

**HEURISTIC POTENTIAL
OF GENERAL POPULATION CENSUSES
IN HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY**

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UDK 94(477.75)"18/19"

DOI 10.15407/mics2026.SE.169



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The article analyzes the heuristic potential of general population censuses as a key source for historical demography, using All-Imperial Population Census of the Russian Empire in 1897 as a case study. It examines the role of censuses in the formation of demography as a scientific discipline and their importance for state governance from the early modern period to the 20th century. Particular attention is paid to the census program, methodology, publication of results, and the structure of its statistical tables.

The study explores the informative value of the 1897 census for investigating population size, social structure, urbanization, migration patterns, levels of education, linguistic and confessional composition, occupational structure, and socio-economic transformations in Dnieper Ukraine at the end of the nineteenth century. Special emphasis is placed on methodological challenges in using census materials, including difficulties in reconstructing ethnic composition due to the absence of ethnic self-identification in the census program, the specific recording of native language and religion, and changes in administrative and territorial boundaries.

The article concludes that despite the ideological limitations of the census program, the 1897 census remains one of the most reliable and informative sources for the study of historical demography, socio-economic history, and modernization processes. Its heuristic potential has not yet been exhausted and can be further expanded through critical analysis, recalculation of data, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: historical demography, population censuses, 1897 census, Russian Empire, Dnieper Ukraine, urbanization, migration, social structure, ethnolinguistic composition, modernization.

The general population censuses have traditionally been the primary source for population history research, and rightfully so. In fact, according to Auguste Comte, they laid an objective, source-based foundation for demography as a science. The attempts to replace them with a sham gobbledygook of various disparate databases have never panned out. General censuses in particular create that credible foundation that the government's policy requires in all areas of society's life, from defense to the sizing and structuring of social expenditures.

Population censuses were conducted as early as in Ancient Rome. Specifically, the Roman Republic used adult male censuses to track its potential military strength. During the modern period, they became indispensable and effective tools for governance. For instance, Canada conducted its first official nationwide census in 1871. Since the mid-20th century, censuses have been quinquennial and, in addition to improved schedules and methods, have been supplemented by municipal censuses.

According to the United States Constitution (Article 1, Section 2), the population is enumerated at least once every ten years, with the country's first federal census dating back to 1790¹. Notably, the USA has a dedicated federal agency responsible for running demographic censuses—the United States Census Bureau.

In the Old World—primarily Western Europe—censuses have a long history: Belgium held its first in 1846 and established a National Registry in 1968 as a database of information about its every citizen. Denmark's history of demographic censuses began in 1769; Finland's—in 1749; France's—in 1801; Germany's—in 1719; Iceland's—in 1703; and Sweden's—in 1749.

Despite acknowledging the need to track the country's mobilization potential, the imperial authorities in the Ukrainian territories under the Russian Empire rule did not recognize the pressing need for a general census until after lengthy discussions at the end of the 19th century. Furthermore, they ignored the new social processes, brought about by industrial modernization, i.e., the formation of socio-economic classes of entrepreneurs and wage workers, stratification of rural and urban population, the artificial nature of traditional statuses, Russians' complete loss of prevalence in the ethnic and national composition of population, the predominance of non-Russian ethnicities, etc.

On January 28 (February 9 O.S.), 1897, the Russian Empire conducted its first and only general population census. It was an event of principal importance in the history of Ukrainian demography and urban studies.

Meanwhile, Census data is underused and often misused in the literature on historical demography and urban history. The huge information potential of census materials thus mostly remains just that—a potential. This study aims to analyze the heuristic potential of 1897 General Population Census data and provide a critical overview of traditional and newly developed methods for leveraging it in historical demography.

1. Constitution of the United States, transcript, National Archives, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

The Census was a survey of the entire population by trained census takers in winter, when migration was minimal. Overall, it was an event of great state significance that involved thorough preparations, preliminary and benchmark surveys, detailed processing and publication of results, the involvement of demography scholars, and a sizeable budget providing for rewards and incentives. These aspects, as well as some others, are worth the attention of Ukrainian state bodies.

Let us start by reviewing the published census results. Throughout 1897–1905, about 200 high-quality publications were released in the First General Population Census of the Russian Empire series, which includes thematic, summary², and regional volumes (89 volumes and 119 books on governorates and major cities). For domestic researchers, it is worth turning to summary volumes and the books dedicated to Ukrainian cities and governorates, e.g., Volhynia, Taurida, Ekaterinoslav, Podolia, Poltava, Kharkov, Chernigov, and Bessarabia governorates and the city of Odesa³. All these publications are available on the internet from the digital vaults of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the website of the Institute of History of Ukraine, which makes them easily accessible.

Each volume includes a preface, a short overview of the main statistical data for the governorate, and two summary tables presenting the population data, distributed by uyezd and city, sex, birthplace, station, faith, native language, literacy, and population density. For example, let us look at the volume with Taurida Governorate data⁴.

Following the preface are 25 tables, mostly combined by multiple attributes, with territorial distribution by uyezd and city, as well as by urban and rural population. There are tables with the data on the present and resident population data, population distribution by household (household member count, presence of third persons and hired workers), population composition by age and sex, as well as by the sex and literacy combination, distribution by the age and marital status, and combination of residents by station (hereditary titles, personal nobility and non-nobility officials, and others). Each social station group is divided into categories: Born in the uyezd of residence, born in the governorate of residence, and born in other governorates and countries.

Table VII contains rather detailed information on the distribution of “non-local” (born outside of their governorate of residence) residents by birth place—a cross-tabulation of place of residence (uyezd/city) and place of birth within the Empire (97 administrative divisions—governorates and regions) or abroad (32 units—mostly countries, with multiple historical regions indicated within Germany; Asia, Africa, and Central American countries are also indicated)⁵.

2. *Общий свод по империи результатов данных первой всеобщей переписи населения, произведенной 28 января 1897 г., в 2-х томах* (Санкт-Петербург: МВД, 1905); *Численность и состав рабочих в России на основании Всеобщей переписи населения Российской империи 1897 г., том 1–2* (Санкт-Петербург: МВД, 1906).

3. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 41, Таврическая губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904); *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 47, кн. 1, Город Одесса* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904).

4. *Ibid.*, 1–3.

5. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 41, 44–55.*

Population distribution by estate is provided with a usual combination: in terms of territory—by governorate/city/rural area, and then similarly by uyezd. The social estate composition includes families with breakdown by husbands and wives of hereditary nobles, personal nobles, and non-nobility officials, Christian clergy, distinguished citizens (hereditary and personal), merchantry, urban commoners, peasantry, Cossacks, allogeneous people, Finland-born people without indication of their estate (an example of double-counting and a source of calculation-related problems for inattentive users), foreign subjects, and persons outside these estates. The last field is problematic because such indicators are a common sign of a social estate crisis, even though this field covers such minorities as foreign colonists⁶.

Table IX is fairly informative, providing population composition by literacy and education (higher, secondary vocational, and general secondary education), social estate, age, and sex, with all the data organized by governorate, uyezd, city, and village. It goes without saying that it includes unique factual material about the actual level of education by age, sex (which gender studies scholars will find interesting), place of residence (cities of various categories and villages), estate, and more, which provides an opportunity to demonstrate the social orientation of education in the Russian Empire.

Table X shows marital status by estate, including the specifics of birth rates in various estates. As usual for censuses, the data is broken down by administrative division.

Popular among the researchers since Perestroika are the data from Tables XII–XVI with the confession data (provided with the usual administrative division breakdown): Orthodox Christians and Edinoverie followers, Old Ritualists, Armenian Gregorians, Armenian Catholics, Catholics, Lutherans, Protestant confessions, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Anglicans, other Christian confessions, Karaites, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and other non-Christian confessions. Table XIII shows the breakdown by language, with the sex of respondents indicated. Tellingly, the Groups & Languages column includes in the Russians category the speakers of “Great Russian,” “Little Russian,” and “Belarusian”⁷. It echoes the Putinist sentiment that Ukrainians are part of the Russian people (even if somewhat spoiled by Banderites) rather than a separate ethnicity. This census also distinguishes Poles and speakers of Slavic (Czechs, Croatians, Bulgarians), Baltic (Lithuanians, Samogitians, Latvians), Romance (Moldovans, French, Italians) languages, Germans and speakers of other Germanic languages (Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, English), Greeks, Albanians, Armenians, Persians, Ossetians, Romani, Jews, Kartvelians (Georgians), Caucasus mountain peoples, Finno-Ugrians (Finns, Estonians, Cheremis, Votians, Mordvins, Hungarians), speakers of Turkic/Tatar languages (Tatars, Chuvash, Turks, Kirghiz), and speakers of Arabic and “Syro-Chaldean” (presently encompassing dialects of Aramaic)⁸.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 94.

8. Ibid., 94–97.

Table XIV offers a combination of three attributes: territorial, as usual in the censuses; confessional according to the criteria indicated above, with literacy indicated in addition to sex for each confession; and native language.

All the language groups mentioned above are classified by administrative division and confession, which means one can find out the number of Russophones by confession in Dneprovsky Uyezd, as well as in Berdiansk, Orikhiv, Oleshky, etc⁹. Importantly, many researchers, journalists, and bloggers reference this table. In most cases, however, they process data incorrectly, as we will discuss below.

Table XV provides population breakdown by native language, literacy, and age groups¹⁰. The respective differences illustrate not just the intrinsic savagery of Russians in matters of education, but also the Empire's actual policy regarding the study (or lack thereof) of the languages of non-Russian peoples, including Ukrainians. The effect of education on estate, mobility, and, finally, the formation of the Ukrainian nation drew the attention of multiple Ukrainian scholars, including Bohdan Kravchenko, the author of the treatise *Social Change and National Consciousness in 20th-century Ukraine*¹¹. The Ukrainian indigenous people's education survey documented an equally terrible situation: The Census distinguished only Karaites and Crimean Tatars, mixing Krymchaks with Jews, and "forgetting" the Cis-Azov Greeks altogether¹².

Table XVI contains specific data on the marital status of various age groups, which may serve as a source for research on the history of marriage, particularly marriage age. In combination with the breakdown by native language, it provides insight into the evolution of marriage traditions across various ethnic groups.

Tables XVII–XIX contain the data about persons with physical impairments (defects of health, speech, appearance), organized by age, native language, and estate¹³. This information is obviously a valuable source for researchers of the history of medicine, health status, dietary peculiarities, ecological situation, socio-psychological state of society, and more. We have never encountered a work by professional historians of medicine that used the data from the 1897 Census, even though general healthcare history works feature some cases of aptly analyzing them¹⁴.

The data on occupational groups (by income source or activity) in tables XX–XXIII have an extraordinary heuristic potential for studying socio-economic history, economic history, and the history of the population's social profile. For instance, Table XX: Governorate-level Population Enumeration by Occupational Groups and Age distinguishes 64 occupations, which were supposed to encompass the widest possible

9. Ibid., 98–125.

10. Ibid., 126–165.

11. Б. Кравченко, *Соціальні зміни і національна свідомість в Україні XX ст.*, пер. В. Івашко і В. Корнієнко (Київ: Основи, 1997).

12. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 126–164.

13. Ibid., 169–183.

14. І. Робак, *Організація охорони здоров'я в Харкові за імперської доби (початок XVIII ст. — 1916 р.)* (Харків: ХДМУ, 2007), 97–98, 263–278.

array of income sources for the Census. Overall, it succeeded, as our estimates show that of 424,547 people surveyed, only 2,217 (0.522%) did not indicate one of the proposed occupations as their own (case in point—the Taurida Governorate)¹⁵.

As to the documented occupations, none of the domestic censuses known to us offers such a detailed list: Administration, Judicial & Police, Military (USSR kept this number secret since the end of the 1920s), Clergy (with breakdown into Orthodox, Other Christians, and Non-Christians), Education, Science & Arts, Healthcare, Convicts (another figure that the USSR did not disclose), and more. Some groups are fairly unusual for today, e.g., Income from Capital & Immovable Property and Parents' & Relatives' Money, which oddly includes the individuals unemployable by age, rentiers, and landlords.

Agricultural Workers are divided into Farmers, Cattle Breeders, and Beekeepers (sic!), even though in reality peasants had to mix these activities, so the division is only theoretical. According to leading scholars of nomadism, even traditional nomads worked the land¹⁶. Equally odd is the separate Fishing & Hunting category, since hunting ceased to be the primary source of subsistence in Ukraine a few hundred years before the Census. That said, one could earn the main part of their income from hunting in the backwoods of Polesia, e.g., by selling the pelts of beavers, foxes, martens, and other fur animals. Meanwhile, agriculture was a complex family affair: children tended to geese, pigs, and calves (as Ostap Vyshnia wrote in his humoresque *How We Used to Study*), women were responsible for the vegetable garden and more, and the hypothetical hunter husband also devoted most of his time to working in his household anyway.

Therefore, farming was the main source of subsistence, while hunting primarily earned money. Budget surveys, a more reliable source, corroborated this picture¹⁷. It was a typical situation for semi-subsistence and subsistence farming households. At the same time, fishing and livestock provided livelihoods for specialized commodity businesses. Obviously, these nuances had to be factored in while perusing the Census materials.

Mining (Group 22: Ore Extraction & Mines) and metallurgy are also distinguished as separate industries. Rather detailed is the analysis of manufacturing industry—fields 24–33: processing of certain products of agriculture (livestock produce, fiber crops, tobacco), woodworking, metalworking, distillation, and food & beverage industry (indicated as “Processing of Plant and Animal Foodstuffs”). Also distinguished were the printing, manufacturing of tools, equipment, and clocks (with toy manufacturing somehow included, too), jewelry, light industry, construction, and the “Manufacture of Carriages (Animal-drawn Vehicles) and Wood Vessels”¹⁸.

15. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 184–185.

16. А. Хазанов, *Кочевники и внешний мир* (Алматы: Дайк-Прес, 2002), 61–93.

17. В. Калініченко, *Селянське господарство України в період непу: історико-економічне дослідження* (Харків: Основа, 1997), 250–267.

18. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 184.

Odd but characteristic for the Empire of that time are the occupation groups in the transportation industry: “Waterborne Transportation,” railways, “Carrier’s Trade” (remember the draymen of Odesa and coach drivers in cities?), and other land vehicles. Fittingly for the social era, “Post, Telegraph & Telephone” is a separate group.

The Census devoted much attention to Finance and Trade, which accounted for 25% of all groups (16 out of 64). Specifically, it distinguished banking establishments, intermediate trade, and 11 types of trade: general; cattle; grain; other agricultural produce; construction materials and fuel; household utensils; metals; machinery and weaponry; clothes, leather, and fur; luxury and devotional articles; peddling and retail delivery trade (apparently, the predecessors of today’s online trade and takeaway), and more¹⁹.

Table XXI: Population Breakdown by Occupational Groups and Uyezds/Cities contains crucial information²⁰. Above all, it is the history of economics scholars who can rely on this data to get an idea of economic specialization and the historical traditions of economic activity. Of interest to historical demography specialists will be two population groups provided for every territorial division: governorate, uyezd, all cities, governorate capital, and major cities. These are individuals with independent employment (source of income) and their family members. They reveal the quantitative composition of the families across various occupational (socio-occupational) groups, as well as the number of farming units and businesses by industry.

Sensitive data about the real socio-economic status of Ukrainians, Russians, and other ethnic groups in the Empire, are contained in the information-heavy Table XII: Population Breakdown by Occupational Groups and Ethnicity Based on Native Language²¹. In the territorial aspect, it shows the usual breakdown (governorate, rural areas, governorate cities, uyezds, and separate cities) with 64 occupation groups mentioned above. Horizontally, it distinguishes multiple ethno-linguistic (we will go into this in greater detail later) groups, with Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belarusians collectively classified as “Russians.”

It also distinguishes Poles, Czechs, Serbians and Bulgarians, Lithuanians and Latvians, Moldovans, French, Italians, Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, English, Greeks, Armenians, Romani, and—separately—the rest of Indo-Europeans, Jews, Kartvelians (Georgians), Mingrelians, Lazi, Svane, Georgian Jews by language, and Caucasus mountain peoples. Among the Finnic peoples, it distinguishes Estonians, Hungarians, and others; the Turkish/Tatar (obviously Turkic) peoples are divided into three groups: Tatars, Turks (apparently Ottomans), and the rest of Turkic language speakers.

Let us focus on two circumstances. First, the All-Imperial Census conflated Crimean Tatars (Qirimlilar) with other Tatars, e.g., Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberian, and others, who are considered separate ethnic groups. The Putinist Russia takes after the Romanov-era

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 186–191.

21. Ibid., 192–261.

Russian Empire in that it insists on Crimean Tatars and Kazan Tatars being the same people, native to their autonomous area in the Volga region and therefore bearing no relation to their ethnic motherland—Crimea. Crimea, according to Putin’s logic, is thus just another region or, specifically, a military base of Russia. Everything else, including the interests of Crimea’s indigenous people, is of secondary importance. Second, every ethno-linguistic group is divided into “independent” earners and “family members,” which allows us to single out and analyze the specifics of each ethnic group’s socio-economic structure and the dynamics of traditional and modern family features.

The 1897 Census materials can strike today’s researchers as unusual. As such, the data obtained is a product of the census’s goal and schedule. Conducted by the imperial government as part of the official “conservative policy,” the Census had an ideological goal of affirming the strength of the monarchy’s social foundation and the importance of estate structure, as well as keeping track of mobilization potential, urbanization processes, population size, rural-to-urban and inter-governorate migration, language and religious situation, and more. That said, the Census was not intended to reveal the onset of capitalism and market relations, the formation of new social classes, and the disintegration of traditional social strata.

Therefore, a census schedule of 14 questions was formulated: full name, marital status, degree of kinship to the Head of the State, sex, age, social estate/rank, faith (confession), birth place, place of registration, place of permanent residence, native language, education (literacy and place of study), occupation (source of income) for 64 groups with separately indicated primary and secondary attributes, physical disabilities (hearing, sight, insanity), military service status, and “Absence, Temporary Leave, and Temporary Stay” as of the time of the Census²². As customary for the time, the census was conducted on a per-household basis. Notably, primary census schedules (preserved to a varying degree) are available for Kyiv and Kharkiv governorates and the city of Odesa²³.

After on-the-spot verification, the data for each individual were transferred from census schedules to punch cards. Then, calculations were run on electric accounting machines, and the results were thoroughly processed to produce a summary. The Census materials are thus considered a trustworthy and perfectly valid source in historical demography.

Naturally, the Census had its shortcomings. For instance, some forms were processed incorrectly, while others lacked some required information. However, statistical data at the time (much like now) made no pretense to absolute precision, and these technical inaccuracies in no way cast doubt on the overall results. Methodological and procedural shortcomings may have had more impact on the Census.

Specifically, there was some confusion about the “registered” population (the population liable for military service), which was registered with their rural community, even

22. В. Стешенко, «Переписи населення», в *Енциклопедія історії України*, т. 8 (Київ: Наукова думка, 2011), 130–134.

23. Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.: Каталог сохранившихся переписных листов в архивах России, Украины и других стран, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://metrics.tilda.ws/perepis1897>.

though they actually lived elsewhere, because showing a high number of people subject to military duty had benefits for the community. The level of Ukrainian language literacy, as in the case of all non-Russian languages, was substantially understated because it was estimated based on the number of people who could not read Russian. The Census data suggest Russification on a staggering scale, even if the Ukrainian language literacy declined only apparently.

For example, of 59,176 residents of Kherson, our native city and then-capital of the governorate, 39,700 were indicated as “Russians” (specifically Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians combined) of whom 31.3% (12,461) indicated Russian language literacy, while among specifically Russians the level of Russian language literacy was 33.17% (9,255 out of 27,902). Ergo, the higher literacy rate was due to the inclusion of officials and the intelligentsia. In Kherson, specifically Russians demonstrated their usual disdain toward non-Russians, their language, and culture. Among the Russians literate in languages other than Russian, there were two women.

Of the city’s 11,591 Ukrainians, 27.04% (3,134) were literate in Russian, with the Census clearly documenting discrimination against Ukrainians in education. In the lands of the Zaporozhian Sich, there were 6.66% fewer literate Ukrainians than among the Russian newcomers (a difference of 1/5). Another shocking fact is that the Census documented one (sic!) person (a woman, by the way) with Ukrainian language literacy, which accounts for 0,008% of the Ukrainian-speaking urban residents. The figures speak for themselves²⁴.

The Census was conducted in winter, as it is the season of minimal population migration, and the usual time for demographic censuses. However, in the late-19th-century Russian Empire, some activities stopped in winter, including construction, river and maritime navigation, and others in which rural residents worked as seasonal laborers. Ergo, the 1897 Census understated the intensity of the peasantry’s migration and the number of wage workers.

Also, it disregarded the actual level of urbanization due to its bureaucratic approach to determining settlement status. Some industrial hubs in Donbas, the Dnieper Region, and Kryvbas were not even considered cities, e.g., Donetsk did not gain city status until 1917, even though it had a population of around 30,000 in 1897. Meanwhile, many historical cities effectively lost their status, yet their residents were counted as part of the urban population during the Census—an important aspect to take into account²⁵.

The Census also had other minor shortcomings, none of which invalidate it as a trustworthy and reliable source widely used by researchers. However, one must take several important factors into account when perusing Census materials.

First up, the main issue is population numbers. Administrative borders of the Russian Empire’s governorates are known not to coincide with Ukraine’s current borders.

24. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 47, 157.

25. Д. Чорний, *По лівий бік Дніпра: проблеми модернізації міст України (кінець XIX — початок XX ст.)* (Харків: ХНУ ім. В. Н. Каразіна, 2007), 33–38.

Therefore, mechanically adding up populations of “Ukrainian governorates” will not paint a true picture. At best, researchers exclude Crimea from their calculations for the former Taurida Governorate lands²⁶, even though it hardly makes a difference.

Clearly, the assessment of the Dnieper Ukraine’s population as of 1897 is possible only by recalculating the population within Ukraine’s current borders, as Serhii Chornyî did in his brief reference book *National Composition of Ukrainian Population in the 20th Century*²⁷ Here, we are referring to the accurate recalculation of the 1897 Census figures within the Russian Empire’s administrative borders against Ukraine’s current borders. Moreover, it did not take an effort of epic proportions—just simple calculations and adjustments. Still, the author demonstrated attention to detail, research culture, and an understanding of how sources emerge and how to leverage them to obtain population numbers.

Now, let us dive into the calculation methodology. It is common knowledge that the Russian Empire’s administrative borders in 1897 were very different from Ukraine’s present-day state borders. At the time, the territory of Ukraine included nine governorates: Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev, Poltava, Kharkov, and Ekaterinoslav governorates in full; Chernigov Governorate without the Starodub Uyezd (now part of Russian territory); and Kherson Governorate without Tiraspol Uyezd (now part of Moldova). As for the Taurida Governorate, its territory is now entirely part of Ukraine. When it comes to the 1897 Census, however, it would be more accurate to exclude Crimea from the assessment of Ukrainian demography, as the peninsula did not become part of Ukraine until 1954. Therefore, when analyzing the demographic aspects of history based on the 1897 Census materials, it would be more accurate to include only the Berdiansk, Dnieper (Oleshky), and Melitopol uyezds—the continental part of the Taurida Governorate.

However, literature tends to “forget” to include parts of the Bessarabia, Kursk, Voronezh, Orel, and Minsk governorates and the Don Host Oblast in the calculation. Of the former Bessarabia Governorate, for example, Akkerman (presently Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy), Izmail, and Khotyn uyezds are now Ukrainian territories. Akkerman and Izmail uyezds are part of Ukraine’s southern historical region of Bessarabia. The southern part of Bessarabia is now part of independent Moldova. Khotyn Uyezd of Bessarabia Governorate is a historical and geographic region (land) included in the historical and geographic region of Bukovina and currently part of the Chernivtsi Oblast of Ukraine.

Kursk Governorate’s Putivl Uyezd is located within the boundaries of the present-day Sumy Oblast, warranting its inclusion into Ukraine while conducting historical or demographic research based on the 1897 Census materials²⁸. However, the Kursk Governorate data establish another precedent. The former territory of the Putivl Uyezd is now only partially included in Ukraine, with Krupetsk Volost remaining in Russia. How-

26. В. Константинова, *Урбанізація: південноукраїнський вимір (1861–2004 роки)* (Запоріжжя: АА Тандем, 2010), 499–502.

27. С. Чорний, *Національний склад населення України в ХХ сторіччі: довідник* (Київ: ДНВП «Картографія», 2001).

28. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

ever, recalculating the 1897 Census materials accurately with due regard to Krupetsk Volost is “impossible for lack of more detailed 1897 Census data”²⁹. The same is true for a few other territories.

E.g., two parts of the Kursk Governorate’s Grayvoron Uyezd—the villages of Myropillia and Krynychne (presently Solidarne)—as well as a part of Belgorod Uyezd, are currently part of Ukraine. Of the Oryol Governorate’s 1897 territory, several villages in the Sevsk Uyezd are now in Ukraine: Fotovyzh, Baranivka, Demyanivka, Muraviynia, Tovstodubove, Mykytske, Rozhkovychi, and Sytne, to name a few. Of the former Minsk Governorate, the part of Polesia on the Ukrainian–Belarusian ethnographic border previously part of the former Rechytsa, Mozyr, and Pinsk uyezds, i.e., Liubeshiv, Morochne, Ugrinichi, Berezove, and Kukhitska Volia volosts, is now the Ukrainian territory.

The easternmost territories of Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions used to be part of the Donetsk and Taganrog uyezds of the Don Host Oblast. Stanytsia Luhanska (the name itself is very conspicuous), a town in the present-day Luhansk Oblast of Ukraine and formerly part of the Donetsk Okrug of the Don Host Oblast, came into the spotlight due to the 2014 and 2022 hostilities during the Russo–Ukrainian War. Before the Russian occupation, Stanytsia Luhanska was home to the Museum of Don Cossacks³⁰. Many Don Cossacks’ descendants also live in the second former stanitsa (an administrative division similar to present-day territorial communities) of the Don Cossacks—Novonikolayevskaya, in the Taganrog Okrug of the Don Host Oblast (presently the city of Novoazovsk in the Donetsk Oblast of Ukraine). Another example that comes to mind is the present-day village of Daryino-Yermakivkla, a former Cossack hamlet (though Cossacks still called it a village) in the Don Host’s Novocherkasskaya Stanitsa.

Of the Voronezh Governorate, the former Troitske Volost of Valuyky Uyezd (the present-day village of Troitske in the Svatovo Raion of Luhansk Oblast), which included about 60 settlements, is now Ukrainian territory. And the list of changes similar to those mentioned above goes on.

Clearly, the problem of contrasting Ukrainian and Russian state border adjustments in 1991 and the administrative divisions of 1897 deserves additional study³¹. Also, one should keep in mind that a considerable amount of Ukrainian territory became part of Russia and Belarus under Soviet rule. It bears emphasizing once more that the lack of the 1897 Census primary documents prevents the accurate recalculation of respective data within the current Ukrainian borders. Presently, the most consistent population figures for Dnieper Ukraine (then under Russian Empire rule) from the 1897 Census are available in the reference book by cartographer Serhii Chorny³², whose calculations are

29. Ibid., 37.

30. Т. Водотика і Л. Савенок, «Історія Слов’яносербії в контексті історичної регіоналістики», *Регіональна історія України* 4 (2010): 81–97.

31. Г. Єфіменко і С. Кульчицький, «Кордони державні України, принципи та історична практика їх визначень», у *Енциклопедія історії України*, т. 5 (Київ: Наукова думка, 2008), 137–142.

32. Чорний, *Національний склад*.

definitely undervalued in scientific literature. Still, all that does not invalidate the census data and attests to a part of the 1897 Census problems being resolvable.

Another nuance in using the 1897 Census materials concerns the differences in administrative structure between present-day and 19th-century Ukraine. More precisely, it is a broader issue of correspondence between the modern administrative structure and the administrative affiliation of cities, villages, and regions in 1897. What makes this issue relevant to the 1897 Census is that its statistics are used in academic circles.

In scientific works, for instance, it is eliminated through more or less accurate geographic definitions, e.g., Right-bank Ukraine (Kyiv, Volyn, and Podolia governorates), Left-bank Ukraine (Chernihiv, Poltava, and Kharkiv governorates), and the South of Ukraine (Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, and Taurida governorates). Although in such a case, only the absolute figures for Right-bank Ukraine can be considered accurate without factoring in the above-mentioned specifics of the 1897 Census as a source, this does not affect the analysis of trends and the evolution of historical progress³³.

The situation is worse in the case of regional studies and non-fiction publications, as well as works on the history of science and technology or the history of pedagogy, museum exhibits, and more. In the volumes of *The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR* dedicated to the history of Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and other oblasts, the use of 1897 Census data for any given oblast is purely illustrative. They are mentioned in texts about cities and raion centers, with only occasional references to the uyezds that overlap most closely with the respective oblast's borders. Sometimes, it results in amusing incidents, e.g., the present-day Kherson Oblast being conflated with imperial Kherson Uyezd (even though the uyezd's territory overlaps the present-day Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts in almost equal parts), or even the Kherson Governorate, which gives a wrong impression of the historical process.

The 1897 Census materials require numerous calculations for each figure. E.g., the ballpark estimate of the present-day Kherson Oblast's population in 1897 must include half of the population of the Kherson Governorate's Kherson Uyezd, the entire Dneprovsky Uyezd, and a third of the Taurida Governorate's Melitopol Uyezd. The Census's every figure needs recalculating, and such is the professional approach.

Still, a simple recalculation of 1897 Census data cannot help determine the population's ethnic (national and ethno-national) composition. It bears reminding that the Census's schedule did not provide for ascertaining the population's ethnic (national) self-identity, the most accurate indicator of ethnic affiliation. Indeed, this attribute is questionable, too, given there is no proven data on the atmosphere within the society (e.g., political pressure, force-major circumstances of war, and more), albeit there is no better statistically measurable indicator at the moment.

33. Я. Грицак, *Нарис історії України: формування модерної української нації* (Київ: Генеза, 1996); Ф. Турченко і Г. Турченко, *Південна Україна: модернізація, світова війна, революція (кінець XIX — 1921 р.)* (Київ: Генеза, 2003).

The Census defined only 1.5 ethnic attributes. About one and a half of at least ten. The first is language, as the Census recorded the population's "native tongue"³⁴. However, as mentioned earlier, this attribute had a very specific purpose (it encompassed only people who were not literate in Russian) and the actual number of Ukrainian speakers was thus substantially understated. Given that "Little Russians" were considered part of the "Russian people" in the Russian Empire, it is understandable. Also, everybody who could speak Russian and write in Russian was considered Russian, which echoes the foundational principle of Putin's "Pax Russica" narrative. Besides, amid sweeping Russification, the Ukrainian language could by no means be considered a universal ethnic marker: So much so, that even after 35 years of Ukrainian independence and throughout the Russo-Ukrainian War, the situation has been no different. Therefore, in relation to language as an ethnic marker in the context of the 1897 Census materials, one must keep in mind the origin and significance of the data in question, as well as the impracticality of mechanically equating the number of Ukrainian speakers with that of Ukrainians in general.

The second ethnicity attribute in the Census materials was faith. However, establishing faith as a marker of Ukrainian ethnicity under the 1897 Census is even more problematic. Usually, religion is a valid ethnic marker when it is part of friend-or-foe identification and contributes to a community's understanding of its dissimilarity (juxtaposition) to others. The classic cases of that are, e.g., Jews, Armenians, and Poles, while for Ukrainians, it is true only for the Western diaspora or if living under foreign rule, with another religion or confession being predominant. In the Russian Empire, the Russian church played a significant role in the Russification of Ukraine and its population.

Consequently, Table XII: Population Distribution by Confession from the Census materials on, e.g., Chernigov Governorate (similar tables are available for every governorate) that offer such categories as Orthodox Christians & Edinoverie Followers, Old Ritualists & Orthodox Christian Deviationists, Armenian Gregorians, Armenian Catholics, Latin Catholics, Reformed Protestants (Presbyterians), Baptists, Mennonites, Anglicans, Followers of Other Christian Denominations, Karaites, Jews, Mohammedans, and Followers of Other Non-Christian Denominations provides no means to identify Ukrainians³⁵. Still, the data give an idea about the numbers of some other ethnic groups. E.g., estimating the numbers of such ethnic and confessional groups as Karaites is rather straightforward with this kind of categorization³⁶.

Census materials include the Population Distribution by Faith & Native Language contingency table for the Chernigov Governorate³⁷. It provides the cross-tabulation

34. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, *Черниговская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 112–115.

35. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, 110–111.

36. С. Водотика і Л. Савенок, «Походження кримських караїмів: аналіз існуючих концепцій і шляхи пошуку істини», *Чорноморський літопис* 3 (2011), 89–91.

37. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, 116–137.

of Native Language and Faith attributes by traditional administrative divisions (governorates, governorate's rural population, governorate's cities, and uyezds, with a breakdown by city). The Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox Christians thus can be singled out as the closest to Ukrainians in terms of identification. If mechanically equating Ukrainian speakers to Ukrainians, it would be more appropriate to speak of an ethno-linguistic group rather than an ethnic one. Still, in the literature, Ukrainian speakers and Ukrainians are often treated as the same for simplicity's sake. Naturally, the data from the dedicated Native Language table and cross-tabulation of Native Language and Faith differ.

Take the Poltava Governorate data, for example. The native-language sample spans 2,778,151 individuals, of whom 92.98% (2,583,133) indicated Ukrainian as their native language. Our calculations thus show that, based on the Census data, the Ukrainian ethno-linguistic community accounted for 92.98% of the population of the Poltava Governorate³⁸. The Native Language and Faith data sample spans 2,778,151 individuals. According to our calculations based on the Census data, 92.94% (2,582,182 people) combine Ukrainian language and Orthodox Christianity faith³⁹. In other words, for Poltava Governorate, the difference amounts to 0.004% or 951 individuals in absolute numbers, meaning those people indicated Ukrainian as their native language, but were not adherents of Christianity.

Now, to the situation in other Ukrainian governorates. E.g., the Native Language data for Ekaterinoslav Governorate spans 2,113,674 individuals, with Ukrainian as their native language to 68.9% (1,456,369) of them, according to our calculations based on the Census data⁴⁰. The contingency table shows 1,453,369 people as being native Ukrainian speakers of Orthodox Christian faith, or 68.18% of the 2,113,674 individuals of the 68.12% sample, according to our calculations based on the Census data⁴¹. Although the difference between the number of Ukrainians singled out based on Native Language alone and that based on the Native Language and Faith combination is seemingly non-existent, it is there and is as large as 0.72%. Obviously, while determining the share of Ukrainians by Native Language alone and by the Native Language and Faith combination, the differences by governorate depended on a range of conditions—modernization pace, urbanization level, ethnic and religious composition, specifics of historical dynamics, etc.

Therefore, it is currently impossible to determine the share of Ukrainians as an ethno-political community based on the 1897 Census results due to the numerous gaps in the primary documentation required for calculations, the existing methods, and, most importantly, the census schedule. Furthermore, it would be incorrect (or even methodologically wrong) to equate population structure by language to ethno-national

38. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 33, *Полтавская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 100–103.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 13, *Екатеринославская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 74–75.

41. *Ibid.*, 76–77.

structure. Regrettably, again, this is the current situation in the literature. Here, Serhii Chornyj also strayed from the right path⁴². A refined approach combining the language and faith attributes would have improved the situation somewhat by adjusting the share of Ukrainians within 1% (on the lower side, compared to calculations based on the language data alone). However, it would have no appreciable effect on the situation. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to refer to either the ethno-linguistic or the linguo-confessional ethno-national components.

Still, the heuristic potential of the 1897 Census has not been exhausted. Specifically, there have been multiple more or less successful attempts to recalculate the data from the Census materials.

For example, Census data has been known to help determine the extent of industrial modernization. Based on the data from the Population Distribution by Estates & Birth Place table (which we covered above) and population numbers, recalculated with due regard to border changes, the degree of urbanization was established as a sign of modernization. Unsurprisingly, Kherson (where city dwellers accounted for 28.65% of the population) and Kharkov (14.74%) governorates were the most urbanized, while Volhynia (7.82%) and Podolia (7.35%) were the least so. Surprisingly, the Ukrainian part of Bessarabia was the third-most urbanized region at 13.08%. The overall revised urbanization level was 11.6%, putting Ukraine on par with the colonial-era USA. As of the end of the 19th century, the Western modernization front-runners had the following urbanization levels: 78% in the UK, 54% in Germany, and 40% in France and the USA. In Ukraine, the 40% level, which Fernand Braudel considered necessary for industrial modernization, was not reached until the 1950s⁴³.

The intensity, numbers, and composition of intra- and inter-governorate migration within the boundaries of the Dnieper Ukraine and the Russian Empire overall are analyzed in the publication *Ad Fontes: Source Capacity of the First General Census of the Russian Empire Population of 1897*⁴⁴. The Other Estates—businessmen, intelligentsia, artisans, laborers, and more—showed the highest level of mobility. This census category was most involved in modernization processes, but most were closely tied to the institutions of traditional society. Migrations thus struck at the foundations of stratification and traditional society, while modernization was still in its early stages by the end of the 19th century⁴⁵.

Comparing the 1897 Census data with the results of single-day city censuses in Ekaterinoslav (Dnipro), Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Kherson (16 in total) held in 1865–1917 provides a better understanding of the Census materials' social and historical significance. Although all summaries of these censuses are yet to be found, and

42. Чорний, *Національний склад*, 8–37.

43. Т. Водотика, «Міграційні й модернізаційні процеси в містах Наддніпрянської України за даними першого загального перепису Російської імперії 1897 р.», *Український історичний журнал* 5 (2013), 127–130.

44. С. Водотика і І. Робак, «Ad fontes: джерелознавчий потенціал першого загального перепису населення Російської імперії 1897 р.», *Східноєвропейський історичний вісник* 16 (2020): 127–139.

45. *Ibid.*, 135–136.

their schedules differed, a comparative analysis of this kind bolsters our understanding of urban history in the post-reform era. For instance, the population of Kyiv doubled from 130,600 to 261,700 between 1874 and 1897. Meanwhile, the number of “gainfully occupied”—the self-employed individuals of the time—increased five-fold from 28,900 to 146,100⁴⁶. This is convincing evidence of the progress in market relations, growth in production and services, and the decline of traditional society. Compared to the leading Western countries, the pace of industrialization was relatively lackluster, but the share of Kyiv residents employed in industrial manufacturing increased by a factor of 5.5 from 1.52% to 8.43% between 1874 and 1897⁴⁷.

Based on a comparative analysis of the 1897 General Population Census, single-day city censuses, industrial and taxation statistics, dynamics of merchant guild certificate issue, and other materials, Tetiana Vodotyka refined the share of entrepreneurs in the urban population’s social structure and justifiably disproved the Leninites’ understanding of the Russian Empire’s social structure as politicized in its form and incorrect in its substance⁴⁸.

Incorporation of the census data (historiographic heritage, population numbers, historical specifics, socio-economic specialization, availability of industrial infrastructure, modernization dynamics, etc.) and the information on reference points for the specific aspects of the urban history as a complex revealed “modernization pioneers” among Ukrainian cities—Odesa, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Ekaterinoslav (Dnipro); and second-tier cities—Zdolbuniv, Zhmerynka, Koziatyn (all three—major railway junctions), Bakhmut (industrial salt mining technology), Mariupol (new technologies for metallurgy using Donetsk coal and Kerch ore), Luhansk (ammunition and locomotive works), Mykolaiv (shipbuilding hub), Elizavetgrad (now Kropyvnytskyi; agricultural machine-building hub of the Ukrainian South), etc⁴⁹.

The attempt at applying the recalculated 1897 Census data to the 64 occupational groups discussed above complements the assessment of Odesa as the modernization front-runner. However, this kind of statistics does not indicate the extent of modernization because the groups are formal and rather estate- and fiscal-related (e.g., Jewelry or Household Item Trading)⁵⁰. To adequately assess the pace of modernization, the sample spans 151,500 self-employed individuals, and the 64 groups were collapsed into just ten: Government, Public Activities, Finance, Industry, Construction, Transport & Communications, Fishing & Hunting, and Service Occupations.

46. Т. Водотика, «Особливості модернізаційних процесів у містах Наддніпрянщини другої половини XIX ст.: нові джерельні пошуки», *Регіональна історія України* 7 (2013), 164–167.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Т. Водотика, «Підприємці в соціальній структурі міського населення Наддніпрянської України в другій половині XIX – на початку XX ст.», *Український історичний збірник* 18 (2015), 120–126.

49. Т. Водотика, «Типологія міст Наддніпрянської України в контексті формування культури підприємництва в другій половині XIX – на початку XX ст.», *Регіональна історія України* 8 (2014), 159–167.

50. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 47, кн. 1, 132–133.

A mere 0.38% were employed in Finance and 14.4% in Trade, which disproves the stereotypical view of Odesa as a financial and trade hub. Meanwhile, the share of industrial employees reached 22.05%. That said, the people actually working in industrial manufacturing accounted only for 28.4% of the overall industrial workforce, with the majority still being employed in pre-industrial areas: woodworking, quarries, food & beverage, and clothing & footwear, where artisanal capacities and technologies remained predominant. The situation in other economic realms was similar. The main source of sustenance for the urban population was the manufacturing industry. At the same time, trade and services were also undeniably important, as emphasized in the article *Socio-economic Profile of Odesa at the End of the 19th Century: Industrial Modernization Progress, According to the Russian Empire's First General Population Census of 1897*⁵¹. However, industrial modernization was in its infancy as of the end of the 19th century, and its progress was more of a quantitative kind and hardly corresponded to the qualitative criteria of modern society⁵².

In conclusion, the situation with the 1897 Census materials is rather controversial. On the one hand, the census schedule was defined by the imperial "conservative" ideology, intended to conceal many socio-economic issues, e.g., ethnic and social structure, collapse of the estate structure, the impact of market relations on the crisis of traditional society, and, ultimately, the extent of the Russian Empire's modernization. Therefore, it is currently impossible to recalculate the Census data according to a different schedule and with due regard to the changes in state borders and the lack of primary materials.

Still, the heuristic potential of the Census is nowhere near exhausted. A testament to that is the generally successful use of its materials to answer the urgent questions of history and historical demography. Obviously, new questions will arise as the social sciences progress, to which the 1897 Census can and must help find adequate answers.

51. С. Водотика і Т. Водотика, «Соціально-економічне обличчя Одеси наприкінці XIX ст.: хода індустріальної модернізації за першим загальним переписом Російської імперії 1897 р.», в *Україна доби модернізації XIX–XX ст.: соціум, цінності, життєві практики* (Херсон: ХДУ, 2020).

52. Ibid., 29.

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