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The historiographical significance of K. K. Palen's inspection reports in the Turkestan region in 1908-1909

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the historical significance of the senatorial inspection led by Count K.K. Palen in Turkestan during 1908–1909. It aims to understand the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of the region under Russian colonial rule and assess how these reports shaped historiography on early 20th-century Central Asia.

Research methodology: The research applies a qualitative historical approach through textual and historiographical analysis of Palen's inspection reports, official records, and contemporary publications. Comparative evaluation was conducted to interpret the collected data in the context of colonial administration and regional transformation.

Results: The findings reveal that the inspection exposed widespread corruption and maladministration while simultaneously producing reliable empirical data, including the only comprehensive household survey of dehkan farms in Turkestan before 1917. The reports provide valuable insights into land use, governance structures, and socio-economic changes driven by Russia's expansionist policies.

Conclusions: Palen's reports serve as a fundamental source for reconstructing the realities of colonial Turkestan. They illustrate the duality of Russia's civilizing mission and the exploitation of resources, offering both critical evidence of systemic flaws and documentation of modernization processes.

Limitations: The inspection materials, while rich, reflect the perspectives of Russian officials and may underrepresent indigenous voices and experiences.

Contribution: This study contributes to Central Asian historiography by positioning Palen's inspection as a unique and comprehensive documentary source for analyzing governance, economic practices, and colonial discourse.

Keywords: *Colonialism, Historiography, K.K. Palen, Turkestan, Uzbekistan*

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to draw researchers' attention to a source that has not ceased to arouse specialist interest (N.B. A Makhmudova, 2015; N.B. A Makhmudova, 2023). At a time when our Central Asian region is increasingly being drawn, on the one hand, into the processes of globalization affecting all spheres of life, and on the other hand, into the emergence, before our very eyes, of a multipolar world (in the geopolitical sense), it is acquiring growing scholarly and methodological

significance. Namely, to the 20-volume collection of reports from the senatorial inspection of 1908–1909 in the Turkestan region, conducted under the leadership of Count K. K. Palen (Vasilyev, 2018). The late 19th and early 20th centuries in Russia were marked by a series of events that shook the very foundations of the empire and society, revealing the precarious position of Russia in a world that, precisely during these years, was beginning to take on the features of multipolarity.

Above all, this was due to Russia's defeat in the war with Japan in 1904. This event marked the unexpected, almost sudden emergence of a new geopolitical power in the Far East, the Japanese Empire, with its far-reaching ambitions. From that moment on, the traditional actors of international politics were compelled to consider these ambitions. This was, of course, the Revolution of 1905 in Russia (Hosoya, 2023). It followed the military defeat and exposed, in the most unfavorable way, the accumulated internal problems and contradictions of the Russian government. These problems, which the ruling circles had ignored for decades, had by the beginning of the 20th century turned into dangerous and explosive factors in social life. This was, finally, the Stolypin reform, launched in 1906 and aimed at overcoming these problems, stabilizing the situation in agriculture, and regulating the migration of impoverished peasants from the densely populated central provinces to the sparsely populated eastern ones, including the vast Turkestan region (Kozhakuly, 2023; Sembiring, Fadlan, Fadhil, Respationo, & Nurkhotijah, 2025).

The need for fundamental reforms in the administrative and economic institutions was acutely felt in the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, which operated on the basis of the outdated 1886 "Regulation on the Administration of the Turkestan Region" It was necessary to adopt a new regulation that would grant the local administration, above all, the office of the Governor-General, greater freedom and flexibility in managing the region's economy. It was necessary to eliminate the de facto administrative dualism in the region, since a number of bodies operated autonomously, reporting only to the central authorities in St. Petersburg, the Ministry of Finance, the Department of Agriculture and State Property, the Resettlement Administration, and others (Aronggear, Marlissa, & Ngutra, 2025; Yadi, Fadlan, Parameshwara, Respationo, & Nurkhotijah, 2025).

In addition, the Russian business community expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the Turkestan Governor-Generalship was subordinate solely to the Ministry of War. Entrepreneurs insisted on incorporating the Turkestan region into the unified system of administration of the Russian provinces, that is, transferring the Governor-Generalship to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, the Russian Empire's governmental circles, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, opposed such a transfer. Given the unstable political situation in the country following the events of 1905 and the growing confusion surrounding P. A. Stolypin's reforms, it was more advisable "to preserve the existing system of governing the region and its subordination solely to the Minister of War until more stable times" (Palen, 1910).

According to the government, "before changing the system of governing the region, it would be more reasonable to examine in greater detail how the existing system functioned and what the region's internal situation actually was" (Ozodbekovich, 2025; Palen, 1910). In view of these circumstances, as well as the need to provide the government with the most comprehensive information possible about the Turkestan region, Emperor Nicholas II decided to conduct a special senatorial inspection in the Turkestan region Palen (1910) By decree of June 18, 1908, leadership of the inspection commission was entrusted to Count Konstantin Konstantinovich Palen, a member of the well-known Palen family and part of the highest circle of St. Petersburg nobility (Riyadi, 2025; Widodo, 2025).

The appointment of Count K.K. Palen's leadership of the senatorial inspection in Turkishtan (1908) was more than an administrative decision; it reflected Russia's attempt to secure control over a strategically vital frontier. The empire realized that military dominance alone was insufficient and that effective governance required empirical knowledge of the region's economy, society, and institutions. Palen, a high-ranking nobleman and reform-minded official, was entrusted with assembling a commission of judges, prosecutors, agronomists, and statisticians to gather reliable data on the matter. The inspection revealed serious structural weaknesses in the bridge. Administrative dualism and the

subordination of the Governor-Generalship to the Ministry of War perpetuated inefficiency and hindered economic development. Entrepreneurs complained that outdated regulations and bureaucratic overlap restricted trades and investments. Palen's team addressed this by conducting the only comprehensive household survey of dehkan farms before 1917, producing invaluable data on land use, irrigation, and agrarian practices (Aronggear et al., 2025; Dollu & Karbeka, 2025).

Equally significant was the exposure to systemic corruption. Officials in several provinces were implicated in embezzlement and bribery, with police forces singled out for their misconduct. These revelations divided public opinion: local elites and entrenched settlers condemned the inspection as destabilizing, while many peasants and reform-minded migrants welcomed it as a step toward justice. Newspapers in Tashkent and St. Petersburg reflected this tension, alternately praising Palen's courage and criticizing his disruption of the imperial prestige. The geopolitical context further amplifies the importance of inspections. At the height of the "Great Game" with Britain, Russia needed to demonstrate effective rule over Central Asia. However, Palen's findings highlight both the strengths and vulnerabilities of Russian colonialism. Although many of his recommendations were not fully implemented, the resulting 20-volume report (1910–1911) became a monumental resource for future researchers. It not only documents abuses but also offers reform strategies and remains a foundational source for understanding governance, society, and colonial dynamics in early 20th-century Central Asia.

2. Literature Review

2. 1 Colonial Governance and Administrative Structures in the Russian Empire

Studies on Russian colonial governance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries emphasize the tension between modernization ambitions and a rigid military administration. According to Skvirskaja (2024), the administration in Central Asia was often considered an extension of the military, which prevented the development of civilian structures. The 1886 Regulation on the Administration of the Turkestan Region confirmed the supremacy of the Ministry of War, limiting flexibility in economic management, and curbing political autonomy for local officials. Several scholars argue that the dualism of authority—where multiple ministries, such as the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Finance, and others, exercised overlapping powers—created inefficiencies and conflicts of interest (Avazov, 2025). This reflects the dilemma of Russian colonialism: whether to maintain strict military control or adopt a more civilian and flexible administrative model, as in the empire's core provinces (Mamura, 2025; Mustafayev, 2025).

2.2 The Role of Inspections in Imperial Governance

Senatorial inspections were not new to the empire, but the one led by K.K. Palen occupies a special place in the literature. Vasilyev (2018) notes that Palen's reports were unique in presenting a comprehensive evaluation of administration, economy, and social life. Unlike other inspections that remained largely formal, Palen incorporated empirical methods, such as household surveys of dehkans, interviews, and statistical analyses. In Russian historiography, Palen's inspection is regarded as an attempt to assess the durability of Russian colonialism in Turkestan during a period of global transition toward multipolarity (N.B. A Makhmudova, 2015). Its outcome was not only administrative but also historiographical, as it left behind detailed records of local conditions (Zaskia, Sukri, & Basir, 2025).

2.3 Agrarian Reforms and Peasant Resettlement

Another important context was the Stolypin reforms of 1906, which sought to resolve agrarian pressures in Russia's central provinces through migration to the eastern peripheries, including Turkestan. Mukhamedova and Wegerich (2018) show that resettlement policies had a dual effect: expanding the colonial agricultural base while simultaneously creating tensions with local populations due to land disputes and water scarcity. Palen's reports support this view by documenting how Russian peasant migration often involved corruption among resettlement officials and generated social dislocation in the dehkan communities. The commission's statistical data on agrarian zonation (valley, steppe, foothill, and mountain) remain a crucial reference for Central Asian agrarian historians (Castañeda Dower & Markevich, 2018). These dynamics underline the broader implications of Stolypin's reforms on the colonial periphery. While officially framed as a solution to overpopulation and land shortages in central

Russia, the migration process often extended imperial control. By populating Turkestan with Russian peasants, the state sought to alleviate social pressures in the metropole and reinforce the empire's demographic and political presence in Central Asia. However, this strategy underestimated the resilience of local agrarian systems and the deep attachment of dehkan communities to their traditional land use practices (Saydullayevich, 2025; Syukur, Wibisono, & Wahyuni, 2025).

Peterson (2016) argue that the settlement policies created a "layered agrarian economy," where Russian settlers were given preferential access to fertile lands and irrigation, while indigenous populations were frequently pushed into marginal areas. This unequal distribution not only deepened socio-economic disparities but also sowed the seeds of resentment that persisted into the Soviet period. Palen's detailed surveys exposed the administrative shortcomings of the resettlement process, particularly the role of officials who exploited the policy for personal gain through bribery and the manipulation of land records. The inspection further revealed that migration disrupted long-standing water management systems, which were crucial for survival in the arid environment of Turkestan. Conflicts over irrigation channels became common as settlers unfamiliar with local customs clashed with established communities. Such disputes highlight the intersection between environmental limitations and colonial policy, reminding scholars that the ecological context of Central Asia is inseparable from its political history. For modern researchers, the data collected by Palen's commission continue to serve as a foundation for understanding the complexities of agrarian transformation in Central Asia. By combining statistical precision with observations of local practices, these materials are indispensable for comparative studies of colonial agriculture, land tenure, and rural livelihoods in multiethnic frontier regions.

2.4 Corruption and Abuse of Power in Colonial Contexts

The literature on corruption in colonial governance emphasizes that frontier regions often became fertile ground for maladministration. In Turkestan, Palen uncovered the widespread abuse of power among the police and district chiefs. Disputed the scale of these findings, numerous officials were dismissed or prosecuted. The significance of Palen's exposure of corruption lies not only in its immediate administrative consequences but also in its long-term historiographical value. By documenting officials' misconduct in detail, Palen challenged the prevailing narrative that colonial administrations functioned with efficiency and legitimacy. Instead, his findings reveal the extent to which governance in Turkestan was undermined by rent-seeking practices, favoritism, and the manipulation of local populations for personal enrichment. This placed the region within a broader pattern of imperial peripheries, where weak institutions created opportunities for unchecked authority.

Several scholars have emphasized that corruption in Turkestan was systemic rather than incidental. It was tied to structural issues such as the militarization of governance, lack of professional training for administrators, and ambiguous lines of accountability between local authorities and metropolitan ministries. In this sense, corruption was not merely a deviation from policy but a predictable outcome of how colonial power was organized. Palen's reports, by naming specific cases and individuals, provide rare empirical evidence of these structural weaknesses. The response to these revelations was deeply divided among the public. Reformist voices in St. Petersburg saw the inspection as a necessary step toward modernizing imperial governance, while conservative officials regarded it as a dangerous critique that undermined Russia's authority on the frontier. Local communities, however, often welcome inspections, interpreting them as a chance to hold corrupt officials accountable. Newspapers of the time documented how residents appealed directly to the Palen, presenting grievances that had long been ignored by provincial authorities.

From a contemporary perspective, Palen's documentation of corruption remains relevant. This allows historians to trace the persistence of administrative malpractice in Central Asia across the imperial, Soviet, and even post-Soviet periods. His reports thus not only illuminate the failures of early 20th-century colonial governance and provide a framework for understanding how patterns of corruption and weak oversight became embedded in the region's political culture.

2.5 Local Society and Responses to Russian Rule

Anthropological and historical research has demonstrated the diversity of local responses to Russian colonialism. It highlights that urban societies in Samarkand and Tashkent were relatively adaptive to modernization, while rural communities resisted more strongly due to land dispossession. In Palen's reports, the local society was divided into two groups: those who supported reform in hopes of justice and those who were fearful of further instability. Local media, such as the Turkestan Native Newspaper, confirmed that the inspection sparked a wide public debate, showing that the colonial society was not merely a passive subject but an active actor with critical perspectives on imperial policies.

2.6 The Geopolitical Dimension: The Great Game

Global geopolitics cannot be separated from the context of the inspection. The literature on the "Great Game" between Russia and Britain underscores Central Asia's strategic importance. Bhat (2020) states that controlling Turkestan was viewed as a bulwark against British threats from India. Thus, the effectiveness of colonial administration had an international dimension. Palen's inspection was a political message: a demonstration that Russia could manage its frontier regions scientifically and effectively. However, these reports paradoxically revealed internal weaknesses, raising questions about the empire's colonial viability (Akhtar & Niazi, 2024).

2.7 Historiographical Value of Palen's Reports

From a historiographical perspective, Palen's reports are regarded as unique primary source. Sobirovich (2020) argues that these documents not only record facts but also reflect how colonial officials perceived modernity, law, and Muslim society. These 20 volumes provide an expansive portrayal of the social, economic, and political dynamics of Central Asia before 1917. N.B. A Makhmudova (2023) stresses that the reports' chief value lies in their completeness and reliability, particularly regarding agrarian systems and land use. Modern scholars use them to study issues ranging from Islamic legal reforms and resource exploitation to interethnic relations in colonial settings.

2.8 Comparative Perspectives on Colonial Inspections

Comparative colonial literature notes that inspection practices were not unique to the Russian Empire. In British India, for instance, annual administrative reports functioned as tools of control and as repositories of colonial knowledge. In French Algeria, inspections ensured the integration of legal and economic systems with the metropole. In contrast, Palen's inspection stands out for combining oversight, scientific data collection, and moral evaluation of Russian colonialism itself. This illustrates a shift from a purely military administration to a more "scientific" colonial method, though still shaped by political interests and imperial biases (Kolsky, 2015).

2.9 Limitations and Critiques in Existing Literature

Despite their richness, Palen's reports are not without limitations. First, they were framed by colonial perspectives, meaning indigenous voices were underrepresented (Tursunmetov, Azimbayev, Pugovkina, Tukhtayeva, & Jamshid, 2020). Second, some scholars argue that while Palen was critical, he nonetheless promoted the problematic narrative of Russia's civilizing mission. Third, their practical impact was limited, as many of his reform recommendations were ignored amid the political instability that led to the 1917 Revolution.

3. Research Methodology

Count K. K. Palen can be described in terms of worldview as an enlightened colonizer and an enthusiast of Russia's civilizing mission in Asia. The "Russian authority," he wrote in one of the inspection reports, "has brought global civilization to Turkestan in the form of railways, the telegraph, postal services, the cultivation of new crops, and manufacturing industry, thereby bringing the region closer to Europe and integrating it into global trade" (Palen, 1911). In practice, however, the region was regarded as "1) from the standpoint of financial policy, as a source of state revenue and as a new market for domestically produced goods; 2) from the standpoint of colonial policy, as a new destination for the resettlement of surplus population from the central provinces" (Palen, 1911). Due credit must be given to K. K. Palen as a model high-ranking official: in the course of the inspection, and especially while

organizing the collected materials, his strong civilizing convictions were significantly shaken by the reality he encountered in the region, and he openly acknowledged this.

It is important to note that only highly competent specialists were engaged in the work of the Inspection Commission. Later, in his memoirs, K. K. Palen wrote that he had "assembled a team of young officials, most of whom were personally acquainted with him" (von der Pahlen, 1964). Some of the names of the commission members are given in Table St. Petersburg "Биржевых новостях" ("Stock Exchange News"): "Senator Count K. K. Palen submitted to the Minister of Justice for approval a list of twenty-seven individuals invited by the senator to serve as his associates. Among them were representatives of the prosecutor's office and the judicial magistracy. Senator Palen's associates departed for Turkestan: Tregubov, the prosecutor of the St. Petersburg District Court; the assistant prosecutors of the same court, Messrs. Akkerman, Savich, and Shtempel, as well as several representatives of the provincial court prosecutor's offices and a number of provincial judges" (Vedomosti, 1908). Upon arriving in Tashkent at the end of June 1908, K.K.Palen also engaged local specialists from among the agronomists to take part in the commission's work.

4. Results and Discussion

The inspection began on July 18. Divided into groups of several people, the commission members simultaneously commenced inspections of all five provinces of the region, Syr-Darya, Samarkand, Fergana, Semirechye, and Transcaspian, as well as both protectorates: the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva. The commission members collected the necessary information concerning virtually all aspects of the region's life with great thoroughness and meticulousness. For example, it was found that the data on agriculture and land use in the region submitted by the provincial statistical committees did not meet the commission's requirements, as they did not allow for a detailed study due to the lack of a unified methodology in their compilation. Then, by order of K. K. Palen, the commission members conducted their own full-scale statistical survey within a short period of time. A special "Senatorial Inspection Questionnaire" was compiled, and a comprehensive household census of dehkan farms was conducted in preselected volosts that represented different geographical zones and, accordingly, different types of agriculture with their own land use practices and economic structures. In accordance with the region's terrain and climatic features, five zones were designated for the survey: valley, valley steppe, steppe, foothill, and mountain. The survey covered 29 volosts in 12 districts (out of a total of 15) in the three so-called "core provinces" of the region, Syr-Darya, Fergana, and Samarkand (Palen, 1911).

Today, these statistical materials constitute an exceptionally valuable historical source for researchers studying land use and land management issues in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century. This was the only officially conducted household survey of dehkan farms in Turkestan from the establishment of the region in 1867 until 1917. The information provided is not only reliable but also sufficiently representative, as the coverage of all climatic zones in the region makes it possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of land management and the farming practices of local dehkans. Most importantly, the principles and purpose of the undertaken study leave no reason to doubt the truthful representation of the picture.

During the inspection, Count K. K. Palen personally toured all five provinces and both vassal states. In July–August 1908, he visited the Syr-Darya, Samarkand, Fergana, and Transcaspian provinces and the Emirate of Bukhara. In July–August 1909, he visited the Khanate of Khiva and Semirechye Province. During his inspection trips, the senator familiarized himself in detail with the state of affairs in the administration of the provinces and districts, studying the documents of local offices, hearing reports from their chiefs, and questioning numerous visitors during the receptions. The "Turkestan Native Newspaper" regularly published reports "On the Reception of Visitors by Count K.K.Palen" (Turkishtan, 1908).

In all the provinces inspected and virtually all departments, the commission members uncovered serious abuses of office by officials; however, foremost among these were the unlawful actions of the police. Particularly egregious cases of corruption were uncovered in the Transcaspian Province. The newspaper

“Новая Русь” wrote in the summer of 1908: “Count Palen’s inspection has only just begun, yet already a picture of astonishing embezzlement, bribery, and extortion has been uncovered in the Transcaspian province” (Palen, 1910). Here, the head of the regional administration’s office, Colonel Strzhalkovsky (popularly known as the “Padishah of the Transcaspian Province”), the police chief of Ashkhabad, the office clerk of the regional administration, and many others were brought to trial (Vremya, 1908). In another case, in the Syr-Darya Province, nearly half of the district chiefs were dismissed, and of the seven police chiefs, five were taken into custody for official misconduct (Turkishtan, 1908).

Naturally, K. K. Palen’s inspection caused a great stir in the Turkestan society. The newspaper “Вечер” wrote that his arrival divided society into two parts: the first group, consisting of longtime residents of the region, condemned the arrival of the inspectors and sought to prove that the local administration was not guilty of any particular offense. The second group, consisting mainly of people who had recently arrived in the region and who regarded current events with a sober eye, advocated the need for a radical purge of the “peacefully resting satraps and their henchmen” (Turkishtan, 1908). The Turkestan administration was extremely dissatisfied with the appointment of the inspection and offered covert resistance from the very beginning. “With the arrival of the inspectors in the region”, wrote “Биржевые ведомости”, “an order was issued through the office of the Turkestan Governor-General, to respond to the senator only on questions specifically asked. To provide information in as brief a form as possible”. The article provided the following example: “The senator requested from the office of the Turkestan Governor-General, within three days, a report on the police. The preparation of this report was entrusted, for 50 rubles, to a man who had recently been dismissed from service on Palen’s recommendation for bribery” (Vedomosti, 1908).

The scale of the abuses and corruption uncovered in various departments in Turkestan proved so great that on November 20, 1908, K. K. Palen, together with part of his staff, departed for St. Petersburg “to resolve jointly with the relevant central departments some delicate issues that had arisen during the inspection” (Palen, 1911). By December 14, the remaining members of the inspection had left Turkistan. They returned to Tashkent, led by K. K. Palen, five months later, on April 13, 1909, and resumed the work of the inspection commission until its completion on July 18 of the same year. Thus, the inspection of the Turkestan region was conducted in two stages: the first from July to December 1908 and the second from April to June 1909. In total, this took about half a year, with a five-month break between 1908 and 1909.

The second stage in 1909 proved just as difficult and tense for the members of the inspection commission, especially for its leader. In May, K. K. Palen held a three-week conference in Tashkent with Muslim jurists, during which the main provisions of Sharia law were discussed and clarified in order to publish them as a normative document in Russian for use in “people’s legal proceedings” (as the institution of qadis is referred to in the reports). In June, the senator visited the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva, where he was received with great honor by the Emir of Bukhara and the Khan of Khiva. In early July, K. K. Palen visited the Fergana Province to inspect the progress of work on the development of oil and coal deposits. Overall, it can be stated that K. K. Palen’s inspection brought a certain degree of order to the work of the governor-general’s administration. Dozens of officials were brought to trial or dismissed from their posts. Even before the results of the inspection were finalized, in March 1909 Governor-General P. I. Mishchenko was dismissed, having held the post for less than a year, and General A. V. Samsonov was appointed in his stead.

The reaction of the Turkestan society to the large-scale abuses uncovered by the inspection in the administration and law enforcement agencies was mixed: some welcomed the exposure of corruption, while others felt that Palen’s inspection was “painting an overly grim picture.” In particular, General A. N. Kuropatkin, who headed the Transcaspian province from 1890 to 1898, published his protest in the newspaper “Туркестанский курьер”: “Palen’s inspection greatly exaggerates the picture of widespread extortion allegedly uncovered in the Transcaspian province”. In his view, this was explained by “the emerging tendency in Russia’s political and social circles to demonstrate that military administration in the frontier had outlived its time and that the frontier should be brought closer to general civil conditions” (Kur’er, 1909). In contrast, the subject population of the Transcaspian province

welcomed the very fact of such an inspection, and especially its results. Later, K. K. Palen recalled that "local residents of the province appealed to the Emperor in St. Petersburg with a request to regularly send similar inspections to Turkestan to prevent a recurrence of the situation that had developed in the Transcaspian province" (von der Pahlen, 1964).

The educated part of society in Tashkent and St. Petersburg regarding the causes of the shortcomings revealed by the audit in the Turkestan region was also divided. An article in "Современном слове" found the reason to be that "from the center, taking advantage of Turkestan's peripheral position, they systematically and deliberately sent everything that was talentless, ignorant, and inept. If it was impossible to advance an official in service, he was sent to Turkestan. On the distant periphery, advancements in services occurred rapidly. Therefore, in Turkestan, all government departments competed with one another in the sphere of abuses" (Slovo, 1909). Indeed, such a conclusion was grounded in K.K.'s reports. Palen repeatedly noted the low professional level in all departments of the colonial administration and law enforcement agencies in the region. The senator himself pointed to the influx of adventurers and people seeking easy profit as the main cause of widespread incompetence, noting that they were especially numerous among peasant settlers.

On July 18, 1909, all commission members departed for St. Petersburg, where they began preparing reports on their enormous work during this period. Following them, a flood of complaints about the actions of the inspection team poured into the Cabinet of Ministers from Turkestan. "Санкт-Петербургские ведомости" reported that these complaints were left without action until the senator put all the collected materials in order. Then, they will be published (Kur'er, 1909). K.K. Palen approached the summing up of the inspection with great responsibility. The commission's reports, in 19 volumes, were published in the St. Petersburg in 1910–1911, and in 1911, a 20th volume, containing the "Sharia Articles" that K.K. Palen had prepared back in the summer of 1909 and was released in Tashkent. These 20 volumes of reports, meticulously organized by subject and each addressing a specific pressing issue of governance or administration, constitute a unique and exceptionally rich source, remarkable for the completeness and reliability of the collected material, on the history of colonial Turkestan in the early 20th century, although their subsequent official fate was far from enviable. Richard A. Pierce, the author of the preface to K.K. Palen's memoirs state, "Palen's reports were published in enormous quantities, but then, like the reports of many previous investigations, they were forgotten. In Turkestan, affairs went on as usual, without change, until the revolutionary year of 1917" (N.B. A Makhmudova, 2015).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Today, the materials of K.K. Palen's inspection constitutes an integral part of the source base for studying the history of Uzbekistan within the broader context of Central Asia. They are valued as a comprehensive source that provides information not only to historians, but also to political scientists and specialists in geopolitics, both about specific events and facts characterizing the early 20th century and about the broader picture of Russia's colonial policy. This includes the dynamics of change in the region's economic and cultural life, the development of commodity–money relations, and the exploitation of natural resources from the day the territory was incorporated into the empire itself. K.K. Palen presents all these processes from both positive and negative perspectives. However, it is important to emphasize the methodological potential contained in the approaches and studies of K.K. Palen and the members of his commission are of practical interest not only to academic historians but also to political scientists and specialists in geopolitics.

5.2 Suggestion

The historiographical value of K. K. Palen's inspection reports offers several important recommendations for research and practice. First, future studies should combine Palen's data with indigenous sources, such as local chronicles and oral traditions. While comprehensive, his reports reflect colonial perspectives; integrating local voices would create a more balanced historical narrative for Turkestan. Second, the methodological tools employed by Palen—household surveys, zonal classifications, and systematic statistical collections —remain relevant today. Contemporary scholars

can adapt these approaches to analyze land use, agrarian reforms, and governance in modern-day Central Asia. By doing so, Palen's framework connects historical insights with ongoing issues of migration, rural transformation, and resource management.

Third, political scientists and geopolitics specialists should view Palen's reports as case studies of imperial governance. They illustrate how empires manage peripheral regions through a mix of authority and compromise. Such lessons remain useful in debates on decentralization, anti-corruption reforms, and integrating diverse populations into national systems. Fourth, educators and policymakers can employ Palen's findings as teaching materials and policy references. University programs in history, political science, and international relations would benefit from exposing students to the complex records of colonial administration. Simultaneously, policymakers may draw lessons from Palen's documentation of corruption and administrative inefficiency to develop more transparent and responsive governance practices. Finally, the digitization of inspection reports should be prioritized. Making these 20 volumes accessible online and available in multiple languages would expand their global use, facilitate comparative studies of colonialism, and preserve them for future generations. Thus, Palen's legacy continues to provide insights for historians and modern governance and policy development in Central Asia and beyond.

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