Distribution Network in the Area of Imperial
Social Practice in the XIX\textsuperscript{th} Century

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- Dad, a camel costs one tenga!
- Where shall I take this tenga?
- Dad, the camel already costs a thousand tenges.
- Here, sonny, take a thousand tenges

(Uzbek proverb)

Abstract: We will try to present the trade environment as some cultural layer (in the 19\textsuperscript{th}- the beginning of the 29\textsuperscript{th} centuries), determine its professional code, conditions of interaction, perception of “Other” on the background of commercial landscape.

As an object of our research we have selected merchants who, on the strength of their business show high level of mobility and adaptation. The commercial sphere is characterized with social activity which demands flexibility and reaction rapidity. These create different situations when the trade people react on perception, create and model interaction model by themselves.

Goal: To examine cultural patterns in ethnic variety of trade community (on the example of Russian, Chinese, Tatar, central Asian merchants).
Trade ways are unique because they have two return points and growing points. They allow us to change the angle of relations seeing: from the imperial center to the periphery and back. In this relation we beg to problematize the aspect of the imperial center - What is the Center of Empire?

If to study it from the point of view of political history, the center is in the capital of the Russian empire. Social history allows us to see the imperial center on the territory of periphery, paraphrasing a well-known conceptual expression of Dipesh Chakrabarty, to make “provincializing Russia”.¹ (Chakrabarty D., 2000)

Commercial contacts here are manifestation of social activity of people but not ethnos or religions. Representatives of different countries do business in the context of establishing and strengthening trade networks, they are under creative strategies where there is no place for violence, invasion. Gaining confidence, supporting own economic significance in strengthening personal trade contacts are at the same time conductors of imperial traditions and rituals, languages, and categories having imperial sense of domination and subordination.

**Key words:** Merchants, social activity, Central Asia, empire.

**Introduction**

Merchants, saudagers, alypsatary, 商人 shan-gen or 卖方 miy-fan were the words for traders on imperial spaces of commerce,

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brokerage, and transportation. Christians and Moslems, the Chinese, Bokharans, Siberian merchants, the merchants of Moscow, Kazakh bais, Tatarian merchants, guests and citizens were all members of many faces trade community. They all present many faces trading community of the newest time.

We will try to analyze different situations of trade interaction on the example of the international trade participants of the Altay region having various written sources of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries as the basis.

We have chosen merchants as the research subject because they demonstrated high level of mobility and adaptation because of their professional activity.

The commercial sphere is characterized with social activity which demands flexible and fast reaction. This creates different situations when the merchants react, make and simulate the interaction process. Within the network of this paper we will examine different situations of the trading society social activity (on the example of Russian, Chinese, Tatar merchants) that appeared on the background of cultural diversity.

Why social activity? Social activity is a definite system of actions, means, and ways used by an individual or a social group to change other individuals or group’s behavior, outlook, or point of view. The basis of the social activity is made by the contacts without which there is no desire to cause some definite reactions of an individual or a group, to change their behavior.

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do business in the context of establishing and strengthening trade networks, they are under creative strategies where there is no place for violence, invasion. Gaining confidence, supporting own economic significance in strengthening personal trade contacts are at the same time conductors of imperial traditions and rituals, languages, and categories having imperial sense of domination and subordination. And the social actions are formed on the basis of culture background being the basis category for the society development and functioning.

For us, trade ways are unique because they have two return points and growing points. They allow us to change the angle of relations seeing: from the imperial center to the periphery and back. In this relation we beg to problematize the aspect of the imperial center - What is the Center of Empire?

What is empire provinces? If we study it from the standpoint of geographic determinism, we can easily imagine the center surrounded by the provinces. But, if we transfer to the colonized provinces, we can see the art of imperial center “reproduction” on the outlying districts, in the flow of the social processes.

We will study the area of cross cultural interaction within the trading network on the example of East Kazakhstan as one of the boundary sites of the Russian Empire colonial provinces.

East Kazakhstan territory was a part of Semipalatinsk oblast with the administration center in Semipalatinsk. During the studied period the region included domain of the middle zhuz Kazakhs (tribes of Nayman, Kypchak, Argyn). Semipalatnaya fortress was founded in 1718 as a bordering and military-pivotal basis, upon its growth it became an important trade point between Russia and Kazakhstan and later, between
Russia, Central Asia and West China. Merchants from Djungaria, Kalmykia, Kokand, Bukhara, Tashkent came there for trade. That is why the customs service was established there to control trade operations since 1728. The service subordinated to Siberian Order located on Moscow under the control of State Commercial Board.

The town significance spread far from the limits of the Kazakh steppe influencing the development of Western Siberia, other regions of Russian state, adjoining regions of China.

Semipalatinsk becoming more and more important center of transit trade does not just let industrial and exotic goods from Russia, China, India, Central Asia pass through, but also successfully merchandises with these countries with leather, red juft, meat, honey made in Pre-Irtysh area.

商人 shan-shen or 卖方 mai-fan – Chinese traders

The Chinese Empire was one of the strategically important partners in the international trade.

China as a mysterious neighbor of Russian empire, opponent of nomads in the 19th century became a strong economical partner, and isolation was not in a hurry to open its borders for foreigners.

The book of Edward Werner “Myths and Legends of China” presented ethnic image of the Chinese, description of their traditions, cults, and legends. China had brightly expressed agricultural character of economy, major mass of which was made by farmers, craftsmen, and traders.
Economic duties of the Chinese has strong traditions, “in their environment professional skills were passed to sons and grandsons. Deviation from traditions was considered as outrage against ancestors. The older showed how to work, developed children’s corresponding skills and natural abilities”.\(^2\) (Э. Вернер, 2007)

It is interesting for us the description of Chinese trade characterized according to the principles of moral when they highly valued honesty and devotion to the given word; especially among trade men which was expressed by the proverb “Merchant’s word is stronger than stone”. Along with that such relations were obligatory, and trickery of a foreigner was considered as a sin.\(^3\) (Э. Вернер, 2007)

The author refers the beginning of international trade to the 17\(^{th}\) century when the first trade relations with European countries started. Change was of barter character. The Chinese got brought European goods in exchange for fabric, tea, china, and craftsman items. Bars of silver of different weight were used as payment, the specimens were different during a new emperor reigning.\(^4\) (Э. Вернер, 2007)

China entering the Russian market was accompanied with its cultural discovery for the Russian society, for merchant class, in particular. To the eyes of a Russian, to be more accurate, Siberian merchant class the image of a Chinese merchant image took shape in the process of trade relations. This image was far from Edward Werner’s imagination, it is confirmed by merchants’ notes and their letters about

\(^2\) Эдвард Вернер (2007.) Мифы и легенды Китая. М.: Центрполиграф.
\(^3\) There.
\(^4\) There.
the trade with China. We were lucky to find one interesting article\textsuperscript{5} (С.В. Трофименко, 2011), where there are a lot of such notes and papers of personal origin; besides, we studied correspondence of a merchant Vesenev A.D. from Barnaul about trade with China in Mongolia.\textsuperscript{6} (Письмо Васенева А.Д., 1894-1915)

Observations of Siberian merchants are full of different information about Chinese trade men, the notes contain description of daily way of life (dwellings, national food, clothes, free time), commercial tricks, the Chinese competitiveness, their relation to Mongolians. All this talks about open interest of Russian partners in completely different culture, language, and traditions; at the end of the day it was interest in China culture, its originality.

Referring to composition of Pozdneev D.M.\textsuperscript{7} (Позднеев Д.М.,1896), the article author uses several ethnographic observations that describe strictly regulated the Chinese way of life.

For example, “they noted a Chinese special way of living and activity there. There was a whole system of prohibitions and limitations. Each Chinese had to get a special permitting certificate – «pyao» for a year, and he had to inform the local administration about any moving. Any violation threatened with deportation and deprivation of the trade ticket. The Chinese in Mongolia are first of all presented with trade men and craftsmen”.

\textsuperscript{5} С.В. Трофимenko (2011) Китайский купец в Монголии глазами русских предпринимателей и исследователей (вторая половина XIX – начало XX в.). Известия АГУ, № 4-1 (72).
\textsuperscript{6} Государственный Архив Алтайского края.
\textsuperscript{7} Позднеев Д.М. (1896). Монголия, её экономическое положение, торговля и промышленность. – Санкт-Петербург.
Chinese commercial activity was stimulated with the opportunity to earn a share, since that moment he (a Chinese) could take part in firm financial operation getting a share from total profit. Naturally, the percent was rather trifling.⁸ (С.В. Трофименко, 2011).

Pozdneev’s observations are supported by the author with the note of Baranov I.P. who uses a Chinese expression: “Er’ zhen’tun’ - sin’tsi li tszin’” - “union of two people is a sharp sward that cuts metal”. This let them survive and successfully do business even under conditions of hard competitive fight:” ideal internal discipline among Chinese merchants that keeps Chinese trade firms within the network of moderate competitiveness and creates solidarity among them” (1917 г.).⁹ (С.В. Трофименко, 2011)

The Chinese preferred to live in traditional houses with thin walls, windows covered with paper and wooden shutter in severe climate of Mongolia. In winter the Chinese warmed their houses with heated from street stove bench and.

Dinners took a significant place in the Chinese daily life. Their duration counted with hours and menu included tens of dishes. It was necessary to taste each dish. It was rather hard to stand such long and satiated meal. Nevertheless, in spite of weak image a Chinese is incredibly patient and enduring”.¹⁰ (С.В. Трофименко, 2011).

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⁸ С.В. Трофименко (2011) Китайский купец в Монголии глазами русских предпринимателей и исследователей (вторая половина XIX – начало XX в.). Известия АГУ, № 4-1 (72).
⁹ There.
¹⁰ С.В. Трофименко (2011) Китайский купец в Монголии глазами русских предпринимателей и исследователей (вторая половина XIX – начало XX в.). Известия АГУ, № 4-1 (72).
The Chinese cultural level also attracted attention, they noted trades’ low literacy because major requirements in trade were utilitarian knowledge: writing, reading, counting and accountancy.

Of the most interests for us are the data about the Chinese cultural leisure-time, S.V. Trofimenko writes about this referring to I. Mayskiy work (1921 г.).

The only and favorite available art abroad was theater, the Chinese went there with great pleasure. In large trade centers there was no holiday without traditional Chinese theatre. They brought actors even from Beijing for performances in Urga. Chinese New year - holiday of spring was celebrated especially pompously.

The Chinese expressed a special degree of priority towards common Mongolians according to Ya.P. Dubrov observations (1884 г.), “…the Chinese deeply despise nomads, they consider them to be of lowers cast, loot at them as at some unhappy pariahs being unable for anything and even being unworthy of a human name. A Chinese talks with a Mongolian with not hidden disgust, aversion as if it is some scabby animal. He does not allow a Mongolian to his table if he doesn’t have to under any special circumstance. A Chinese takes any opportunity to humiliate a Mongolian, abuse him and, show despise”.

The Chinese related similarly the Mongolian religion according to Ya. P. Dubrov, “blind with their hatred and despise to innocent Mongolian the Chinese let themselves chaff lamas, their belief, and

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11 There.
12 There.
taking a chance display disrespect to lama duguns (temples); openly
laugh at and about and being not last casuists, give to mockery
everything which a Mongolian believes in though deep in soul they quite
share his superstitions“.

Chinese trade men were eager to support their trade enterprises
in competition with other foreign companies; on their land they used
their administrative resources against Russian merchants. This was
mentioned by a merchant from Barnaul A.D. Vasenev in his business
letters to Morozov T.S., where misuses of Chinese trade companies
were brightly presented. A.D. Vasenev wrote in one of his letters:
“…Chinese merchants always deal with companies not talking about
senior, and sometimes main high officials from province whose help
with they easily avoid legislative internal taxes and other city payments
from goods”. (Письмо Васенева А.Д., 1894-1915)

The merchant Vasenev A.D. was concerned with the choice of
favorable transportation ways for successful promoting Russian goods,
in this case the preference was given to land way through Semipalatinsk
to north-west Chinese provinces because cheaper sea way could not
support goods sale because of supersaturation of port cities with
European goods. Vasenev A.D. expressed concern about that the Chinese
“…with their intrigues did harm where they could, setting buyers and
local bureaucrats against us; the latter arbitrary rule reached prohibiting
our trade as it was lately in Lanchow”. (Письмо Васенева А.Д., 1894-
1915)

13 There.
Retrieved from State Archive of the Altai Territory database.
15 There.
Opening China for new trade space activated mobility of Chinese merchants and made them quite agile in international interaction. This is explained with of invention a new language - the language of Russian-Chinese trade - “the kyakhtin language”.

Kyakhtin language (Kyakhtin pinjin, Russian-Chinese pinjin, Chinese traditional 中俄混合語, упя. 中俄混合语, zhōng’ě hùnhéyǔ; палп. chzhunye khyn’kheyuy) — pinjin, existing at the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th centuries in the regions of the Amur river, Manchuria and Transbaikalia bordering with China (name from Kyakhta city).

The vocabulary of the Kyanbtin language16 (Даль В.И., 1863-1866) was mostly Russian but the structure was Chinese; words did not change, verb were used in imperative form, nouns and pronouns became determiners in pre-position, thus, the difference between personal and possessive pronounces was lost, etc.. The famous phrase “my your understand not” is connected with the Kyakhtin pinjin/Creole.

There was time in China when this language was taught for the needs of bureaucrats having trade with Russia, textbooks were published, and there were examination commissions (textbooks authors used to call Kyakhtin pinjin “the Russian language”, the sincerity degree of this is not quite clear). They stopped using Kyakhtin language actively in the first half of the 20th century.17 («Кяхтинский язык», n.d.)

Making new dictionary in emperor space became an important demonstration of trade people flexibility imputing their “traditions’ into the countries policy.

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**Tatar merchants**

Tatar merchants were considered as almost of the most enterprising experts of trade art in the Russian empire. Authorities, large entrepreneur, local peripheral elites often ask for their help. The Tatars were entrepreneurs in demand who in many years managed to adapt in the system of the Russian statehood and become its loyal subjects. The success of Tatar adaptation was in the empire loyalty, Christianization and integration of the Tatar elite into noble hierarchy of Russia. These characteristic made the Tatars very important dealers in the empire oriental diplomacy. Deviation from semi-nomad cattle-breeding and settled farming allowed the Tatars to master more profitable niche in economy - trade. It was also supported by the Tatars’ belonging to turco-language world and commitment to Islam opening roads to inaccessible and dangerous for the Russian merchant class Asian countries.

It has been written a lot of historical work, about the role of the Tatars in the Russian-Oriental trade, there have been a lot of Soviet, foreign and modern research.

In one of the collective monograph we find the Tatars assessment important for our research “ the Russian empire expansion going on with the help of multi-ethnic dealers did not just promoted forming original internal space but also expanded the zone of contact of Christian community with the Moslem world”.¹⁸ (Наганава Норихиро & Хамамото, 2011)

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Chamamoto Khami says that in the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century the Tatars began to establish base stations in Kazakh steppes (Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk) and Central Asia (Urgench, Bukhara, Samarkand). The Tatar merchants moved to East Turkmenistan as well. In the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century they took part in frontier fair in east-Turkestan Chugunchak.\textsuperscript{19} (Наганава Норихиро & Хамамото, 2011)

It seemed that the major motivation for trade promoting was foreign economic policy state protection of the Russian empire but the state was not always ahead of merchants but vice versa. In this aspect it is interesting to learn about notes of a Tatar merchant who tried to put way to other countries. Having a brilliant opportunity to learn about adventurous initiatives of brave merchants we will try to imagine their tactics of interaction and establishing important professional contacts.

There are a lot of intriguing details, opening unknown for us space of intercultural contacts in the story of a 2\textsuperscript{nd} guild merchant Abdul-Bali Abdul-Vagapov, Abu-Bakirov.\textsuperscript{20} (П.И. Небольсин, 1850).

The merchant got the idea to start trade in Chuguchak from the stories of Bukhara and Tashkent merchants who were dealing in Chuguchak. The trip was delayed because of unstable situation in the Kazakh steppe where Kenesary Kasymov uprising took place. The merchant’s waiting did not take long “…and finally my patience was lost: I am not able to overcome the desire and thanking the God I started to get ready for business. I have bought different goods being in demand by the Chinese. I collected information about the goods quality . I loaded

\textsuperscript{19} There.

\textsuperscript{20} П.И. Небольсин (1850). Рассказ троицкого 2-й гильдии купца, Абдул-Бали Абдул-Вагапова Абу-Бакирова, о путешествии его с товарами из Троицка в Чугучак, и о прочем. Географические известия. Вып. 2. СПб.
70 camels, took 12 workers and added 15 horses I left Troitsk for Chuguchak. It was in 1815”.21 (П.И. Небольсин, 1850).

On his way to Chuguchak the merchant met a lot of Kazakh auls, where he used all his arsenal of diplomacy. Presented himself to Kazakh fathers he successfully manipulated with his Russian citizenship using such dainty aphorisms as: “Free merchant of great Russia! I answered imitating known manner of Kyrgyz; and then continued, I hope that respecting force and glory of Russia and our Great Sovereign you will not do any harm or hurt to me, his citizen”.22 (П.И. Небольсин, 1850). With those words merchant Abdul-Bali gave the Kazakhs different presents, cut sheep for making traditional Kazakh dish, successfully maneuvering with knowledge of steppe traditions, he observed all their subtleties such as “ber-tugyz”.

“Ber-tugyz” in Russian word for word means “one-nine”; to present somebody ber-tugyz means to present 9 different items making cloths necessity, for example, cloth for three oriental robes (two pieces of the same cloth for each oriental robe), for two bishments, one hat; for one malakhai, broadcloth for chapan (put over oriental robe) and juft for a pair of high boots. Of course, ber-tugyz depending upon the cost of goods may be more or less.23 (П.И. Небольсин, 1850).

Obtaining favorable Kazakh families consent on the territory of Siberian line from the banks of the Esyl to the Ayagoz a merchant was able to go through one of the Tarbagatay slips in Elauli to the family

21 П.И. Небольсин (1850). Рассказ троицкого 2-й гильдии купца, Абдул-Бали Абдул-Вагапова Абу-Бакирова, о путешествии его с товарами из Troitska в Чугучак, и о прочем. Географические известия. Вып. 2. СПб.
22 There.
23 There.
land of Bai-horse man\textsuperscript{24} from there Abdul-Bali went to Chugunchak town where he had to observe the whole Chinese ceremonial for obtaining Chinese authorities loyalty.

A person sent from Kokand khanate taking an of o coal position having his stamp took part in the negotiations of the merchant with the Chinese officials: head of the customs - “tu-galaday”, the governor of Chuguchak - Khab-Amban. The official’s name was Mukhamedgan Mukhammed Sharypov, he was an official interpreter for making the negotiations of Central Asian merchants with Chuguchak government.

Ceremonial talks with Chugunchak governor was supplemented with the merchant’s rich presents, he thought over presents content in Kazan. “I had thought over in Russia, - the merchant Abdul-Bali wrote, which present would be the best for a Chinese official, and after thinking over for a long time I decided to take, really to take first, gorgeous marzhan\textsuperscript{25}, of rare for the Chinese size: its weight was 12 zolotniks and bought for 400 silver rubles; second, bronze gilded French dining-room clock, I paid 300 silver rubles for is; third, I brought extremely skillfully made collapsible dressing table on legs with pretty big mirror; I bought it by chance and paid 100 silver rubles for the second-hand. The fourth and last present from me was a spyglass for 50 silver rubles”.\textsuperscript{26}

The merchant Abdul-Bali travel was successful which lasted for 5 years during the period he obtained the Chinese credibility which

\textsuperscript{24} Bai- horseman is one of the large family branch of naiman tribe who used to be nomads in the area of the Tarbagatay mountains and China, crossing Russian-Chinese state border.

\textsuperscript{25} Margan is pearl (in the translation from the Tatar language).

\textsuperscript{26} П.И. Небольсин (1850). Рассказ троицкого 2-й гильдии купца, Абдул-Бали Абдул-Вагапова Абу-Бакирова, о путешествии его с товарами из Троицка в Чугучак, и о прочем. Географические известия. Вып. 2. СПб.
opened the doors to trade centers of the Russian empire: Irbit fair, Kuakhta fairs in Astrakhan and Orenburg, Tashkent, Chuguchak. Commercial area of the Tatar merchant Abdul-Bali was really imperial, his strong way did not go through steppes and rivers, but through mind and perception of his trade partners. Successful knowledge of other cultures, traditions, and his position in the system of the empire expanded the borders of his influence and contacts.

**Conclusion**

Major method of studying the given problem used by many researchers is describing key historical events and processes within the network of geographical models structured by them.

Basic elements of imaginable territory where Russian-Chinese trade went on include border points which later became twin cities, for example, Kyakhta (Russia) - Khankou (China).²⁷ (Лю Цзайци, 2006) Besides, those trade centers, the scientists include into their geographic model such cities: Odessa, Xinjiang, Petropavlovsk, Semipalatinsk, Blagoveshchensk, Khabarovsk. As we see, the logics of the structure includes major bordering zones with the most convenient land and sea trade ways and whole-sale-fair trade.

Putting a problem, the authors examine the attempts of Russian empire to regulate the trade and fight with arising economic risks and competitiveness with foreign states.

The authors of the studied by us works based on the following key definitions: export, import, competitiveness, exchange, stability,

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market penetration, administration, crossing borders, interstate agreements, Certificate, ticket, capital, duty, tea trade, tea trade way, cultural interaction. If we do not go into detailed retelling of scientific publications,28 (as cited in Дацышен В.Г., 2002) one may note that the researchers did a successful attempt to reconstruct state regulating of trade processes from the part of China as well as from the part of Russia. It does not belittle the value of the scientific works, but on the contrary, it reconstructs the system of legal corridors in trans-bordering space and allows to assess the states political flexibility in that process. Generally, trade relations with China strengthen not just economic power of the empire but also involved many representatives of different categories of merchant class of Siberia, European part of Russia and merchants from Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

But that process was not limited with geographic framework, on the contrary, the trade expanded them and introduced new approaches for trade people interaction.

Joining Kazakhstan to Russia played a big role in that process. Kazakh zhuses become strategically important territorial objects as “Gates to Asia”. Official sources of local colonial administration directly points the fact: “generally speaking, the exchange does not take place

between China and Semipalatinsk oblast but between China and European Russia. Semipalatinsk merchants are just brokers in this exchange”.\textsuperscript{29} (Обзор Семипалатинской Области, 1896 год)

The materials of Semipalatinsk Oblast Review, which presented an official report of the oblast governor, has the statistics of international trade operations. Using these data we made the table were we present the volume of foreign trade in Semipalatinsk oblast. (Обзоры Семипалатинской Области, 1883-1906).\textsuperscript{30}

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\textsuperscript{29} Обзор Семипалатинской Области за 1896 год. – Семипалатинск. Типография Семипалатинского Областного Правления. 1896 г. – С.20.

\textsuperscript{30} Обзоры Семипалатинской Области за 1883, 1895, 1896, 1900, 1901, 1904, 1906 гг.
Кяхтинский язык, называемый там и китайским, русский, искаженный на китайский лад, без склонений и спряжений, с постановкою гласной буквы между каждыми двумя согласными; язык этот неизменчив, увековечен словарями китайского правительства, и им говорят тысячи китайцев и русских; напр.: погули было, гулял, гостил; погули еса, гуляю; погули буду, погуляю, погошу. Птица летай еса, птица летает; лошаки убежи было, лошадь ушла, сбежала. Побелизански,близ.близко; соленыще, солнце; парезеденика, праздник и пр. Даль В.И. Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка: В 4 т. - Спб., 1863-1866.


П.И. Небольсин (1850). Рассказ троицкого 2-й гильдии купца, Абдул-Бали Абдул-Вагапова Абу-Бакирова, о путешествии его с товарами из Троицка в Чугучак, и о прочем. Географические известия. Вып. 2. СПб.

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