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Тел.: +7 (727) 261-67-19, +7 (727) 272-47-59

E-mail: edu.history@bk.ru

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Тел.: +7 (727) 261-67-19, +7 (727) 272-47-59

E-mail: edu.history@bk.ru

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SETTLEMENT COLONIALISM AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION: THE POLITICS OF ELIMINATION

Gabit B. Zhumatay¹, Akmaral S. Yskak²

¹Narxoz University
(55, Zhandosov Str., 050035 Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan)
Assistant Professor of School of Law and Public Policy, Candidate of Historical Sciences
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0468-8538>. E-mail: gabit.zhumatay@narxoz.kz

²Narxoz University
(55, Zhandosov Str., 050035 Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan)
Associate Professor of School of Arts and Social Sciences, Doctor of Historical Sciences
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3998-584X>. E-mail: sakmaral7@gmail.com

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Abstract. *Introduction.* This article explores the historical and ideological roots of the founding of the modern state of Israel and the forced displacement of the Palestinian people. The study also examines how these foundational racial, theological and ethnocentric concepts have shaped Israel's colonial policies and strategies towards the indigenous peoples of historic Palestine since 1948. Exploring the historical roots of racial Zionist ideologies and discourses allows us to better understand Israeli settler colonialism and the plight of the Palestinian people. *Aims and Objectives of the Study* The main objective of the study is to examine how racial ideologies and discourses have shaped current Israeli settler colonialism and its efforts to oppress indigenous peoples and reshape historic Palestine. Through an analysis of historical sources and relevant literature, the study seeks to establish connections and continuities between early Israeli racial discourses and current Israeli colonial oppressive policies towards the indigenous peoples of Palestine. *Results.* The results of the study show that early Israeli ideologies and discourses have shaped Israel's ongoing policies and approaches to forced displacement, dispossession, extermination, and racial discrimination against the indigenous population of Palestine. *Conclusions.* The study concludes that key Israeli hegemonic discourses justify and legitimize claims to Palestine, shaping and directing Israel's colonial policies and strategies towards the Palestinian population.

Keywords: Palestine, Israel, racial oppression, settler colonialism

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¹Нархоз Университеті

(55-үй, Жандосов көш., 050035 Алматы, Қазақстан Республикасы)


Құқық және мемлекеттік басқару мектебінің ассистент профессоры, т.ғ.к.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0468-8538>. E-mail: gabit.zhumatay@narхоз.kz

²Нархоз Университеті

(55-үй, Жандосов көш., 050035 Алматы, Қазақстан Республикасы)

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 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3998-584X>. E-mail: sakmaral7@gmail.com

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Бұл мақалада қазіргі Израиль мемлекетінің құрылу тарихы мен идеологиялық негіздері және палестин халқының күштеп қоныс аударылуы зерттеледі. Сонымен қатар зерттеу сионизмнің негізгі нәсілдік, теологиялық және этноцентристік концепциялары Израильдің 1948 жылдан бері тарихи Палестинаның байырғы халықына қатысты отаршылдық нәсілшілдік саясаты мен стратегияларын қалай қалыптастырып, ықпал еткенін қарастырады. Нәсілшіл сионистік идеологиялар мен дискурстардың тарихи тамырларын зерттеу бізге Израильдің қоныс аудару колониализмін және палестин халқының ауыр жағдайын тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері. *Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты* – нәсілшіл сионистік идеологиялар мен дискурстардың қазіргі Израиль қоныс аудару колониализмін және байырғы халықтарды басып-жаншу мен тарихи Палестинаны қайта пішіндеу әрекеттерін қалай қалыптастырғанын зерттеу. Тақырып бойынша тарихи дереккөздер мен әдебиеттерді талдай отырып, зерттеу ерте кезеңдегі израильдік нәсілшіл дискурстар мен қазіргі Израильдің отаршыл репрессивті саясаты арасындағы байланысты және сабақтастықты анықтауға ұмтылады. *Зерттеудің нәтижелері.* Зерттеу нәтижелері көрсеткендей, ерте израильдік идеологиялар мен дискурстар Израильдің байырғы палестин халқына қатысты жүргізіп отырған күштеп көшіру, меншік құқығынан айыру, жою және нәсілдік кемсітушілік саясаты мен әдістерінің қалыптасуына негіз болған. *Қорытынды.* Зерттеу Израильдің негізгі гегемонистік дискурстары Палестинаға деген талаптарды ақтап, заңдастырып, палестин халқына қатысты отаршыл саясат пен стратегияларды қалыптастырып, бағыттап отырғанын көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: Палестина, сионизм, Израиль, нәсілдік езгі, қоныс аудару колониализмі

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ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНЧЕСКИЙ КОЛОНИАЛИЗМ ПАЛЕСТИНСКИХ ВОПРОС: ПОЛИТИКА ЭЛИМИНАЦИИ

Габит Бекенулы Жуматай¹, Акмарал Сыдыгалыкызы Ыскак²

¹Университет Нархоз

(д. 55, ул. Жандосова, 050035 Алматы, Республика Казахстан)

Ассистент профессор Школы права и государственного управления, к.и.н.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0468-8538>. E-mail: gabit.zhumatay@narxoz.kz

²Университет Нархоз

(д. 55, ул. Жандосова, 050035 Алматы, Республика Казахстан)

Ассоциированный профессор Гуманитарной школы, д.и.н.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3998-584X>. E-mail: sakmaral7@gmail.com

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В этой статье исследуются исторические и идеологические корни основания современного государства Израиль и насильственного переселения палестинского народа. В исследовании также рассматривается, как эти основополагающие расовые, теологические и этноцентрические концепции сформировали колониальную политику и стратегию Израиля по отношению к коренным народам исторической Палестины с 1948 года. Исследование исторических корней расовых сионистских идеологий и дискурсов позволяет нам лучше понять израильский переселенческий колониализм и бедственное положение палестинского народа. Цели и задачи исследования. *Основная цель исследования* — изучить, как расовые сионистские идеологии и дискурсы сформировали нынешний израильский поселенческий колониализм и его усилия по угнетению коренных народов и переформатированию исторической Палестины. Путем анализа исторических источников и литературы по теме исследование стремится установить связи и преемственность между ранними израильскими расовыми дискурсами и нынешней израильской колониальной репрессивной политикой по отношению к коренным народам Палестины. *Полученные результаты.* Результаты исследования показывают, что ранние израильские идеологии и дискурсы сформировали продолжающуюся политику и подходы Израиля к насильственным переселениям, лишению собственности, истреблению и расовой дискриминации по отношению к коренному населению Палестины. *Выводы.* В исследовании делается вывод о том, что ключевые гегемонистские дискурсы Израиля оправдывают и легитимируют претензии на Палестину, формируя и направляя колониальную политику и стратегии Израиля по отношению к палестинскому населению.

Ключевые слова: Палестина, сионизм, Израиль, расовое угнетение, переселенческий колониализм

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Introduction

Drawing upon historical sources, the relevant literature and studies on settler colonialism, this study explores Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine and the historical roots of exclusion, erasure and elimination of the Palestinian people. Gaining deeper and fresh insights into the historical and ideological roots of Zionism and its efforts to exclude and erase the indigenous Palestinian people is highly relevant in the light of ongoing Israeli genocide of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza. Therefore, it is pertinent to examine the historical and ideological roots of Zionism and its hostility towards the native people of historic Palestine. Investigating the roots of Zionism and its rationale for the removal of the natives of Palestine allows us to understand the continuity of Israel's colonial racial oppressive practices and policies vis-à-vis Palestinians. Zionism was born on European soil. Under the strong influence of European theories and concepts of nationalism, Ashkenazi Jewish intellectuals came up with an idea of establishing a homeland for European Jewry who lacked their own country. These Jewish intellectuals in Europe were prominent figures in different fields and even though they encountered religious and racial persecution in Europe, they came to increasingly identify themselves with Europe. The roots of the exclusivist character of Zionism, Zionists and later the state of Israel lied in their strong sense of affiliation with Europe and the West as general. Zionism was and is a European phenomenon and ideology of Jewish nationalism and Zionists believed that they were representing Europe in the East and building a European society in Palestine (Herzl, 1989: 13).

Despite being physically present in the Middle East and building a Jewish homeland in the heart of the Orient, Zionists identified themselves with Europe and Europeans, simultaneously rejecting any idea of embracing an Oriental identity and integrating themselves into indigenous society of Palestine or the broader Middle East (Shohat, 1988: 1). Quite the contrary, from the start Zionists sought to transform Palestine into a European white entity by encouraging Ashkenazi Jewish colonization of the land and at the same time, gradually erasing and supplanting indigenous society and population. From its inception, Zionism and its followers considered establishing an exclusivist racialized white Ashkenazi Jewish society. Oriental Jews could be part of this settler society provided they would be stripped of their eastern identities and integrated into an Ashkenazi dominated settler colonial entity. Early Zionists sought to transform the followers of Judaism into an ethnonational group modeled on nationalism and national theories in Europe. Through gathering all Jews around the world through mass immigration to Palestine, Zionists dreamed of transforming an Arab dominated Palestine into a Jewish dominated country.

The current plight of the Palestinian people and the primacy of the Zionist state of Israel in Palestine have been shaped by the events right after World War II. British withdrawal from Palestine and the adoption of the UN Resolution 181 in 1947 led to the creation of the Jewish state of Israel and at the same time, the violent removal and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land, which was immediately incorporated into Israel. The establishment of Israel and ethnic cleansing of the natives turned into a national tragedy for the Palestinian people, which is known as the Nakba, which literally means “the catastrophe” (Pappe, 2006). It is estimated that nearly 800,000 Palestinians were violently displaced by Zionist terrorist groups such as the Haganah, the Irgun, the Stern and the Lehi (Charif, 2023; Pappe, 2006). The loss of homeland turned these Palestinians and their descendants into perpetual refugees, whose right of return has been denied by Israel ever since. The root cause of the plight and collective suffering of the Palestinians is Zionism and the state of Israel as its inevitable outcome. To erect a Jewish state in Palestine, the rights, liberty, freedom and self-determination of indigenous people were sacrificed. As a result of the establishment of Israel and its continuous denial of the rights of the natives made the Palestinians a stateless, homeless and rightless people.

The current study is timely and relevant not only in terms of historical origins of Zionism, but also what has been unfolding in historic Palestine since the Hamas attack of Israel on October 7, 2023. On October 24, 2023, Secretary-General of the UN António Guterres stated that “*It is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation. They have seen their land steadily devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced and their homes*

demolished. Their hopes for a political solution to their plight have been vanishing.” The UN Secretary-General accurately described what has been going on for many decades in historic Palestine where Israel has been consistent in its quest for building a racially exclusivist Jewish state at the expense of the indigenous population of Palestine. Indeed, although Israeli politicians and society have outrightly denied any wrongdoing against the Palestinians, Zionist Jewish exclusivist racial and ethnocentric ideologies are rooted in the genesis and development of Zionism, which came into existence in Europe. In Sayegh’s view, racism is an essential, inherent and permanent feature of Zionism, which serves as the basic motivation for Zionist settler colonialism and statehood (Sayegh, 1965b: 214). Since Zionism was born on European soil at the end of the 19th century, it was heavily influenced by European ideas of scientific racism, ethnocracy and nationalism. In this sense, Zionism and its logical outcome, the state of Israel, were built and are still sustained by European concepts of racial supremacy and ethnocracy. Studies indicate that racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy constitute the core of the Zionist ideology (Sayegh, 1965b: 214).

It is evident that racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy have shaped and guided policies of the state of Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians. This in turn excluded the indigenous population of historic Palestine from citizenship of Israel and precluded the Palestinians from integrating themselves into Israeli society. Since today the state of Israel is based on racial supremacy of Jews and racial exclusiveness, Israeli policymakers and society have consistently advocated and called for ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. In the aftermath of the Hamas attack, in their op-ed piece for the Wall Street Journal on November 13, 2023, two leading Israeli politicians Danny Danon and Ram Ben-Barak called for the voluntary transfer of 2.3 million people of Gaza to other countries (Danon & Ben-Barak, 2023). Moreover, Israel’s Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and many other right-wing radical Israeli politicians have consistently advocated the annexation of the West Bank and expulsion of Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt (Magid, 2024a). Besides Israeli policymakers and society, influential Western politicians likewise call for expelling Palestinians from Gaza. The US president Donald Trump has recently suggested that the United States ought to occupy Gaza and certain Arab countries in the Middle East such as Jordan and Egypt should take in nearly 2 million residents of this area (Roth, 2025).

It is obvious that Trump’s involvement in this contentious issue is not an accident, rather it is a sheer manifestation of European white racism and a conventional Zionist idea of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians from Palestine to make room for an ethnocentric and racist Zionist political entity. In other words, as a settler colonial project, the state of Israel is driven by the logic of elimination, which tends to take on a variety of forms (Wolfe, 2006: 401). In this sense, as a racially exclusivist and self-segregated settler colonial entity, Israel has remained obstinate and rejected any idea of absorbing the indigenous Palestinian population by granting Israeli citizenship to them or by cultural integration and assimilation. However, studies point out that by virtue of its racially exclusivist nature and self-segregated character, Zionism precludes any idea of integration and assimilation (Sayegh, 1965b: 214). From this standpoint, since its inception in 1948, Israel has systematically excluded the indigenous population of Palestine from citizenship and integration. The Zionist regime’s ultimate goal is to get rid of this population either by extermination or forced expulsion. In this regard, Israeli war in Gaza as well as in West Bank against the indigenous people of Palestine pursues the same goal, namely ethnic cleansing and elimination of the Palestinians. In this case, Israel acts and behaves exactly in the same manner as other settler colonies. Yet unlike other settler colonial societies, Israel does not seek to absorb the indigenous people of historic Palestine, instead opting for the exclusion and elimination of the native to build a racially exclusivist and supremacist nation state.

Materials and methods

In the framework of this study to gain a deeper understanding of the historical and ideological roots of Zionist Israeli exclusion and erasure of the indigenous Palestinian people to make room for the Jewish people and for a Jewish state, we have explored the historical foundations and underpinning of Zionism and Israel’s exclusivist colonial practices and policies vis-à-vis the native

population of historic Palestine. Drawing upon the relevant literature on the topic, historical sources, works of the founders of Zionism such as Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann and others, as well as the current primary data collected from Israeli and Western online press such as ‘Haaretz’, ‘the Times of Israel’, ‘the Jerusalem Post’ and other media outlets, we have examined Zionist settler colonialism and its impact on the native people of Palestine, and how it led to the transformation of Palestine into a Israeli settler colony. A critical review of relevant literature, specifically studies by Said, Khalidi, Pappe, Morris, Erakat, Sayegh, Zureik, Cook, Davis and other leading scholars allowed us to gain an understanding of the hegemonic discourses and narratives of Zionism and Israel, historical and ideological roots, the persistence and continuity of exclusivist ethnocentric racist Zionist ideology that lies at the core of the current Israel’s colonial oppressive policies towards the native Palestinian people.

The study utilizes qualitative methods, namely a critical analysis of historical data, primary sources and relevant literature. In addition to historical methods, the study also employs a critical discourse analysis to examine and understand how and why certain hegemonic political and ideological discourses are produced and perpetuated by various actors. In this case, we have focused on historical and ideological discourses of Zionism, and we have traced how these hegemonic ideological narratives continue to be used by Israel to deal with the occupied Palestinian territories that it has occupied and indigenous inhabitants of these lands. A critical discourse analysis is a powerful research approach first devised and articulated by the French intellectual Michel Foucault and further developed and employed by Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi, Nura Erakat and many other prominent scholars and theoreticians of postcolonialism, Orientalism and the Palestinian Studies. In this regard, the use of a critical analysis of historical data and a discourse analysis approach are relevant research methods that help gain a deeper understanding of historical sources and data.

Discussion

Studies indicate settler colonial origins and character of Zionism and the state Israel (Cook, 2008; Davis, 1973; Erakat, 2019; Finkelstein, 2010; Hixson, 2013; Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 1992, 2000, 2003; Morris, 2004; Pappe, 2006, 2014; Said, 1980; Sayegh, 1965a, 1965b; Wolfe, 2006; Zureik, 2016). Scholars point out that armed with European exclusivist ultranationalist and racist ideologies, the Zionists colonized Palestine, bringing European Jews and driving the native populations out of the land (Erakat, 2019; Hixson, 2013; Pappe, 2006, 2014; Said, 1980; Zureik, 2016). From this perspective, Zionism and the state of Israel are a settler colonial project aimed at removing the indigenous Palestinians to make room for European Jewish settlers (Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 1992, 2000, 2003; Morris, 2004; Wolfe, 2006: 395). In Uri Davis’s view, in contrast to European conquest and colonization of Africa and Asia, Jewish colonization of Palestine has always sought the installment of an ethnically, culturally and racially exclusivist society, in which Jews would settle and dominate demographically (Davis, 1973: 89). Fayeegh Sayegh observes that as opposed to European colonizers of Africa and Asia, the Zionist colonists were primarily motivated and driven by the desire to attain a nation state for themselves, which would be realized through the establishment a Jewish state in Palestine (Sayegh, 1965a: 4). A prospective Jewish nation state in Palestine was envisioned by the Zionists as a political entity for only Jewish people (Sayegh, 1965a: 4). In Patrick Wolfe’s view, any settler colonial project relies upon the elimination of native societies (Wolfe, 2006: 391).

Zionists consider everything through the primordial biblical ethnocentric, racial and theological lens (Erakat, 2019; Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 1992, 2000; Said, 1980). From this standpoint, Zionists seem to have stuck in the biblical times because they draw from religious scriptures and narratives to justify their colonization of Palestine, establishment of a settler colony and ethnic cleansing of the native people of Palestine. Besides, Israel is seen as an enlightened Western nation, a legitimate nation state, so that’s why according to Western logic, everything Israel is doing is righteous, noble, benevolent and even if it kills Palestinians and other non-Jews en masse (Said, 1980). Zionism, Zionist colonization and the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel have been based on colonial oppression, religious, racial, ethnic and cultural supremacy. The choice of Palestine as the site for

Jewish settlement by the Zionists was predicated on the Hebrew Bible and Judaism. Drawing upon Jewish religious scriptures and the Bible, the Zionists argued that stateless and homeless Jews scattered around the globe were destined to return to Palestine and create their homeland, which had been promised by God. According to Zionism, a Jewish national home in Palestine would serve as a safe haven for the Jewish people from perpetual antisemitism and persecution (Said, 1980). Despite having long been subjected to racism and persecution, European Jews internalized European colonial racial supremacist mentality and ideologies. As a result, when the Zionist encountered indigenous population in Palestine, they saw the natives as backward barbarians (Erakat, 2019; Khalidi, 2020; Said, 1980; Zureik, 2016). Even if Zionism was predicated upon European colonialism and European settlers acted as colonizers, the Zionists did not consider themselves as such. Quite the opposite, Zionist narratives and propaganda generated, reinforced and perpetuated the myths of the unbroken unity of the Jewish people to the Holy Land or to the ancient land of Israel (Handelman, 1994: 441).

Results

The historical and ideological roots of excluding and eliminating the native of Palestine

In his book Jonathan Cook stresses that European identities of Zionists and the denial of the existence of indigenous people of Palestine rooted in the early Zionist thinking (Cook, 2008: 13). Drawing upon European tradition of racial superiority, ethnocentrism and colonial dominating mentality, early Zionists increasingly cultivated an image of Jews as a civilizing force and at the same time, promoting and reinforcing racialized Orientalist views of the Arabs as a backward, inferior and savage people (Erakat, 2019; Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 1992, 2000, 2003). Early Zionists consistently advanced an idea that only a Jewish presence and domination in Palestine and the Middle East would drag the area out of its barbarism and primitiveness, incorporating it into European civilization (Cook, 2008: 14). Thus, early Zionists cultivated and perpetuated ethnocentric and racialized discourses about themselves and Arabs, in which European Jewish colonizers were portrayed as a people being at the forefront of a civilizing mission on behalf of Europe, while Arabs were described as enemies of white European Christian civilization and incorrigible savages. A future Zionist Jewish state in Palestine was presented as an extension of European civilization and as a strategic outpost of the West in the region. In his 1896 book *“Der Judenstaat”* (*“The Jewish State”*) the founder of Zionism Theodor Herzl envisioned a future Jewish state in Palestine as *“the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism”* (Herzl, 1989: 13). In 1931, the leader of American Zionists Stephen Wise stated that *“an Arab Palestine is a threat to Great Britain and a menace to the world. A Jewish Palestine is an asset to Great Britain and a blessing to the world”* (Wise & Lloyd, 2016).

Zionist association and affiliation with Europe and the Western Christian world right away produced a mutual response from Western elites who sympathized with the Zionist cause and held pro-Zionist bias and anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab sentiments (Pappe, 2006, 2014; Zureik, 2016). Edward Said points out that the Zionists identified themselves in part with the Orient, yet at the same time, they constructed themselves as a nation who had successfully emancipated themselves from the worst Oriental excesses (Said, 1980: 26). In addition to the romanticized reductive perceptions of the East deeply entrenched in Europe, Ashkenazi Jews further reinforced and perpetuated European biased racialized views of the Orient and the Arabs. In this regard, Zionists did not confine themselves to knowledge production about the East, but also, they became dominant in knowledge production about the Orient, shaping hegemonic racialized discourses and narratives about the Arabs and Islam as hostile to Europe. Through the systematic relentless and deliberate demonization and vilification of the Arabs and Islam, the Zionists did not allow the Arabs and Islam to be accepted as part of the civilized world. Portraying the Arabs as enemies of civilization, Zionists never intended to allow the Arabs to appear equally with European Jews. This strategy allowed Zionists to construct themselves as an extension of the Western civilization and the Arabs as the embodiment of evil, barbarism and darkness (Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 2000).

Zionist views and representation of themselves and the Arabs are encapsulated in Chaim Weizmann's letter to Arthur Balfour on May 30, 1918. Weizmann who was a leading Zionist leader

and the president of the World Zionist Organization, in his letter depicted the Arabs as treacherous, backward, dishonest, uneducated, greedy, inefficient and uncivilized, while portraying Jews as advanced and modern (Said, 1980: 26–28). Constructing a racialized image of the Arabs as worshippers of only power and success, Weizmann warned the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour that Britain, who was about to establish its colonial rule over Palestine, should watch the Arabs and should not give them “*the slightest grievance or ground of complaint*” (Said, 1980, 27). Describing the English officials in Palestine as enlightened and honest, Weizmann at the same time portrayed the Arab officials and servants as corrupt, inefficient and arrogant. Weizmann was filled with anger and resentment at the Arab demographic domination in Palestine, which in his view “*would necessarily lend towards the creation of an Arab Palestine*” (Said, 1980: 27). Yet emphasizing the backwardness and savagery of the Arabs, their being “*at least four centuries behind the times*”, Weizmann pointed out that the Arab demographic supremacy would not produce an Arab Palestine (Said, 1980: 28).

Edward Said calls attention to how Weizmann’s statement was instructive, specifically in terms of Zionist association and identification with the English and European. In his letter Weizmann overtly demonstrated that he and his fellow Zionists were knowledgeable about the difference between the Oriental and the Occidental mind (Said, 1980: 28). As opposed to Europeans and Zionists who were constructed as enlightened, honest and noble, Weizmann deliberately promoted and reinforced traditional European perceptions of the Arabs as Oriental, backward and inferior barbarians. Considering the Arabs less human, Weizmann implied that these Oriental barbarians did not deserve to own a state, despite their demographic prevalence and advantage. Weizmann’s reductive racialized discourse about the Arabs seems to have built on John Stuart Mill’s assumptions on representative government, which denied native peoples’ right to rule themselves on the ground that they were purportedly backward and centuries behind civilized Europeans (Said, 1980: 28). Weizmann and other Zionists applied this concept in the Palestinian context to undermine and delegitimize the Arab right to statehood. Moreover, from the start the Zionists turned themselves into knowledge producers about the East and experts on the Orient, informing and guiding the West in this matter. Zionists systematically promoted an idea of shared values and civilizational affiliation with Europe, while reinforcing an image of the Arabs as alien and hostile to the Western civilization.

The birth of Zionism and the efforts of early Zionists to build a Jewish home in Palestine through gradual yet mass immigration of European Jews to this land generated indigenous resentment and resistance. From the outset the Zionists perceived the indigenous people of Palestine as their enemies and thereby harbored a plan to get rid of them through ethnic cleansing and extermination. In this case, Edward Said calls attention to the fact that the indigenous Palestinians were subjected to a unique form of colonialism, specifically Zionist settler colonialism, which unlike European colonialism had no any intention to accommodate the native population, instead seeking a nation state only for Jews (Said, 1994: 54). In Said’s view, for the Zionists “*the best Palestinian ... is either dead or gone*” (Said, 1994: 54). That’s why the discourse of either voluntary or forced transfer of the indigenous Palestinians to other countries to transform Palestine into a Jewish dominated area has been at the core of the Zionist thinking (Masalha, 1992, 2000, 2003; Pappe, 2006, 2014). From Theodor Herzl to the current leadership of Israel the concept of transfer or ethnic cleansing of Palestine has been foundational in the Zionist ideology (Zhumatay & Yskak, 2024a, 2024b). For instance, in the light of ongoing Israel’s genocide in Gaza and West Bank, Israeli leaders have consistently called for the transfer of Palestinians to neighboring countries such as Egypt, Jordan and proposed that Western states should likewise accept Palestinians (Danon & Ben-Barak, 2023; Magid, 2024a). Zionists, therefore, invested heavily in demonization of the Arabs. In this regard, they drew upon old traditional European Christian hostility to Islam and the East, resurrecting Europe’s feud with the Orient. Western sympathizers and sponsors of Zionism were convinced that Jewish colonization of Palestine was in line with their interests as Zionist takeover of this land would extend the frontiers of the West into the Middle East. As beneficiaries of Western imperialism, the early Zionist leaders skillfully exploited an imagined civilizational affiliation with the West. Theodor Herzl stressed that a future Zionist entity in Palestine would be a civilizational outpost of the West in the

Orient. Weizmann and Zionist leaders increasingly weaponized a civilizational affinity with the West. Subscribe to the Zionist cause, Western political elites and intellectuals came to view Zionism and later Israel as the only liberal democracy in the Middle East, and as an extension of the West in the region who was destined to deter and fight the enemies of the civilized world on behalf of the West such as Soviet communism and Islam (Said, 1980: 29). In addition, having embraced Zionism and committed to this cause, the West came to internalize Zionist narratives and discourses about the Arabs, seeing them as the embodiment of Oriental despotism, backwardness and ignorance. Thus, with the blessings and backing of the West, the Zionists embarked upon the path of forging a nation state in Palestine predicated upon ethnocentrism, racial and cultural superiority.

Mainstream American political discourse came to view Zionism and later the Zionist state of Israel as an enlightened liberal democracy, which ought to be respected and admired as an entity which corresponds entirely and harmoniously with Western values and ideas about society and man (Said, 1980: 29; Shohat, 1988). It is widely believed that as an extension of the West, the Zionist entity cannot be accountable to no one. On the other hand, those who resist Zionism and the Jewish state are evil, wicked, nefarious and decadent. Such irrational and dark forces have no voice and “*only Zionism can speak for them*” (Said, 1980: 29). European and American political establishment and intellectuals came to reinforce and perpetuate such racialized, ethnocentric and deeply tribal narratives, which are deeply embedded in Western mind and culture. Such pro-Zionist bias was manifested in the letter to “The New York Times” by Reinhold Niebuhr and other American notables on November 21, 1947. In the letter, American intellectuals lent their support for the plan of partitioning Palestine and establishing a Jewish state. In their view, a liberal democratic state ought to be established in Palestine, which could be realized through the creation of a Zionist entity. Niebuhr and his colleagues argued that “there is only one vanguard of progress and modernization in the Middle East, and that is Jewish Palestine” (Said, 1980: 30). In addition to a prospective Jewish state, Christian Lebanon was likewise defined as the second vanguard of civilization and modernization. They constructed Lebanon as a Christian entity being artificially subdued by the pan-Arabists and pan-Islamists. Exhibiting their selective profoundly pro-Zionist and pro-Christian biases and prejudices, they referred to Jewish Palestine and Christian Lebanon as the two islands of Western civilization in the East, and at the same time, portraying the Arab-Islamic Middle East as “hopeless”. Reinhold Niebuhr and other American intellectuals associated Judaism and Christianity with progress and modernity, while viewing Islam and Muslims as inconsistent with Western values and civilization. Like Zionists, Western political elites and intellectuals came to see the Arabs, especially Muslim Arabs as being unworthy and of little interest. Thus, from the outset the Zionist views and attitudes towards the Arabs were accepted by Americans and Europeans. In this sense, the West expressed its willingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of Jewish and Christian entities as vanguard of progress and islands of Western civilizations in the East, while completely disregarding voices, wishes and rights of the absolute majority. In doing so, Europeans and Americans extended the same colonial racist strategies they had systematically applied towards indigenous peoples of North America, Africa, Asia, elsewhere, and to the Muslim Arabs specifically.

Studies on Zionist colonization indicate that although Zionists identified themselves with Europe, they stood apart from Europe when it came to colonization of Palestine. Unlike European colonization around the globe, from its inception Zionist Jewish colonization has consistently sought a settler state composed and ruled by Jews alone (Davis, 1973: 89). Incoming and invading European Ashkenazi settler population was destined to replace indigenous Arab population and integrating Oriental native Jews of Palestine through their Europeanization and assimilation into Ashkenazi dominated settler society. Only a tiny minority of Arabs could be tolerated whose natural growth ought to be always checked and if necessary halted by leveraging various approaches. Jewish-Arab coexistence and forging a multicultural entity was out of question as such a scenario would undermine a European vocation and identity of the Zionist state and the heavy presence of Arabs would threaten the very existence of the Jewish state. Since Ashkenazi Jews settling and colonizing Palestine imagined themselves as a distinct ethnoreligious group representing Europe, believed that instilling and extending the Western civilization in Palestine and the wider Mideast were their historic mission

and duty. Therefore, Euro-Americans came to embrace European Jews taking root in Palestine as inherently good, benevolent and noble. Western attitudes towards the native populations of Palestine, specifically towards the Arabs were deeply reductive and racialized, filled with racial slurs, stereotypes and stigmatizations. Like Europeans had conquered, colonized, subjugated and dominated indigenous lands and their inhabitants for centuries, European Jews embarked upon the same path of colonization, subjugation and domination of a non-European land. In this case, European Jews were expected to instill, replicate and reproduce Europe in the Middle East through destruction and erasure of indigenous Arab population and their homeland. Reproduction of Europe in non-European lands, exclusion, racial discrimination, displacement, and removal of the natives were seen as normal, legitimate and inevitable (Said, 1980: 78–79). With the advent of Zionism and Ashkenazi colonization of Palestine, especially with the birth of the state of Israel in 1948, the invading Jewish settler population from Europe and other parts of the planet came to gradually yet violently replace indigenous Arab population.

Discourses, practices and policies of exclusion and elimination of Palestine

Outrightly denying the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, Israel has systematically favored people of Jewish background, encouraging them to immigrate to Israel and granting Israeli citizenship even if they were not born in this country. Like in any other colonial contexts, the Zionist settler regime established colonial, racial and ethnic hierarchies, placing those with Jewish blood at the top of hierarchy, who are the most privileged racial and ethno-religious group in Israel. A prominent Israeli scholar Oren Yiftachel draws attention to the ethnocratic and theocratic character of Zionist society and Israeli regime, which is reflected in the promotion of the dominant ethno-religious group in contested spaces at the expense other groups, Judaizing or Hebraizing colonial spaces, laying the claim to the land on the ground as their rightful ancestral homeland (Yiftachel, 2006: 3). Judaization of Palestine as a contested space between the indigenous Palestinian people and invading Jewish population is marked by the triumph of the Zionist project and indigenous resistance to this Israeli colonization (Yiftachel, 2006: 3). Oren Yiftachel also calls attention to the Israel's efforts to cement its claim and domination over the conquered territories, erecting a racial apartheid, exclusionary and discriminatory regime, subjecting the native Palestinians to harsh military occupation and racist treatment, as they “stand in the way of the state's program of Judaization” (Yiftachel, 2009: 12). Likewise, Nurit Peled-Elhanan brings to the attention to how despite a successful self-proclaimed image of the only democracy in the Middle East, the Israeli regime is defined as an ‘ethnocracy’ because “ethnicity and not citizenship is the main determinant for the allocation of rights, power and resources in Israel” (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 1).

Joseph Massad brings to the for the fact that how Zionism drew extensively from a theological epistemology rooted in Judaism and Christian Europe in erecting a demographically, ethno-religiously and culturally exclusive Jewish state predicated upon the racial and religious supremacy over the native Palestinians (Massad, 2003; 440). Despite approximately two million Palestinians are citizens of Israel, they do not enjoy the full rights as Jewish Israelis (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 1–2). Palestinians in the occupied territories are the most stateless, homeless and rightless, being subjected to the ruthless military colonial occupation, racial discrimination, apartheid and oppression (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 1; Yiftachel, 2009: 11–12). As the occupying power, Israel has neither granted them Israeli citizenship nor relinquished its control over Palestinian territories (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 1). In this regard, although Israel claims the West Bank and other occupied territories as its own due to its biblical connection to these lands, the Zionist state is not willing to absorb the inhabitants of these territories through granting them citizenship, instead focusing on their expulsion or transfer to neighboring countries. Perhaps that is why Patrick Wolfe defined this process as the elimination of natives by a settler colony (Wolfe, 2006). Any settler society according to this eliminationist logic seeks the removal of native populations and destruction of indigenous society in order to erect a new society based on the political system and culture of settlers.

Zionism and the Israeli ethnocratic regime are religiously motivated phenomena and thereby are guided and sustained by religious scriptures and Judaism. The Zionist claim to the land of Palestine and a concept of chosennes are predicated upon the Hebrew Bible and Judaism. In our view,

the choice of Palestine by the founders of Zionism was predicated upon the purported historical connection of European Jewry to the biblical times and Canaan. Therefore, the Zionists noted that they sought to restore the Jewish right to Palestine in accordance with the Bible. They believe that Palestine and other areas of the Middle East are promised to Jews by their God (Salaita, 2006). From this perspective, all non-Jews inhabiting this promised land ought to be driven out in order to make room for God's chosen people. The concept of the promised land and chosenness cultivated religious, ethnic and cultural supremacy among Jews who consider themselves superior to the Palestinians and other non-Jews. Not only religious Zionists, but also left-wing and right-wing secular Zionists subscribe to religious justifications for land theft and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. All the Zionists and Israeli governments since the birth of Israel in 1948 have emphasized the historic connections of the Jewish people to Palestine. In particular, Israeli president Isaac Herzog has often referred to the biblical narratives to legitimize and justify Israel's right to the land, the historical affinity of Jews with Palestine (Lazaroff, 2021). During his meeting with the US president Joe Biden, Isaac Herzog referred to Biden as 'Joseph', a Biblical figure (Magid, 2024b). The Israeli president drew his American counterpart's attention to how, in the Bible, Joseph will strengthen Israel, likening Biden to this biblical figure (Magid, 2024b).

During his speech to the US Congress in July 2023, Isaac Herzog stated that *"When the State of Israel was established in 1948, the land which the Almighty promised to Abraham, to which Moses lead the Israelites, the land of the Bible, of milk and honey, evolved into an exquisite land of democracy. Against all odds, the Jewish people returned home and built a national home, which became a beautiful Israeli democracy"* (Haaretz, 2023; The Times of Israel, 2023). Invoking religious scriptures and referencing the Hebrew Bible seem widely accepted and embraced in Israel and in the Zionist discourses. In July 2024, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu pointed out that *"the Land of Israel is where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob prayed, where Isaiah and Jeremiah preached and where David and Solomon ruled... For nearly four thousand years, the land of Israel has been the homeland of the Jewish people. It's always been our home; it will always be our home"* (Haaretz, 2024). Thus, to justify their claim to the land and to legitimize a racist state that dehumanizes and oppresses Palestinians because of their different ethnic, religious and cultural identities, the Zionists heavily rely on their religious scriptures.

This kind of primordial theological ethnocentric essence of the Zionist regime prioritizes and privileges the Jewish blood. In this sense, all factions of Zionism have been advocating annexation of the West Bank, building Jewish settlements and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Religious fundamentalists and fascists in Israel led by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and many other Zionists have forcefully demanded the expulsion of Palestinians from occupied territories and incorporation of these lands into Israel (Keller-Lynn, 2023). In this regard, the leader of Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), which is a far-right ultrareligious fascist party, Ben Gvir claims that in accordance with the Torah of Israel the land belongs to the Jewish people (Keller-Lynn, 2023). Finance Minister and the leader of another fascist ultrareligious party – the National Religious Party-Religious Zionism, Bezalel Smotrich believes that Jews have historical ties to the land and thereby they are entitled to build settlements everywhere in the West Bank (Keller-Lynn, 2023). Such a dangerous view is shared not only by Zionists in Israel, but also by zealous American Zionists. For instance, on January 21, 2025, Elise Stefanik, a congresswoman from the Republican Party, stated that Israel has a biblical right to the occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank (Zhang, 2025). Elise Stefanik is set to become US ambassador to the UN, representing the Trump administration.

Although the Zionists tend to present Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East, in practice that is not the case. Oren Yiftachel and Nurit Peled-Elhanan stress that while maintaining its democratic façade, the Israeli regime in practice operates as an ethnocracy (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 1; Yiftachel, 2006: 3). In Joseph Massad's assessment, Israel functions as a racial and theological supremacist regime premised upon the perpetual oppression of Palestinians (Massad, 2003; 440). In this regard, Israel pretty much resembles Western powers who pretend to be liberal democracy, but at the same time, they practice colonialism, imperialism, racism and human rights violations. For

instance, the US depicts itself as an exceptional nation and a bastion of democracy. However, such a self-proclaimed image has not precluded the US from practicing slavery, racial segregation, and ethnic cleansing and genocide of indigenous peoples in North America. In a similar vein, despite Israel being a ruthless oppressive colonialist regime and heavily militarized settler entity, the Zionists brag about Israel's alleged goodness, benevolence and a democratic identity. For instance, in his address to a joint session of the US Congress on July 19, 2023, Israeli president Isaac Herzog stated that *"our democracy is strong and resilient. Israel has democracy in its DNA ... a country which takes pride in its vibrant democracy, its protection of minorities, human rights, and civil liberties"* (Haaretz, 2023; Novak, 2023; The Times of Israel, 2023). Echoing Herzog's statement, in his address to the US Congress in July 2024, Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu highlighted that *"we built a powerful and vibrant democracy, a democracy that pushes the boundaries of innovation for the betterment of all humanity"* (Haaretz, 2024). Yet the essence of so-called Israeli democracy lies in the political culture in which Jews in Israel can have arguments and disagreements among themselves, splitting into multiple political parties and factions, having bitter arguments with one another, yet all of them are united and unanimous when it comes to dealing with the Palestinians. Even the most liberal Zionists acquiesce and favor the removal of the indigenous Palestinians.

Superiority mindset and worldviews of the Zionists led to dehumanization of non-Hebrew populations of Palestine, who in their view, ought to be expelled from the land. Expulsion or in other words ethnic cleansing of the indigenous people of Palestine to make way for European Jews was and still is the central in the Zionist discourse vis-à-vis Palestinians (Khalidi, 2020; Masalha, 1992, 2000, 2003; Morris, 2004; Pappé, 2006, 2014). All of this forms the core of practices and policies of the Israeli regime vis-à-vis the indigenous Palestinians. Exclusion and erasure of Palestine and its indigenous population have always been central in Zionism and Zionist discourses and narratives. By the same token, the purge and depopulation of Palestine from its indigenous people, according to the Zionist discourses, ought to be surely and inevitably accompanied by the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state, in which Jews were expected to gain a demographic majority. This is because without demographic supremacy, the Zionists believe that there would not be a Jewish state in Palestine. Such a thinking lies at the heart of the early Zionist discourse about Palestine and Jewish presence in this land (Morris, 2004: 40). Zionism as an ultranationalist ideology is predicated upon "racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy" (Sayegh, 1965b: 214).

This essence of Zionism indicates that it is a deeply racist, exclusivist and racial supremacist ideology. The founders of Zionism and their successors strictly adhered to the core principles and tenets of Zionism, specifically in creating a Jewish nation state in Palestine through large scale Jewish colonization and ethnic cleansing and extermination of the native people of Palestine. In this regard, although the Zionist coveted the land of Palestine, they did fully disregard the rights and voices of the natives of this land. While prioritizing the right and claim of European Jews to the land of Palestine and their right to self-determination, the Zionists denied the same rights to the indigenous population of Palestine. Such Zionist attitudes and views have been the core discourse of Zionism and the state of Israel. Despite one historical period supersedes another and new generation substitutes old one, we observe the persistence and continuity of this core hegemonic Zionist discourse in Israeli society, among Zionists, their supporters and sponsors. Moreover, this core hegemonic discourse has informed and guided practices and policies of the Zionist Israeli regime of exclusion and erasure of Palestine and its native population.

Conclusion

The current study has explored Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine and the historical and ideological roots of excluding and erasing the Palestinian people. Examining the historical and ideological foundations of Zionism and Israeli settler colonialism allows for understanding the continuity of colonial and racist policies and practices of Israel towards the indigenous people of historic Palestine. The study has discussed underlying hegemonic discourses that underpin the Zionist claim to Palestine and Israel's colonial policy towards the Palestinian population. The results of the study show that first, the Zionists lay their exclusive claim to Palestine, stressing the exclusive right

of Jews, and simultaneously denying the Palestinian rights to the land and self-determination. In this respect, Israel has been established as a Jewish nation state predicated upon ethnic, cultural and racial superiority of Jews to the native people. Second, Israel's right to Palestine is substantiated and legitimized by Judaism and religious narratives. Third, despite its colonial and racist character, Israel is defined as the only democracy in the Middle East, which craftily conceals its oppressive colonial origins and character. Fourth, as the Zionists have envisioned Israel as the state of the Jewish people where Jews ought to demographically dominate and control the state and society, the indigenous Palestinians who constituted the majority in 1948 ought to be numerically reduced to a docile marginalized tiny minority through permanent forced disposessions, ethnic cleansing and genocide. That's why, the removal of the Palestinian people from their land to make room for Jews has been the central Zionist discourse. Fifth, to make Jewish supremacism sustainable and inviolable, the Zionist regime has systematically applied racist laws, policies and practices vis-à-vis the natives, erecting a cruel apartheid regime and subjecting Palestinians to unending racial segregation, discrimination, and repression, which is designed to perpetuate the plight and oppression of the Palestinian people. Last but not least, despite its physical presence in the Middle East, Israel identifies itself with the Western Christian world, relentlessly advancing and imposing its self-made image of 'the only democracy in the region.'

To prove their indigeneity, to legitimize their claim to Palestine and to justify their violent seizure of the land and forced removal of the indigenous Palestinian population, the Zionists, especially adherents to religious Zionism and even secular Zionism refer to the Hebrew Bible. The logic behind the religious rationale and justification for the Jewish claim to Palestine, the Zionists claimed indigeneity to the land, arguing that the Jews always were on this soil, and at the same time, contesting and denying the indigeneity and rights of the indigenous Arabs to Palestine. On the one hand, the Zionists outrightly deny the very existence of the Palestinians as a people, dismissing their peoplehood and nationhood. Yet at the same time, they argue that only the Jewish people are indigenous to the land. Artificially constructed a hierarchy of races and religions justifies the Jewish racial and ethnocentric supremacism in historic Palestine. This in turn legitimizes placing Jews at the top of the hierarchy as the most privileged people, while denying the full rights to the Palestinians, systematically marginalizing and oppressing them, confining them into ghettos and Bantustans across the West Bank and Gaza. Thus, since its inception Zionism has been relentless in transforming Palestine into a Jewish state at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian people. Zionist colonization has resulted in the gradual erasure and replacement of native Palestinian society and its inhabitants by Jewish settlers and the Israeli settler colony. At the outset, the task of the Zionists has been to keep the Jewish character of Israel by bringing more Jews from around the world, settling in Palestine at the expense of the indigenous Arab population. This policy has been accompanied by land confiscation, forced elimination of original residents from their lands and homes, keeping the demography of the country, especially the growth of Palestinian population at bay, ensuring a Jewish demographic majority throughout the country, through applying draconian laws with regard to Palestinians, introducing apartheid and racial segregation by erecting concrete walls, building illegal Jewish settlements on lands belonging to Palestinians.

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МАЗМҰНЫ

ТАРИХНАМА ЖӘНЕ ДЕРЕКТАНУ

Қарасаев Ғ.М., Кенжебаев Ғ.Қ., Оспанова Р. ЕУРАЗИЯ ӨңІРІ ТҮРҒЫНДАРЫНЫҢ КӨНЕ ЗЕМАННАН ХҮШ ҒАСЫРҒА ДЕЙІНГІ ТАРИХЫ БАТЫС, ОРЫС ЗЕРТТЕУШІЛЕРІ ШЫҒАРМАЛАРЫНДА.....	7
Шолахов М.Г. ЖОШЫ ҰЛЫСЫНЫҢ САРАЙШЫҒЫ ЕУРОПАЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ОТАНДЫҚ ТАРИХНАМАДА.....	21

ТАРИХ

Аккуш С., Темирханов Б. XX ҒАСЫРДЫҢ БАСЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ ҚАЖЫЛАРЫ: «ҚАЗАҚ» ГАЗЕТІНІҢ МАТЕРИАЛДАРЫ НЕГІЗІНДЕ ЗЕРТТЕУ.....	36
Атантаева Б.Ж., Мухаметкалиева К.Б., Абенова Г.А. БІЛІМ БЕРУДЕГІ ӨЗГЕРІСТЕР: 1920 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ СЕМЕЙ ӨңІРІНДЕГІ МЕКТЕП ЖҮЙЕСІНІҢ ДАМУЫ МЕН САУАТСЫЗДЫҚҚА ҚАРСЫ КҮРЕС.....	49
Байдильдина Феллан С.Х., Абдирайымова А.С., Раджапов А.У. МӘСКЕУ МЕН ЛЕНИНГРАДТА ҚАЗАҚ КСР ҮШІН МӘДЕНИЕТ ЖӘНЕ ӨНЕР МАМАНДАРЫН ДАЯРЛАУ МӘСЕЛЕСІ (1930–1950 ЖЖ.).....	66
Бисембайұлы М. ҚАЗАҚСТАНҒА ЕРІКСІЗ КӨШІРІЛГЕН ПОЛЯКТАРДЫҢ САЯСИ ЖӘНЕ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ЖАҒДАЙЫ.....	81
Дюсембекова Ж., Түрсүн Х., Жеңіс Ж.Ж. ГЕРМАНИЯДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ СТУДЕНТТЕРІНІҢ САЯСИ ҚЫЗМЕТІ.....	96
Жаркен А.М., Есимова Ж.К. 1959–1989 ЖЫЛДАР САНАҚТАРЫ БОЙЫНША ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ СОЛТҮСТІК ОБЛЫСТАРЫНДАҒЫ ПОЛИЭТНИКАЛЫҚ ХАЛЫҚТЫҢ ГЕНДЕРЛІК ҚҰРЫЛЫМЫНДАҒЫ ӨЗГЕРІСТЕРІ.....	108
Жолдасұлы Т., Ойданова Ж.Ж. ҚЫЗЫЛОРДА ОБЛЫСТЫҚ «БІЛІМ» ҚОҒАМЫ ҰЙЫМЫ: ҒЫЛЫМДЫ ДӘРІПТЕУ ЖӘНЕ САЯСИ-АТЕИСТІК ТӘРБИЕ БЕРУ ҚЫЗМЕТІ (1948–1964 жж.).....	125
Жұматай Ғ.Б., Ысқақ А.С. ҚОНЫС АУДАРУ КОЛОНИАЛИЗМІ ЖӘНЕ ПАЛЕСТИН МӘСЕЛЕСІ: ҚҰРЫЛЫМДЫҚ ШЕТТЕТУ САЯСАТЫ.....	143
Купенова Г.Ы., Сманова А.М. ОРЫС-ҚАЗАҚ ШЕКАРАСЫНЫҢ ҚҰРЫЛУЫ: ОРЫНБОР ШЕКАРА КОМИССИЯСЫ (1799–1859 ЖЖ.).....	158
Мухамедеева И.А., Мухамедеева Р.М., Кенжебек Д.Қ. СОЛТҮСТІК ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ МӘДЕНИ МҰРАСЫН САҚТАУДЫҢ ИННОВАЦИЯЛЫҚ ЦИФРЛЫҚ СТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫ.....	173
Мұсағалиева А.С., Мұсабекова Р.М. ЕҢБЕК ПОСЕЛКІСІНЕН ТЫҢ ИГЕРУ СОВХОЗЫНА ДЕЙІН: № 26 ЕҢБЕК ПОСЕЛКІСІ – АЛЖИР – «АҚМОЛА» СОВХОЗЫ.....	186
Мұхатова О.Х. ЕСТЕЛІКТЕРДЕГІ АШАРШЫЛЫҚ АҚИҚАТЫ.....	203
Сахи Ж., Каржаубаева А. МУЗЕЙ-ҮЙЛЕР: ТҰЖЫРЫМДАР МЕН КӨЗҚАРАСТАР.....	217
Стамшалов Е.И. «ЕРЕКШЕ КОМИССИЯДАН» «ЕРЕКШЕ КОМИССИЯҒА»: ҚЫТАЙДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ БОСҚЫНДАРЫН ҚАЙТАРУ ТАРИХЫНАН (1924–1926).....	232
Тасилова Н.А., Майданали З., Сайлан Б.С. АЛТЫН ОРДАНЫҢ САЯСИ ТАРИХЫНДАҒЫ ӘМІРЛЕРДІҢ РӨЛІ.....	250
Уалтаева А.С., Мусаева Э.А., Мельдибекова З.А. АКАДЕМИЯЛЫҚ ҰТҚЫРЛЫҚТЫҢ ӘЛЕМДІК ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ: ТАРИХЫ ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗІРГІ ТРЕНДЕНЦИЯЛАР.....	265
Эгамбердиев М., Ахантаева Ә. РЕСЕЙ ИМПЕРИЯСЫНЫҢ КӨШІ-ҚОН САЯСАТЫ ШЕҢБЕРІНДЕ ҰЙҒЫРЛАРДЫҢ (ТАРАНШЫ) САКРАЛДЫ-МИСТИКАЛЫҚ ТӘЖІРИБЕЛЕРІ.....	283

ЭТНОЛОГИЯ/АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ

Кұлмағанбетова Г.К., Святко С. ФЕДОРОВ МӘДЕНИЕТІН ЗЕРТТЕУДЕГІ ОРТАЛЫҚ ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ҚОЛА ДӘУІРІ АРХЕОЛОГИЯСЫНЫҢ РЕТРОСПЕКТИВАСЫ.....	298
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СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

ИСТОРИОГРАФИЯ И ИСТОЧНИКОВЕДЕНИЕ

Карасаев Г.М., Кенжебаев Г.К., Оспанова Р. ИСТОРИЯ НАРОДОВ ЕВРАЗИЙСКОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА С ДРЕВНЕЙШИХ ВРЕМЕН ДО XVIII ВЕКА В ТРУДАХ ЗАПАДНЫХ И РУССКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЕЙ.....	7
Шолахов М.Г. САРАЙЧИК УЛУСА ДЖУЧИ В ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ И ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ.....	21

ИСТОРИЯ

Аккуш С., Темирханов Б. КАЗАХСКИЕ ХАДЖИ НАЧАЛА XX ВЕКА: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ НА ОСНОВЕ МАТЕРИАЛОВ ГАЗЕТЫ «ҚАЗАҚ».....	36
Атантаева Б.Ж., Мухаметкалиева К.Б., Абенова Г.А. ПЕРЕМЕНЫ В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ: РАЗВИТИЕ ШКОЛЬНОЙ СИСТЕМЫ И БОРЬБА С НЕГРАМОТНОСТЬЮ В СЕМИПАЛАТИНСКЕ В 1920 ГОДЫ.....	49
Байдильдина Феллан С.Х., Абдирайымова А.С., Раджапов А.У. К ВОПРОСУ ПОДГОТОВКИ КАДРОВ КУЛЬТУРЫ И ИСКУССТВА ДЛЯ КАЗССР В ЛЕНИНГРАДЕ И МОСКВЕ (1930–1950-Е ГГ.).....	66
Бисембайұлы М. ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ И СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ ПОЛЯКОВ, ВЫНУЖДЕННО ПЕРЕСЕЛЕННЫХ В КАЗАХСТАН.....	81
Дюсембекова Ж., Турсун Х., Женис Ж.Ж. КАЗАХСКИЕ СТУДЕНТЫ В ГЕРМАНИИ В 1922–1926 ГГ.....	96
Жаркен А.М., Есимова Ж.К. ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ГЕНДЕРНОЙ СТРУКТУРЕ ПОЛИЭТНИЧЕСКОГО НАСЕЛЕНИЯ СЕВЕРНЫХ ОБЛАСТЕЙ КАЗАХСТАНА ПО ПЕРЕПИСЯМ 1959–1989 гг.....	108
Жолдасұлы Т., Ойданова Ж.Ж. КЫЗЫЛОРДИНСКОЕ ОБЛАСТНОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО «ЗНАНИЕ»: ПРОПАГАНДА НАУКИ И ПОЛИТИКО-АТЕИСТИЧЕСКОЕ ВОСПИТАНИЕ (1948–1964).....	125
Жуматай Г.Б., Ыскак А.С. ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНЧЕСКИЙ КОЛОНИАЛИЗМ ПАЛЕСТИНСКИХ ВОПРОС: ПОЛИТИКА ЭЛИМИНАЦИИ.....	143
Купенова Г.Ы., Сманова А.М. ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ РУССКО-КАЗАХСКОГО ПОГРАНИЧЬЯ: ОРЕНБУРГСКАЯ ПОГРАНИЧНАЯ КОМИССИЯ (1799–1859 ГГ.).....	158
Мухамадеева И.А., Мухамадеева Р.М., Кенжебек Д.К. ИННОВАЦИОННЫЕ ЦИФРОВЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ДЛЯ СОХРАНЕНИЯ КУЛЬТУРНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ СЕВЕРНОГО КАЗАХСТАНА.....	173
Мусагалиева А.С., Мусабекова Р.М. ОТ ТРУДОВОГО ПОСЕЛКА ДО ЦЕЛИННОГО СОВХОЗА: ТРУДПОСЕЛОК № 26 – АЛЖИР – СОВХОЗ «АКМОЛИНСКИЙ».....	186
Мухатова О.Х. ПРАВДА О ГОЛОДЕ В ВОСПОМИНАНИЯХ.....	203
Сахи Ж., Каржаубаева А. ДОМ-МУЗЕИ: КОНЦЕПЦИИ И ВЗГЛЯДЫ.....	217
Стамшалов Е.И. «ОТ ОСОБОЙ КОМИССИИ К ОСОБУЮ КОМИССИЮ»: ИЗ ИСТОРИИ ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЯ КАЗАХСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ИЗ КИТАЯ (1924–1926).....	232
Тасилова Н.А., Майданади З., Сайлан Б.С. АЛТЫН ОРДАНЫҢ САЯСИ ТАРИХЫНДАҒЫ ӨМІРЛЕРДІҢ РӨЛІ.....	250
Уалтаева А.С., Мусаева Э.А., Мельдибекова З.А. МИРОВОЙ И КАЗАХСТАНСКИЙ ОПЫТ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОЙ МОБИЛЬНОСТИ: ИСТОРИЯ И АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ТРЕНДЫ.....	265
Эгамбердиев М., Ахантаева Ә. САКРАЛЬНО-МИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ПРАКТИКИ УЙГУРОВ (ТАРАНЧИ) В КОНТЕКСТЕ ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНЧЕСКОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ.....	283

ЭТНОЛОГИЯ/АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ

Кульмаганбетова Г.К., Святко С. РЕТРОСПЕКТИВА АРХЕОЛОГИИ БРОНЗОВОГО ВЕКА ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО КАЗАХСТАНА В ФОКУСЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ФЕДОРОВСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ.....	298
---	-----

CONTENTS

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCE STUDIES

Karasaev G.M., Kenzhebayev G.K., Ospanova R.R.

THE HISTORY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE EURASIAN SPACE FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE XIII CENTURY IN THE WORKS OF WESTERN AND RUSSIAN RESEARCHERS.....7

Sholakhov M.

SARAYCHIK OF THE JOCHI ULUS IN EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY.....21

HISTORY

Akkus S., Temirkhanov B.

THE KAZAKH PILGRIMS OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: A STUDY BASED ON THE MATERIALS OF THE “KAZAKH” NEWSPAPER.....36

Atantayeva B.Zh., Mukhametkalieva K.B., Abenova G.A.

CHANGES IN EDUCATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY IN SEMIPALATINSK IN THE 1920s.....49

Baidildina Fellan S., Abdiraiymova A., Rajapov A.

ON THE ISSUE OF TRAINING CULTURAL AND ART PERSONNEL FOR THE KAZAKH SSR IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD (1930–1950S).....66

Bissembayuly M.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF POLES DEPORTED TO KAZAKHSTAN.....81

Dyusembekova Zh., Tursun Kh., Zhengis Zh.

KAZAKH STUDENTS IN GERMANY IN 1922-1926.....96

Zharken A.M., Yessimova Zh.K.

CHANGES IN THE GENDER STRUCTURE OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC POPULATION OF THE NORTHERN REGIONS OF KAZAKHSTAN ACCORDING TO CENSUSES 1959–1989.....108

Zholdassuly T., Oidanova Zh.

KYZYLORDA REGIONAL “KNOWLEDGE” SOCIETY:

PROMOTING SCIENCE AND POLITICAL-ATHEISTIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES (1948–1964).....125

Zhumatay G.B., Yskak A.S.

SETTLEMENT COLONIALISM AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION: THE POLITICS OF ELIMINATION...143

Kupenova G.Y., Smanova A.M.

FORMATION OF THE RUSSIAN-KAZAKH BORDERLAND:

ORENBURG BORDER COMMISSION (1799–1859).....158

Mukhamadeyeva I.A., Mukhamadeyeva R.M., Kenzhebek D.K.

INNOVATIVE DIGITAL STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

OF NORTHERN KAZAKHSTAN.....173

Mussagaliyeva A.S., Mussabekova R.M.

FROM THE LABOR SETTLEMENT TO THE VIRGIN STATE FARM: LABOR SETTLEMENT

No. 26 – AKMOLA BRANCH OF KARLAG – AKMOLINSKY STATE FARM.....186

Mukhatova O.Kh.

THE TRUTH ABOUT FAMINE IN MEMORIES.....203

Sakhi Zh., Karzhaubayeva A.

HOUSE MUSEUMS: CONCEPTS AND VIEWS.....217

Stamshalov Ye.

“FROM SPECIAL COMMISSION TO SPECIAL COMMISSION”: FROM THE HISTORY OF THE RETURN OF KAZAKH REFUGEES FROM CHINA (1924–1926).....232

Tassilova N.A., Maidanali Z., Sailan B.S.

THE ROLE OF EMIRS IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE GOLDEN HORDE.....250

Ualtayeva A.S., Mussayeva E.A., Meldibekova Z.A.

WORLD AND KAZAKHSTANI EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC MOBILITY:

HISTORY AND CURRENT TRENDS.....265

Egamberdiyev M., Akhantaeva A.

THE POLICY OF THE TSARIST ADMINISTRATION AND THE SACRED-MYSTICAL PRACTICES OF THE TARANCHIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR RELOCATION TO ZHETYSU.....283

ETHNOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

Kulmaganbetova G.K., Svyatko S.

RETROSPECTIVE OF THE BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CENTRAL KAZAKHSTAN IN FOCUS ON THE STUDY OF THE FEDOROV CULTURE.....298

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Е-mail: edu.history@bk.ru

Журнал сайты: <https://edu.e-history.kz>

Ш.Ш. Уәлиханов ат. ТжЭИ басылған:

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