term “bai” means not all rich feudal lords in general, but only a certain social stratum of this class, which does not have hereditary, granted titles (Zimanov, 1958:214).

A modern researcher of Kazakh mythology, cultural scientist Z. Nauryzbai supports this meaning of the term “bai” as a carrier of well-being, fertility, and luck of a kindred. In her opinion, bai’s socially significant duty was to transmit this well-being and abundance in their tribal group (Nauryzbai, 2022:11).

Thus, semantically, the word “bai” has several meanings: it can mean a rich man, a master, a nobleman, a well-to-do person, as well as a husband or spouse.

The financial situation definitely played an essential role in referring to a bai group. Thus, N. Massanov attaches great economic importance to the institution of baistvo. In accordance with his study, the survival and normal functioning of the least well-off farms were due to strong ties and cooperation with wealthy livestock owners (Massanov, 1995:184).

A.I. Levshin believes that wealth was a matter of vanity for livestock owners: “I once asked one owner of 8000 horses why he did not sell some of his herds annually. He answered me, “Why would I sell my pleasure? I don’t need the money; I’ll have to lock it in a chest where no one will see it. But now, when my herds walk in the steppes, everyone looks at them, everyone knows that they are mine, and everyone says that I am rich.” Thanks to the amassed fortune, nomadic Kazakhs, according to A. I. Levshin, received respect and the well-deserved title of “bai”. This title gave them a significant advantage over the heirs of the khans and the worthiest seniors (Levshin, 1996: 327).

Based on the study of folklore materials, Z. Nauryzbai notes that in the Kazakh traditional society, built up on a generic basis, the property of the family was considered common until the 19th century. A bai was responsible for the material well-being of all relatives (Nauryzbai, 2022:12).

In the economy of the nomadic Kazakhs, the focus was on amassing fortune, which was measured by the number of livestock. At the same time, a bai was not engaged in entrepreneurship in the traditional sense, since the main purpose of livestock breeding was to accumulate a household, not trade. The number of livestock served not only as an indicator of wealth, but also determined the social status.

In a special semiotic framework, wealth acquired a specific meaning, which reflected the personal qualities and dignity of a person. In addition, it was an indicator of special belonging. Thus, the etiology of the word “bai” shows respect for wealth, which means both rich, worthy, and revered (Khamitova, 2008: 22).

According to N. Massanov, wealth and the number of livestock were not only indicators of social status, but also served as the basis for the formation of political power and influence within the society. A rich bai could be involved in political activities, had more opportunities to influence and make decisions in family affairs (Massanov, 1984). In accordance with N. Massanov’s opinion, one of the most common forms of exploitation of mass direct producers was the “joint labor” of individuals with different property status within the community. This form of exploitation was practically not reflected in the sources and was not the subject of scientific research. He notes that the first person who drew attention to this was V. F. Shakhmatov, who wrote on this occasion that “...a bai, who had a large herd, and a poor man, who had only a few heads of cattle, used the same amount of labor for grazing, i.e. the poor man actually grazed the bai livestock for free” (Massanov, 1995:195).

Zh.B. Abylkhozhin turns the spotlight on patronage-client relations within the traditional agrarian structure. The patrons here were the rural social elite, who fully controlled the production process, and the clients were people who did not have enough material resources for independent farming. He further argues that the existence of a “class” of clients depended on traditional paternalistic relations, i.e. the so-called institution of social guarantees (redistribution of part of the social product in favor of poor individuals) (Massanov, Abylkhozhin, Yerofeyeva, 2007: 242).

A bai was not only their own, but also their kindred’s mouthpiece. This enabled the bai to play the role of a leader and personificator of family and tribal solidarity. Bais were in charge of well-being of their kindred and maintaining its reputation. Their duty was to create conditions under which all members of the family felt protected and were financially established. Strong and rich auls consisting of many people were an indicator of a strong, large, and wealthy kindred. A poor aul in the kindred or an impoverished member of the kindred who became a zhatak was a reason for ridiculing the bai of these kindred. At the cusp of the 20th century, bais undertook financing of newspapers and book publications, tuition fees and the maintenance of talented children in schools and universities. They also supported the initiatives of the Alashorda people, including bail them out and paying fines, as well as advocating for the interests of the people and their education.

Thus, in Kazakh society, the role of a bai was associated with providing financial support to relatives in difficult situations. One of the alternative practices was the so-called “sauna relations”, when a wealthy bai transferred or donated an excess amount of their herd to impecunious relatives for breeding and maintenance. The livestock borrowed for use, in the case of jute, had to be returned to the bai herd. Soviet researchers noted that such a system made bai’s wealth untouchable, and the poor population more dependent (Sabitov, 2016:66).

The American historian James Baker notes the special significance of bais in the culture and life of the Kazakhs: “A bai personified the representative power of the kindred, supported customs and organized a system of mutual assistance even when the position of a bai in the 20th century was determined more by the level of personal well-being than by the wealth of the kindred. The seniors supported the head, the younger ones obeyed the seniors, the women – men, according to exogamy and other marriage rites. Economic and political power in Kazakh society virtually merged” (Baker, 1985).

By the middle of the 19th century, baistvo had become an important part of economic relations, and this was due to the dawning growth of trade. In a research work of the French historian Isabelle Ohayon, it is noted that by the end of the 19th century, the characteristic “bai” was gaining popularity: “At that time, the title of bai could be applied to a wealthy merchant, and to the owner of livestock and cultivated land. On the eve of the revolution, being a bai meant leading a sedentary (i.e. urban) lifestyle, like representatives of the economic and political aristocracy of the steppe, but at the same time having a large number of livestock and leading a nomadic lifestyle” (Ohayon, 2009:42).

Researcher S.A. Zhakisheva believes that the term “bai” was traditionally used to refer to influential owners of much livestock and property, but in fact these people rather acted as symbols of power and high authority, rather than reflecting their wealth. According to S.A.

Zhakisheva, bais were classified according to several levels corresponding to specific socio-economic and socio-cultural spheres of the multi-structural economy.

Within the territorial production association, there was a segregation of the social stratum of bais functioning through community cooperation. However, some of them reached the required level of accumulation of means of production, such as livestock, and ceased to need community cooperation and went beyond it, becoming carriers of another social organization of production (Zhakisheva, 2021).

S.G. Klyashtorny and T.I. Sultanov pointed out that among the Kazakh nomads, bais constituted a quite large social stratum while they did not distinguish them as a special class: bais were both among the sultans and among biys. Wealth and financial well-being undoubtedly provided huge benefits and determined prestige in society. Nevertheless, a large fortune did not ensure special rights. The importance of individual bais in society was determined by the value of the class to which they belonged. For instance, a sultan, even a poor one, enjoyed all the rights and privileges given by law to this social group in permanent joint possession (Klyashtorny, Sultanov, 2009: 238). According to Zheti Jargy, a bai, if there were not a sultan or a biy, paid the khan, like anyone “able to carry a weapon”, “the 20th part of their property annually” (Sultanov, 1982: 101-102).

Kazakh society, taking into account its specific features, formed a social order where social positions and stratification were determined by both economic and traditional factors. Throughout several centuries, we have been able to observe repetitive and stable forms of social interrelations. Before the certain events, the social structure was distinguished by homogeneity. It was homogeneous, and its division was due to the need to carry out functional tasks which contributed to maintaining and preserving the social order. For example, the main activity of the biys was nomadic farm management. But they also represented an intellectual stratum that fulfilled judicial functions. The researcher Zh. Mazhitova uses the category “institution” when describing biystvo “which, in the course of its activities, performed administrative, judicial, military, and other functions to maintain the stable life of the nomadic community” (Mazhitova, 2016: 9) Such description of biys indicates, first of all, their professional functions.

The situation is similar with batyrstvo. The reference to theoretical sources enables us to define batyrstvo as an honorary, well-deserved title or as a professional category of military persons. More popular is the definition of batyrstvo as a title that can be assigned both to the ordinary nomads sharua and to higher rulers such as sultans and khans. For example, the title of batyr was given to Khan Tauke and Sultan Barak. Consequently, the batyrstvo represents a privileged group of talented and reputable military personnel.

The group of aksakals also stood out for its functional significance. According to V. Bartold, they were persons who were not assigned certain legal powers (Bartold, 2020). However, their impact on social and economic life was profound. They were a kind of social capital that ensured public order.

The largest is the social group of sharua, which combines all other social positions. However, there is scarce information in the written sources allowing us to reconstruct functional peculiarities identifying common features more completely.

Thus, on the basis of historiographical analysis, we can claim that until the end of the 18th century, bais could not be considered as a separate social group. Bai was a characteristic of



the nomad's financial situation, regardless of their social status. Financial success rarely gave a nomad a strong position in society with the provision of political functions. Firstly, in the conditions of nomadic life and extremely limited opportunities for amassing, material well-being was seldom the result of investing human resources and entrepreneurial skills. As well as poverty, it was often determined by natural phenomena (jute and epizootics). That is, material success was not something stable, guaranteeing the stability of social status. Secondly, the social order and the placement of groups and individuals by stratum was determined by origin and belonging to the kindred. The level of political influence did not depend on material wealth. A poor sultan was more influential than a rich sharua.

Accordingly, the reasons for the formation of baistvo as a separate institution can be related to a qualitatively new economic reality.

The change in the economy of the Kazakhs in the second half of the 19th - early 20th century led to a significant social and property gap among the Kazakhs. For instance, according to the researcher Zh. A. Kudaibergenova: "If earlier differentiation in the Kazakh aul manifested itself in an increase in property inequality due to the concentration of a huge number of livestock in the hands of bais, later the nature of differentiation changed: social stratification was expressed in addition to owning a significant number of livestock, also in accumulation of money. As a result, a new social type of a bai kulak, a representative of the nascent Kazakh bourgeoisie, was formed. In addition to bai kulaks, the Kazakh bourgeoisie was formed of the so-called alypsatars and saudagers, who represented trade and intermediary capital" (Kudaibergenova, 2010: 22). She refers to Tokash Bokin's "Kyrgyz-Russian dictionary" which distinguishes "bas bais" – these are the richest community members, in whose hands significant wealth was concentrated, "keude bais" – people who had profits, as well as "ayak bais" – these are farms similar to those of the middle-class peasants. The most disadvantaged were kedeis or zharly – these were those who could not farm and were hired as workers, they were at the same time divided into horseless, landless, and the deprived, the latter actually represented the rural proletariat (Kudaibergenova, 2010: 22).

S.I. Kovalskaya identifies several related social terms: "myngyrgan bai" – owning more than 1000 heads of livestock; "shirigen bai" – so rich that the property simply rots, "sasyk bai" – stench of sewage emanates from the spoilt property; "zhanabai" – a new bai, who has recently become rich, is dangerous, you cannot borrow money from them or to settle next to the newlywed couples; "kara bai" – a greedy bai; "karymbai" – a bai who works only for themselves; "alypsattar bai" – the one who borrows and lends. Alypsattar bai bought goods in large shopping centres and brought them to the steppe for sale (Kovalskaya, 2017: 56).

S. Zimanov considers baistvo to be a product of feudal relations. He claims that the majority of biys, batyrs, seniors and aksakals represented the baistvo in government and management bodies. For example, if a historically formed aul (from 5 to 20 kubitkas) or an administrative aul (from 50 to 70 kubitkas) was headed by one aksakal or senior, then there could be several bai yards within the aul. Irrespective of being relatives of the senior, they had a significant influence on their activities (Zimanov, 1958:215).

B. Suleimenov held onto the similar opinion believing that in the late 19th - early 20th centuries, there were two main antagonistic classes in the Kazakh aul: feudals (baia) and peasants

(sharua). In addition to them, two new classes were emerging in the livestock breeding and agricultural zone, where capitalist relations were developing: bais (kulaks) and hired batraks (agricultural proletariat) (Suleimenov, 1963:241).

Imperial modernization introduced serious amendments to the social structure of Kazakh society. New social groups were appearing: workers, employees, merchants. Political decisions led to transformation of the economy. Under the conditions of permanent reduction of pasture lands, the traditional economy turned out to be plagued by a profound crisis. The income from nomadic farming was insufficient for the existence of a steppe inhabitant. Table 1 demonstrates the dynamics in the number of livestock in Kazakh farms. Cattle was also included in the bred livestock, which indicates that the nomadic routes were reduced, since cows are less adapted to long-distance crossings. There is instability in the number of livestock and there is a significant tendency to reduce it (Table 1). Under these conditions, it became necessary to diversify the nomadic economy.

Table 1

**Number of livestock in the Kazakh farms\***

Year	Camels	Horses	Cattle	Small ruminants
1885	68686	475200	186612	2 420610
1886	67438	482294	193626	2 309023
1887	58500	441613	198905	1 964213
1888	62319	447789	203756	2 011170
1889	62319	451259	202993	2 049343
1890	61597	508266	229182	2 018839
1892	58499	460269	210149	1 936771

\*Volosts and settlements as of 1893 Iss.5 Semipalatinskaya oblast' (Townships and localities, 1895:20).

So, N. Konshin, an ethnographer, a public figure, describes the typical image of a Kazakh bai at the beginning of the 20th century: "Kurmangali is a tall Kyrgyz, with a sedate speech and manners, pertaining to a rich aksakal. He is a wordly-wise man, and my visit did not confuse him at all. I heard from the Cossacks that he had several hundred horses and sheep, but Kurmangali himself, despite all my tricks, only grinned and obstinately insisted that he had fewer horses and sheep than a hundred each. In Kyrgyz land, he has an arable: 3 dessiatinas of wheat and 1 dessiatina of oats. According to him, he used to be engaged in trade: he bought manufactured goods in Ust-Kamenogorsk, exchanged them in the steppe for sheep, which he sold to larger livestock dealers" (Remembrance book of Semipalatinsk region, 1900:33).

Nomadic farming was undoubtedly the main source of income. However, this budget item was characterized by extreme instability and dependence on objective factors. To maintain their economic status, the rich nomads combined livestock breeding, agriculture and trade. Based on the results of another trip to the steppe, K. Gins left interesting notes: "On July 10, we intended

to go back to the Priili valley, but in such a way as to travel sixty versts east of the settlement which we left. On the way, we visited a nomadic fair. The fair was small, one street wide. On both sides, side by side, there were twenty-twenty-five yurtas turned into the shops. There was everything one may need for Kyrgyz everyday life. There was a two-colour flag in the middle. An accordion was playing in one of the yurtas. In another one, a Taranchi performed an “ash-khan” and sold pelmeni for a penny a piece” (Suleimenov, 1963:76).

The financial status of a nomad, despite the various types of sources of income, was determined by the number of livestock. The data from the sources of the colonial period presented in Table 2 demonstrate the percentage of affluent and bai farms dependent on the number of livestock. According to the statistics of the Resettlement Department, at the beginning of the 20th century in the Pavlodar uyezd of the Semipalatinskaya oblast', 12500 poor farms owned 63500 horses, while 800 bai farms possessed 172700 horses. Farms of small and large bais in Kokchetavskiy and Kustanaiskiy uyezds ranged from 7.7% to 11.1%, but they accounted for almost half of horses – 47.7%, cattle – 22%, small ruminants (sheep and goats) – 34.5%. Poor and middle-class farms in Omskiy uyezd (84%) had the same number of livestock as 16% of bai farms.

Table 2

**Number of farms where hired labor force was used (Suleimenov, 1963:86)**

Uyezds	Number of farms, %	
	of affluent sharua	of bais
Atbassarskiy	23.3	71.1
Akmolinskiy	49.6	82.3
Kustanaiskiy	48.2	87.8
Pavlodarskiy	31.6	80.6
Karkarinskiy	40.7	80.2
Petropavlovskiy	52.9	88.7
Aktyubinskiy	78.5	96.2
Ust-Kamenogorskiy	43.3	83.5
Omskiy	40.0	71.9

Bais were mainly engaged in trade, much more where capitalist relations developed relatively faster. This explains the high percentage of bai farms that used hired labor: in Aktyubinskiy uyezd – 96.2%, Petropavlovskiy – 88.7%, Kustanaiskiy – 87.8%, etc. (Suleimenov, 1963:86).

Based on new conceptual approaches, Kazakhstani historians of the early 1990s attempted to describe the process of confiscation and expulsion of the so-called “semi-feudal” bais from their places of permanent residence to other districts of the republic and other regions of the country. Thus, in accordance with the conclusions drawn by S. A. Zhakisheva, the official authorities classified the Kazakh aul population as “semi-feudal” bais, not because of economic factors, but because of their political unreliability in relation to the Soviet government. Farms which did not meet the criteria of the affluent ones could often fall under the category of baistvo.

This is evidenced by complaints and appeals from the owners of nomadic farms. For instance, the number of farms increased as a result of “artificial unification of independent farms of close relatives (for example, father and sons), or an increase in the number of livestock corresponding to directive standards (Zhakisheva, 2021: 82). The affiliation of the nomads with the tsarist administration was the basis for getting on the list for confiscation.

In the Soviet period, baistvo became a political category rather than an economic one. The negative connotation of the term “bai” was determined by the ideological agenda and the struggle against affluent and wealthy Kazakhs. Negative semantics (kulak-bai element, feudal-bai remnants) were actively supported in the scientific and political context.

## **Conclusions**

Thus, the social structure of the Kazakh nomadic society was a system of stable interdependent relationships principally determined by the specific features of the economy. This was reflected in the system of social positions and the distribution of nomads in it. Stability and organization of social relations was ensured by the functional differences of social groups. Baistvo is a separate category in the Kazakh society. The development of baistvo and its separation into an independent social group was accompanied by structural changes in the nomadic economy. For instance, it is obvious that prior to the 18th century, a bai was rather a characteristic of property status, which is confirmed by written sources. The colonial period, which transformed all aspects of nomadic life, resulted in the emergence of new social categories. Baistvo performed a whole range of functions in order to gain its independent status. The high material status of a nomad had to be enhanced by other socially useful acts. They were at the same time the core of the Kazakh aul and economy and the role model that was able to adapt to new socio-economic realities.

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## **Authors' contributions:**

**Yermenbayeva G.K.:** substantiated the concept of the article and methodological approaches to the research, conducted a critical analysis of the literature, engaged in writing and editing of the text, design of the bibliography and list of references.

**Sultangazy G. Zh.:** equally participated in the development of the idea of the article, contributed to the analysis of the problem and selection of the definition of the source material, collection of statistical data and tabular presentation of the results.

**Medeubayev Y.I.** Equally involved in posing the problem, conceptualizing the article, and writing the conclusions.

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### **Қазақ қоғамындағы байлардың әлеуметтік мәртебесінің теориялық-әдіснамалық аспектілері**

**Аңдатпа.** Қазақ қоғамы өзіне тән ерекшеліктерді ескеріп, әлеуметтік ұстанымдары мен топтарға бөлінуі экономикалық және дәстүрлі факторлармен айқындалған әлеуметтік тәртіпті қалыптастырды.

Көшпелі экономикадағы құрылымдық өзгерістер оның әлеуметтік стратификациясына әсер етті. Жаңа құрылымда белгілі ауқатты адамдар үлкен рөл атқара бастады. Байдың мәртебесі экономикалық және саяси аспектілерді біріктірді. Әлеуметтік құрылымда байлардың экономикалық маңызы оның мүлкінің көлемімен анықталды, өйткені байлық "әл-ауқатты және тыныш өмірге" жетудің негізгі факторы болды. Бұл өз кезегінде оған саяси маңыз бен ықпал берді. Тарихнамада байдың басқа әлеуметтік топтардан функционалдық айырмашылықтары туралы бірыңғай түсінік жоқ. Қолда бар материал интерпретациялардың кең спектрін білдіреді: саудагер, бай, мал иесі немесе XIX ғасырдың екінші жартысындағы экономикалық реформалар толқынында пайда болған кәсіпкер бай болуы мүмкін.

Сонымен қатар, "бай" термині кез-келген ауқатты адамға қатысты қолданылуы мүмкін, ал әлеуметтік топ ретінде олар бір әлеуметтік қабатқа біріктірілген ортақ сипаттағы адамдардың бірігуі. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты қазақ қоғамындағы байлардың әлеуметтік мәртебесінің теориялық-әдіснамалық аспектілерін талдау болып табылады.

**Түйін сөздер:** әлеуметтік құрылым; қазақ қоғамы; байлар; дебаизация; тәркілеу; байлық; мал иелері.

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### **Теоретико-методологические аспекты социального статуса богатства в казахском обществе**

**Аннотация.** Казахское общество с учетом присущей ему специфики сформировало общественный порядок, где социальные позиции и распределение по стратам детерминировались как экономическими, так и традиционными факторами.

Структурные изменения в кочевой экономике отразились на его социальной стратификации. В новой структуре все большую роль начали играть зажиточные лица, известные как баи.



Статус бая объединял в себе два аспекта - экономический и политический. В социальной структуре его экономическое значение определялось размером его имущества, так как богатство было ключевым фактором для достижения «благополучной и спокойной жизни». Это, в свою очередь, придавало ему политическое значение и влияние. В историографии отсутствует единое понимание функциональных отличий бая от других социальных групп. Имеющийся материал подразумевает широкий спектр интерпретаций: баем мог быть торговец, богатый владелец скота или предприниматель, появившийся на волне экономических реформ второй половины XIX века. Кроме того, термин «бай» мог применяться для обозначения любого состоятельного человека, в то время как социальная группа представляет собой объединение людей на основе общих характеристик, они объединяются в одну социальную страту. Целью данной статьи является анализ теоретико-методологических аспектов социального статуса байства в казахском обществе.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная структура; казахское общество; байство; бай; дебаизация; конфискация; богатство; скотовладельцы.

### **Список литературы**

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