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ОТАРЛЫҚ КЕЗЕҢДЕГІ ТАРИХИ ТҰЛҒАЛАР
ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ДЕЙТЕЛИ КОЛОНИАЛЬНОГО ПЕРИОДА

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The first highly educated person from Zhetysu, Barlybek Syrtanov¹

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Сыртанов

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нская мужская гимназия; Барлы-
бек Сыртанов

This article explores the life and legacy of Barlybek Syrtanov, the first highly educated individual from the Zhetysu region, situating him within the broader context of educational and political developments in late 19th and early 20th century Qazaqstan. The establishment of the Verny Boys' Gymnasium in the 1870s and a charitable foundation for educating local youth laid the foundation for the emergence of a new intellectual class among the Qazaqs. Archival sources document the educational journeys of several prominent figures, including Syrtanov, who later pursued higher education in St. Petersburg. Their academic experiences in the imperial centers of Russia equipped them with the knowledge and political awareness necessary to become agents of national awakening and social reform. At the turn of the 20th century, education was increasingly seen by the Qazaq elite as both a personal and collective tool for progress. Syrtanov and his contemporaries became key figures in advocating for the rights of the Qazaq people, participating actively in the political life of the empire. This article emphasizes the significance of Syrtanov's contributions to nation-building, viewing his educational achievements and public service as emblematic of the broader transformation of Qazaq society during a pivotal historical moment.

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Жетісудан шыққан алғашқы жоғары білімді тұлға Барлыбек Сыртанов

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Бұл мақала Жетісу өңірінің алғашқы жоғары білімді өкілі Барлыбек Сыртановтың өмірі мен қызметін XIX ғасырдың соңы мен XX ғасырдың басындағы Қазақстандағы білім беру мен саяси өзгерістер аясында қарастырады. 1870 жылдары Верный қаласында ашылған ерлер гимназиясы мен Жетісу жастарын оқытуға арналған қайырымдылық қоры қазақ зиялыларының қалыптасуы жолында маңызды рөл атқарды. Архив деректері Сыртанов секілді бірқатар жастардың осы оқу орнында білім алып, кейбірі Ресей империясының университеттерінде білімін әрі қарай жалғастырғанын көрсетеді. Бұл кезеңде білім – қазақ жастарының жеке жетістігі ғана болмай, ұлтқа қызмет етудің маңызды құралына айналды. Империя астанасы Санкт-Петербургте жоғары білім алған Сыртанов пен оның замандастары XX ғасыр басында қазақ халқының құқығын қорғау жолында саяси өмірге белсенді араласты. Мақалада Барлыбек Сыртановтың ұлт мүддесіне сіңірген еңбегі ерекше көрсетіліп, қазақ қоғамының жаңғыруындағы рөлі сипатталады.

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¹ Translation and annotations from Qazaq into English PhD in Chinese History Dinara Saikeneva.

Барлыбек Сыртанов – первый казах из Жетысу с высшим образованием

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Статья посвящена жизни и наследию Барлыбека Сыртанова – первого высокообразованного представителя Жетысуского региона. Его биография рассматривается в контексте образовательных и политических преобразований конца XIX – начала XX века в Казахстане. Открытие мужской гимназии в городе Верный в 1870-х годах и деятельность благотворительного фонда, направленного на обучение молодежи, стали важными шагами в формировании казахской интеллигенции. Архивные источники подтверждают, что ряд видных личностей, включая Сыртанова, получили образование в данных учреждениях, а затем некоторые из них продолжили обучение в университетах Российской империи. Образование стало для казахской молодежи не только личным достижением, но и способом служения народу. Сыртанов и его современники, получившие высшее образование в столице империи, стали активными участниками политической жизни и борцами за права казахского народа. Статья подчеркивает значимость вклада Барлыбека Сыртанова в развитие казахской идентичности, раскрывает его роль в пробуждении и модернизации казахского общества на рубеже эпох.

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Introduction

The boys' gymnasium, opened in Verny in the 1870s created favourable conditions for the development of education in the region and the training of representatives of the local population. The establishment of a charitable foundation for the education of the younger generation of the population of Zhetysu made a significant contribution to ensuring that Qazaq children received secondary education. Archival documents show that at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, young people such as Zheksenbi Dengilbayev, Barlybek Syrtanov, Turlybek Syrtanov, Muqametzhan Tynyshbayev, Isqaq Zhaqsylqov, Tubek Esengulov, Nusipbek Zhaqypbayev, Bazarbay Mametov, Salyq Amanzholov and others were educated at the gymnasium. The beginning of the 20th century was a time of revitalisation of public consciousness and the beginning of a new path of national identity for the Qazaq people. In this historical period, the desire for education and science reached unprecedented levels, and the desire for higher education, especially among young people, was evident. Qazaq youth, educated at universities and specialised educational institutions in the major cities of Imperial Russia, became the driving force of national progress. They aspired not only to their own future, but also to the cultural, social and professional development of the nation as a whole [Qoigeldiyev 1995: 86]. A person who received an education at a higher educational institution in St. Petersburg worked hard for his nationality and defended the interests of the Qazaqs at the beginning of the 20th century. Among the Qazaqs who actively participated in the political life of Qazaq society at the beginning of the 20th century were Baqytzhan Qaratayev, Baqytkerey Qulmanov, Barlybek Syrtanov, Zhakhansha Seidalin, Aidarkhan Turlybayev, Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov, Mustafa Shoqaeov, Zhaqyp Aqbayev, Raimzhan Marsekov.

Materials and methods

Archival documents, especially in the collections of Holding-44 (Zhetysu Regional Administration) of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Qazaqstan, Holding-94 (Verny Men's Gymnasium) and Holding-1 of the National Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Office of the Governor General of Turkestan), Holding-461 (Security Department of Turkestan), as well as materials kept in 14 archival collections of the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg, were widely used as sources for the research work. The archive documents were analysed and used in accordance with the data requirements. The principles of historicism and civilisation were taken into account when writing the article. On the basis of the historicising principle, the history of the liberation

struggle of the 19th and early 20th centuries can be closely linked to other events and phenomena of this epoch, while within the framework of the civilising principle, intelligence was evaluated as a phenomenon that meets the democratic requirements of its epoch.

Analysis

The deeper we delve into the history of the Alash movement, which has occupied a place among the "closed topics" for decades, the more we realise that there are still many undiscovered facets. One of the topics that should be studied is undoubtedly the childhood of one of the figures of the Alash movement, Barlybek Syrtanov, who was educated at the Verny Men's Gymnasium. Among the researchers of Barlybek Studies are Saken Özbeküly [Özbeküly 1996], Dina Amanzholova [Amanzholova 2009], Nurlan Dulatbekov [Dulatbekov 2015], Eldos Toqtarbay [Toqtarbay 2019], Xavier Hallez [Hallez 2023: 230–246] and others. These books tell about the life and activities of Syrtanov in the field of jurisprudence. However, there are still enough unresolved subtleties on this topic.

The works of Manash Qozybayev occupy a special place in the study of the Alash movement, as demanded by the modern public. The scientist studies this complex problem not from the standpoint of the old, great interest, but at a new methodological and theoretical level, based on national specifics and interests, universal human qualities [Qozybayev 1992]. According to Kenes Nurpeisuly, the "Alash" movement in general is a reflection of the national liberation movement launched by the Qazaq national-democratic intelligentsia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries [Nūrpeiisov 1995: 119].

Results

At the end of the 19th century, following his graduation from the Verny Men's Gymnasium in the Zhetysu region, the prominent public figure Barlybek Syrtanov traveled to Saint Petersburg in pursuit of higher education. The life and work of Barlybek Syrtanov have not yet been studied in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Barlybek Syrtanov was a native of the *Matay* clan within the *Naiman* tribe. His lineage is recorded in historical chronicles as follows:

Naiman – Toletgetai – Matai – Kaptaghai – Zholdas – Esenkeldi – Zholan – Asan – Sary – Boribai – Qulshan – Meirman – Batyrqul – Shaka – Syrtan – Barlybek.

Syrtan had five sons and one daughter:

Turlybek (1860–1906),

Kerimbek (1862–1915),

Barlybek (1866–1914),

Batima (1868–1934),

Moldakhmet (1870–1919), and

Kenzhekhan (1872–1917) [Özbeküly 1996: 16].

Barlybek's mother, Kuldariya Bulekbayqyzy, passed away in 1921 [Özbeküly 1996: 16].

Barlybek Syrtanov was born in 1866 in the Arasan volost of the Qapal county, located in the Zhetysu region. The brothers Turlybek and Barlybek Syrtanov began their education and acquired basic literacy between 1874 and 1876 at a two-grade school in Qapal. Archival documents indicate that Qazaq children, having received their initial education in local Russian-Qazaq schools, were sometimes admitted directly into the lower preparatory classes of gymnasiums. Only after passing a series of structured entrance examinations would they be introduced to the curriculum spanning from the first to the eighth grades of the gymnasium. Children from all social strata, aged between 8 and 10 years old, were admitted to gymnasiums. Students could attend gymnasiums either at the expense of the state treasury (Holdinged by taxes collected from the Qazaq population), at their own personal expense, or by receiving named scholarships. The majority of students in such gymnasiums were educated at the expense of the state treasury. Based on the charter for progymnasiums under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public

Education, approved on July 31, 1871, the Verny Men's Gymnasium was opened in the city of Verny on September 1, 1876. Initially, it functioned as a four-class progymnasium and, in that same year, comprised two regular classes and one preparatory class. As of July 1, 1879, the four-class progymnasium was expanded to six classes. By July 1, 1881, it had been transformed into a full classical gymnasium consisting of eight grades.²

Local Qazaq students in the gymnasium studied a broad range of subjects, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, Latin, Russian, Greek, geography, German, penmanship, trigonometry, French, drawing, religious studies, arithmetic, singing, gymnastics, logic, geometry, handicrafts, philosophy, natural science, cosmography, mathematical geography, pedagogy (including didactics and methodology), and law. Each of these subjects was taught in accordance with officially approved curricula, and all textbooks used in gymnasiums were sanctioned exclusively by the educational district. Qazaq students were granted certain minor exemptions. For instance, in the Turkestan region, they were exempted from studying Latin at the recommendation of the Governor-General of Turkestan, Kaufman. In 1882, a decision of the State Council further exempted them from studying both Latin and Greek. Additionally, they were not required to take religious studies (Law of God).

In 1877, a boarding school was established at the Verny Gymnasium. By the beginning of the 20th century, 42 students were being educated there at the expense of the treasury. The gymnasium admitted children between the ages of 8 and 10.³ According to data from January 1, 1891, the preparatory class had 39 students; the first grade – 38; the second – 27; the third – 23; the fourth – 24; the fifth – 13; the sixth – 12; the seventh – 4; and the eighth grade – 6, totaling 186 students enrolled at the gymnasium. Pupils in the preparatory division were divided into groups based on academic performance. They learned to read and write in Russian, to speak the language through practice, and to perform the four basic arithmetic operations as well as counting up to 100. Reading and writing in Russian were taught by the head of the boarding school, who also spoke Qazaq, while arithmetic and penmanship were taught by his assistant. The weekly curriculum included 12 hours for Russian language, 6 hours for arithmetic, and 2 hours for penmanship.⁴ Graduates who completed the full course of the gymnasium received a certificate of maturity (attestat zrelosti). In 1876, when the Verny Men's Gymnasium was first opened, Barlybek enrolled and was placed into the preparatory class. Documents confirming his prior study at the two-grade school in Qapal bear the signature of Zhangazy Togzhanov. Other Qazaq students attending the gymnasium at that time included: Denzhilbayev Zheksenbi, Barlybek Syrtanov, Turlybek Syrtanov, Zhangazinov Kusain, Mambetov Daulet, Kenzhebayev Shymbai, among others.

During his studies, Barlybek demonstrated a strong aptitude for mathematics. His final certificate reflects his academic achievements:

*Diligence – 5, Motivation – 5, Conduct – 5, Russian Language – 4, Logic – 4, Latin – 4, Mathematics – 5, Physics and Mathematical Geography – 5, Natural History – 4, History – 5, Geography – 5, German – 5.*⁵

After ten years of study, Barlybek successfully completed the full gymnasium course in 1886. Recognizing his intellectual potential, the director of the Verny Men's Gymnasium, Dragutin Novak, petitioned the Military Governor of Zhetysu to support Barlybek's continued education in Saint Petersburg. That same year, Barlybek Syrtanov was admitted to the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Saint Petersburg University.⁶

² Central State Archive of the Republic of Qazaqstan (CSA RQ), h. 94, r. 1, f. 129, fol. 24.

³ CSA RQ, h. 93, r. 1, f. 112, fol. 5.

⁴ CSA RQ, h. 94, r. 1, f. 351, fol. 21.

⁵ CSA RQ, h. 94, r. 1, f. 66, fol. 57.

⁶ CSA RQ, h. 94, r. 1, f. 66, fol. 23–66.

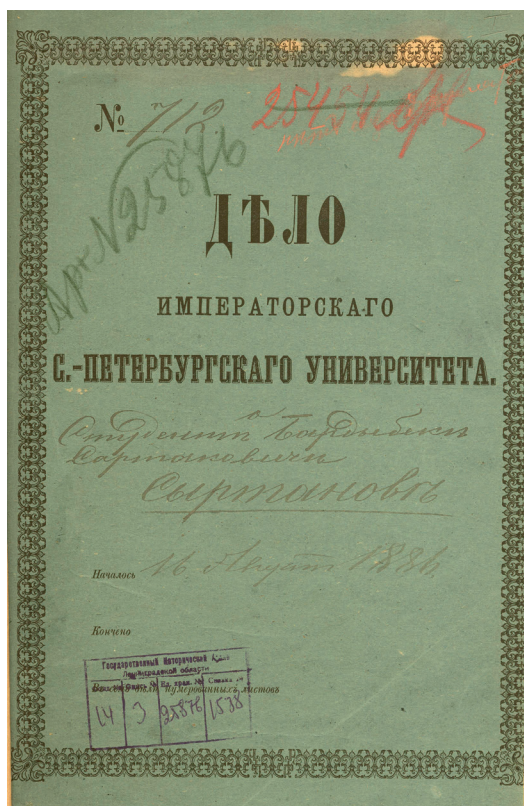


Fig. 1. Title page of the personal file of Barlybek Syrtanov, student of St. Petersburg University. Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg

1-сур. Санкт-Петербург университетінің студенті Барлыбек Сыртановтың жеке ісінің титулды парағы. Санкт-Петербург орталық мемлекеттік тарихи архиві

Рис. 1. Титульный лист личного дела студента Санкт-Петербургского университета Барлыбека Сыртанова. Центральный государственный исторический архив Санкт-Петербурга



Fig. 2. Barlybek Syrtanov, student of St. Petersburg University. Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg

2-сур. Санкт-Петербург университетінің студенті Барлыбек Сыртанов. Санкт-Петербург орталық мемлекеттік тарихи архиві

Рис. 2. Барлыбек Сыртанов, студент Санкт-Петербургского университета. Центральный государственный исторический архив Санкт-Петербурга

In the archives of the Zhetysu Regional Administration, a 402-page file titled “The Case of the Qazaq of Arasan Volost Syrtan Bokin” has been preserved. Upon examination, it provides extensive information on the political situation in Arasan during that period. In 1875, a case was initiated against Syrtan Bokin from the Qapal county’s Arasan volost due to multiple political and administrative conflicts involving two opposing factions: one led by the volost ruler Turysbek Mamanov and Esimbek Tanekin, and the other by Syrtan Bokin. Although a ruling initially sentenced Bokin to exile in the Tomsk Governorate of Siberia, the intervention of his literate sons, Barlybek and Turlybek, succeeded in reducing the punishment to internal exile in the Shilik precinct of the Verny county. This case remains largely unexamined by researchers studying the life and career of Barlybek; their conclusions have often been based solely on Zhambyl Zhabayev’s poem “To Syrtan”.

A petition preserved in the archival collections records the following appeal from Syrtan Bokin, addressed to the Zhetysu Regional Administration:

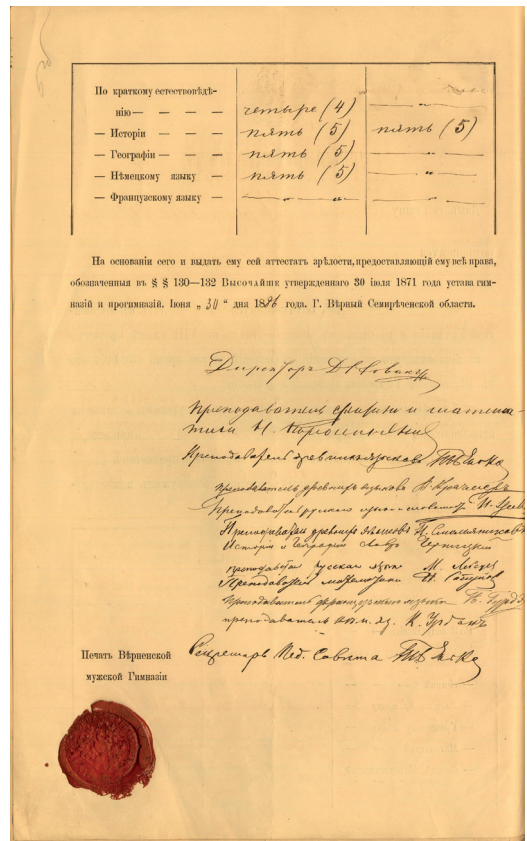
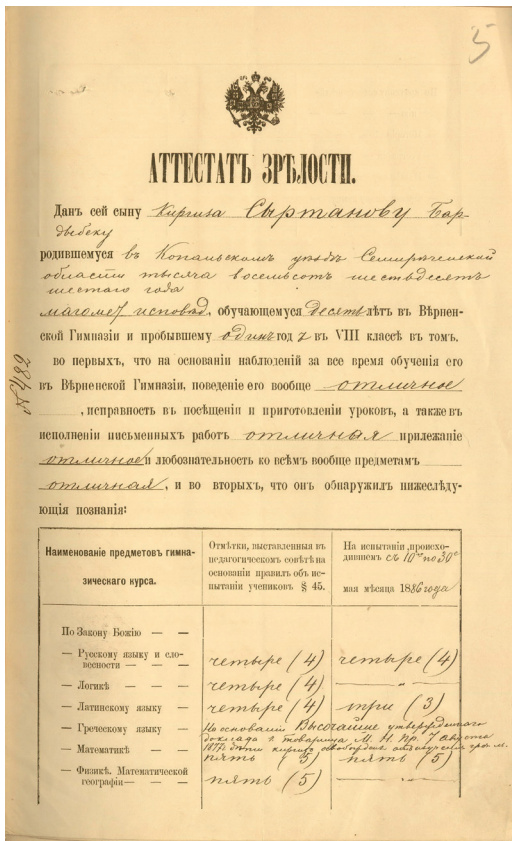


Fig. 3–4. Certificate of Maturity from the Verna Men’s Gymnasium of Barlybek Syrtanov. Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg

3–4-сур. Барлыбек Сыртановтың Верный ерлер гимназиясын бітіргені туралы аттестаты. Санкт-Петербург орталық мемлекеттік тарихи архиві

Рис. 3–4. Аттестат зрелости Верненской мужской гимназии Барлыбека Сыртанова. Центральный государственный исторический архив Санкт-Петербурга



Petition of the Qazaq of Arasan Volost, Qapal county, Syrtan Bokin (dated January 19, 1882):

In March 1875, during a session of the volost biys’ assembly chaired by Deputy Head of the Qapal county, Lieutenant Colonel Izraztsov, the court ruled in my favor against Esimbek Tanekin, a Qazaq of Arasan volost, ordering the return of 182 sheep, 2 camels, and 2 racehorses. A copy of this ruling was issued to former volost ruler Maman Qalqabayev for enforcement. However, due to Esimbek being Maman’s paternal cousin, I received nothing during Maman’s tenure, despite repeated petitions and requests. I was even denied a copy of the court ruling. Furthermore, in 1874 Maman appropriated a silver goblet with gold plating awarded to my son Barlybek by former Governor-General von Kaufman for academic achievement.

In 1876, Maman Qalqabayev’s son, Turysbek Mamanov, was elected volost ruler. I submitted the same request for enforcement, but despite the bribes and gifts I had offered (chosen by him own three pacers and two fine riding horses), Turysbek not only refused to comply but also resorted to violence, seizing the best black stallion from my herd. I filed multiple complaints to county Chief Colonel Rezanov, but these only exacerbated the oppression.

In 1882, during another biy assembly in Arasan chaired by the county Chief, a ruling in my favor ordered Zhabai Bekbaulov of Basqan-Sarqan volost to provide 23 mares and 80 rubles in cash. This ruling, like the previous one, was handed to Turysbek for enforcement, but again, neither the property nor the documents were returned. In early January of this year, I submitted another



Fig. 5. Student certificate of Barlybek Syrtanov, St. Petersburg University. Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg

5-сур. Санкт-Петербург университетінің студенті Барлыбек Сыртановтың куәлігі. Санкт-Петербург орталық мемлекеттік тарихи архиві

Рис. 5. Свидетельство студента Санкт-Петербургского университета Барлыбека Сыртанова. Центральный государственный исторический архив Санкт-Петербурга

complaint to the county authorities, but they redirected me back to the same volost ruler. When I tried to travel to Verna to appeal to the regional administration, I was denied a travel pass and detained for three days by the police. Upon release, I was forced to travel to Verna without a permit, having no other means to seek justice. Further abuses include sending me to Sergiopol in search of a fugitive, Bogembai Muryimbaev, during which time Turysbek seized seven horses from my herd as surety. Upon return, I learned of this expropriation. My pursuit of justice led to violent reprisals: two of my nephews were murdered by Esimbek's men, and my son Turlybek was wounded with a dagger. He later submitted a separate complaint to the Military Governor of Zhetysu.

Not only volost ruler but their relatives suppress people, for instance, Maman's father, Qalqabai (a son of Duiset), unlawfully assumed the title of topbashi and imposed payments from the accused despite not being a biy. After the death of his wife, for his second marriage, he took two camels and two silver ingots (worth 35 rubles each Chinese silver bars) from me but failed to fulfill his promise to pay 11 horses from the bride's dowry.

Other misdeeds by Turysbek include:

1) Previously, Qazaqs paid taxes per household; however, in order to ease the burden on poorer households, the Qapal county later replaced the household (hearth) tax with a livestock levy. Nevertheless, Turysbek Mamanov began collecting both taxes simultaneously—per household and on livestock—thus imposing a double tax.

2) In 1882, the volost ruler collected up to 3,000 rubles from the residents of our volost and the Buyen-Qoyandy volost, allegedly to fund his father, Maman's trip as a representative of both volosts to the coronation of the Emperor. However, Maman did not attend the ceremony, and the money was never returned.

3) For the construction of barracks at the Arasan station, intended for the passage of soldiers, 1 ruble 75 kopecks was collected from each household—amounting to a total of 5,000 rubles. After the barracks were built, a large portion of the fund remained unused, but this surplus was not returned to the people and remained in the possession of the volost ruler.

4) The volost ruler arbitrarily seized valuable wintering pastures from Qazaqs and redistributed them to others in exchange for horses or monetary payments.

Due to fear of retribution, the population refrains from filing complaints. If the administration could at least suspend Turysbek, many more testimonies would expose the extent of his abuse of authority and the undue influence of the Duiset clan.

The unreliability of the Duiset clan had been officially recognized by the former esteemed Military Governor of the Zhetisu Region and confirmed by the current Governor-General of the Steppe, who issued an order stating that not only should no one from this clan be elected as a volost ruler, but even the position of "ten-man" (onbasy) should be denied to them. Nevertheless, through various manipulative schemes, the Duiset clan managed to regain full control over the volost administration, thereby depriving the population of any means to file complaints about their unlawful actions. The position of volost ruler effectively became hereditary property of the clan. For example, after Yesimbek Tanekin (a grandson of Duiset) was removed from office, an ordinary Qazaq named Sarsen Mynzhasarov was elected. However, once Yesimbek Tanekin was released from prison in the city of Verny and returned to the volost, he used deceit to have Mynzhasarov removed, and in his place, his cousin Maman was elected. Maman was presented as a candidate under the name Qalqabayev, after his father Qalqabai (Duiset's son), to obscure his lineage. The electors (elulik), under partial bribery and coercion, were compelled to conceal from the county authorities that Maman was in fact Duiset's grandson. Later, Maman's son, the current volost ruler Turysbek Mamanov, was elected through similar schemes.

I hereby request the regional administration to enforce the rulings of the 1875 and 1882 biy assemblies, order the restitution of the property awarded to me, and compel Maman Qalqabayev and Turysbek Mamanov to return the silver goblet, 2 camels, 2 silver ingots, 3 pacers, 9 riding horses, and 1 stallion.

Verny, January 19, 1882. Signed on behalf of the illiterate petitioner by his son, Turlybek Syrطانov, who placed his seal at his father's request.⁷

In October 1882, Turlybek Syrطانov, who attended the 4th grade of the Verny men's gymnasium, dropped out for health reasons. If we consider the above request of his father Syrطان, his son Turlybek ended in 1882, when Yessimbek Tanekin (a related brother of the Volost governor) wounded my son Turlybek with a dagger on the ridge, about which my son complained to the military governor of the Zhetisu region. For this reason, Turlybek was forced to abandon his studies. In 1883, an application to the director of the Verny men's gymnasium for re-education to restore his health was kept in the archives.

The same complaint was written by Syrطان's wife Kuldariya in 1883:

To the Most Honorable Military Governor of the Zhetisu Region, From Kuldariya Bokina, wife of Syrطان Boktin, a Qazaq of the Arasan volost, Qapal county

Petition

In December of last year, my husband, Syrطان Bokin, a Qazaq of the Arasan volost, was forced to go to the city of Verny on business. For some reason, he first submitted a request to the head of

⁷ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 33973, fol. 2–5.

the Qapal county, who advised him to obtain a travel permit either from the volost chief or the village elder. The latter, using the excuse of the county head's directive, showed unwillingness to issue the permit without cause, and thus refused my husband's request. My husband then ventured to Verny without the aforementioned permit. After his departure, some Qazaqs of the Arasan volost, under the orders of volost chief Turysbek Mamanov, forged a ruling regarding my husband's case and produced a false copy stating that 575 rubles' worth of livestock should be collected. Based on this fabricated document, certain Qazaqs—namely: Tileuqa Alibekov was awarded three mares and two stallions from my husband, Yesimbek Tanekin was awarded two camels and one horse, and another Qazaq named Boran was awarded one horse. Knowing that my husband was absent from home, the above-mentioned livestock were forcibly taken from our herd. Furthermore, in Arasan volost, the word of Mamanov and his relatives, who engage in trade there, has become law:

1) Najmi Bekbolatov, a second-guild merchant from Qapal, seized the ten best sheep from us, allegedly due to my husband's debt.

2) Zhusup, who had taken a horse for 100 rubles, also took five sheep which were promised not for us, but for the house of Arazbek Tanekin—a close relative of Mamanov—from my husband and the Arasan Qazaqs.

I have no knowledge of the reasons for these actions. All of this was done at the request of volost chief Mamanov, who also took a stallion and a mare from us to graze with his own herd and refuses to return them. I do not know even how is he and they should have waited for his return. Even though I asked the county administrator about this matter, and an order was indeed issued for the return of the livestock to me, the volost chief has not followed the order, and to this day the livestock has not been returned.

Therefore, I have come to the conclusion, and humbly ask Your Excellency, not to leave this matter unresolved and to issue a binding order for the return of the specified livestock that was forcibly taken, as described in this petition.

July 17, 1883. City of Qapal. Kuldariya Bokina, wife of Syrtan Boktin. Due to illiteracy and at her request, the petition was signed by her son, Barlybek Syrtanov, a 6th-grade student of the Verny Men's Gymnasium.

Petition written by Barlybek Syrtanov.⁸

In 1887, Syrtan Bokin was exiled to the Shilik district. Archival records provide the following information about his family:

Syrtan Bokin was 50 years old at the time (currently residing in Verny).

His first wife, Kuldariya, was also 50 years old.

Their children:

- 1) Turlybek, aged 25, was a translator at the military court in Verny; his wife Kumis was 27, and their daughter Rakhila was one year old,
- 2) Barlybek, aged 20, was a student at St. Petersburg University; his wife Erkezhan was 20,
- 3) Moldakhan was 16,
- 4) Kenzhekhan was 11,
- 5) Their daughter Fatima was 18,

Syrtan Bokin's second wife, Symbat, was 24 years old; their son Qumarbek was one week old.

Kerimbek Syrtanov was 27 years old; his wife Tazhi was 30. Their children: Alimbek, 1 year old, Qylyshqan 7 years old, Nurila 8 years old, Kulzhamila 3 years old, Raqymzhan 2 years old.

⁸ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 33973, fol. 145–146.

In total, there were 3 families: 9 men and 10 women. Two of them were recorded as literate.⁹

Syrtan Bokin lived for about six years in the Kishi Almaty volost (part of the Verny county), after which he moved back to the Kuldei-Zhumai volost, which had separated from the Arasan volost.

While living in the Kishi Almaty volost, Syrtan met the great Qazaq poet Zhambyl and shared with him the hardships he had endured and the story of his exile to that volost. The following lines from Zhambyl Zhabayev's poem "To Syrtan" confirm the above archival facts:

*From Qydyraly-Qulshan
soars my bold Syrtan...*

*You read the land with sunlit eyes,
Your path revealed beneath the skies.
Qydyraly's brave Yesimbek –
Struck Erantal with no regret.*

*Born of men who earned their name,
To serve a cause, you played the game.
While Maman's kin just counted coins,
You broke the lies their plots had joined.*

*Escaping from the slander laid,
You left the traps the traitors made.
Now you dream of city halls –
Who hasn't walked through urban walls?*

*Few Qazaqs match your kind of fire,
Who place their hopes in children's mire.
If your two sons grow wise and tall,
You shall escape the tempter's call.*

*I long, though like an orphaned youth,
For guidance from your well of truth [Zhabayev 2014: 38].*

In 1886, a group of young Qazaqs in search of knowledge – Bakhytzhan Karatayev, Barlybek Syrtanov, Abdolla Temirov, and Mambetali Serdalin – arrived to study at the University of St. Petersburg. These young Qazaqs not only maintained close, almost familial ties with one another, but also deeply immersed themselves in the vibrant political, intellectual, and cultural life of the city. Like other students from across the Russian Empire, the Qazaq youth organized a "Fellow Countrymen's Association" that reflected their shared goals and identity. Since the university had always been a barometer of Russia's intellectual climate, students regularly expressed their opinions on politically significant events through rallies, demonstrations, and campaigns. Student groups, through their "fellow countrymen" circles, would often respond to pressing issues with appeals, proclamations, and other forms of expression—turning such political engagement into a tradition [Shchetinina 1976: 31]. In one of the letters written by the famous Shormanov to Grigory Potanin, he wrote:

Thirty of our Qazaq youth are studying in institutions of higher education. Among them is Barlybek Syrtanov, who is studying in St. Petersburg. Please pay attention to him.

This letter, written in 1887, clearly demonstrates the degree of involvement of this respected figure—bridging the elder generation from Bayanaul to the young men arriving from Zhetysu.

Barlybek Syrtanov graduated from university with top honors, receiving a first-class diploma in the specialty of Arabic-Persian and Turkic-Tatar studies, and returned to his native region. On May 27, 1891, by Order No. 1364, Barlybek Syrtanov began serving at the Treasury Chamber

⁹ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 33973, fol. 318.

in Tashkent, the center of the Turkestan General-Governorate. On October 15, 1892, by Order No. 119, he was confirmed in the rank of Collegiate Secretary; on November 10, 1893, by Order No. 128, he served as Titular Counselor. On September 29, 1894, he was transferred to the office of the Zhetisu Regional Administration in Verny, where he headed the records management department.¹⁰ While serving in government, Barlybek Syrtanov never forgot the interests of his people. He used every opportunity to serve his nation with dedication. Between 1903 and 1907, Syrtanov participated in research on the border demarcation between Russia and China. He also opposed the seizure of fertile Qazaq lands in the Zhetisu region by Russian settlers arriving from the interior of the empire.

On this, his compatriot Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev wrote:

In 1891, after graduating from university, Barlybek returned to his homeland in Qapal. When Barlybek came to his village, I was traveling to school that autumn and stayed overnight at his home – that was when we first met. I was only 10 years old. In 1894, his older brother Turlybek came from Chuguchak and became an interpreter for the military governor in Almaty. From that year until 1905, the brothers lived together in Almaty and were known simply as 'Barlybek and Turlybek.' All the Qazaq and Qyrgyz people of the Zhetisuregion considered them as kin, and their house was never without guests. Those who lacked rights came crying to Barlybek and Turlybek and left having had justice restored. They never made anyone cry, nor allowed injustice. Because of this, not a single Qazaq or Qyrgyz in the entire region went against the word of Barlybek and Turlybek, –

wrote Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev in a heartfelt obituary published in Qazaq newspaper [Smagulova, Abikova 2017].

According to Barlybek Syrtanov's official service record, compiled on December 23, 1904, while serving as a junior official for special assignments under the military governor of Zhetisu and holding the rank of Titular Counselor, he was awarded the following state honors: on February 26, 1896, a silver medal and Alexander ribbon in memory of Emperor Alexander III; and on December 6, 1899, the Order of Saint Stanislaus, 3rd class. His annual salary was 1,200 rubles. He married Erkezhan Atalykova, a Qazaq from the Sartau volost. His children: daughter Zubaida, born January 10, 1892; daughter Bibi-Latifa, born October 15, 1895; daughter Bibi-Khanifa, born February 8, 1903; daughter Bibi-Saliha, born December 23, 1904; son Abdul-Qadir, born July 21, 1898; son Daribek, born February 17, 1900.¹¹

In the service record of Collegiate Registrar Turlybek Syrtanov, dated February 1905, who worked as a translator of native languages at the Zhetisuregional administration, it is stated:

Born in June 1860. Graduated from the 4th grade of the Verny Men's Gymnasium (Certificate No. 697). On May 11, 1893, by Order No. 137 of the Zhetisu military governor, he began serving at the Sergiopol District Administration. On January 28, 1893, by Order No. 258, he was appointed translator of native languages at the Zhetisu regional administration. On February 15, 1896, he was awarded a silver medal and an Andrew ribbon for participation in the coronation of Emperor Nicholas II. In 1897, he was again awarded a silver medal for his work during the first general census.

He married Altyn, daughter of Sazambai Boranbayev.

Children: daughter Shakhrezada, born November 1, 1888; daughter Bibi-Nur, born February 2, 1896; daughter Bibi-Rufiya, born September 7, 1900.

Annual salary – 800 rubles.¹²

¹⁰ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 55418, fol. 9–11.

¹¹ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 55418, fol. 9–11.

¹² CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 55420, fol. 1–7.

On April 24, 1905, Turlybek Syrtanov retired due to health reasons. He served in government for 11 years, 4 months, and 13 days. His pension was set at 114 rubles 30 kopecks annually, and was later increased to 214 rubles 50 kopecks.¹³

Starting in 1905, Barlybek continuously refined and developed his ideas about a future state structure for the Qazaq people. His work, "The Statute of the Qazaq Nation" (1911), discovered by researcher Saken Özbeküly in the personal archive of the statesman and introduced into scholarly circulation, stands as a bold and visionary document by a young patriot [Özbeküly, 1996: 88].

The republican form of governance proposed by Barlybek Syrtanov for Qazaqstan was to be implemented based on the principle of the separation of powers. Barlybek Syrtanov suggested the establishment of a "National Assembly" as the highest legislative body of the state. The Assembly would elect the head of the executive power—the President—for a term of four years. No individual would have the right to be elected President for more than two terms. The President would govern the country through ministers nominated by himself and approved by the National Assembly. Syrtanov's Charter of the Qazaq Nation consisted of four sections: "On the Sovereignty of the Qazaq Republic," "On Human Rights," "On Qazaq Land," and "On the Judiciary." The end of the Charter, composed of 28 articles, bears the note: "13 June 1911, St. Petersburg."

On June 9, 1907, Barlybek Syrtanov, who at the time served as a junior official for special assignments under the Military Governor of Zhetisu Oblast, submitted a report entitled On the Question of Improving the Lives of the Qazaqs. This report was of considerable significance. In it, he analyzed the adverse effects of issues such as electoral violations during volost (district) elections, the conduct of volost clerks, elubasy, aul elders, biys, as well as land and religious matters on Qazaq society.

As a result of my individual inquiries, I inform Your Excellency that at present the gravest injustice affecting the Qazaq population is the election of the volost administrators, he wrote. He further noted the consequences of this practice:

Applicants spend enormous sums to bribe voters, elected officials, and even some bureaucrats in order to secure the position of volost administrator. The expenses are so excessive that they may seem unbelievable. For example, in the recent election in the Talkan volost of Pishpek Uezd, 52,000 rubles were spent between two candidates—20,000 rubles by one and 32,000 rubles by the other. Only the candidates themselves know where this money went. After the elections, the spent money is recouped from the population, often in excess. What is most troubling is the burden placed on the poor. If needed, a petitioner might demand a share of the spoils from a particular household or aul, sometimes receiving only a few coins—or nothing at all. The money ultimately ends up in the pockets of influential Qazaqs, while the financial burden falls on the impoverished majority. Once the winning side becomes clear during elections, the victor appoints his supporters to all biys (judicial) positions across the auls. These newly appointed biys then spend the next three years ready to sign off even on death sentences if instructed –

the report stated.¹⁴

On October 21, 1910, a congress of representatives of the Qazaq and Qyrgyz national political elite from Zhetisu Oblast took place near the settlement of Uzynagash, close to Verny. This meeting, referred to in gendarmerie documents as the "Uzynaghash Congress," was held in secret. It was timed to coincide with the official celebrations organized by the regional Russian authorities to mark the 50th anniversary of the Russian army's victory over Kokand forces near Uzynaghash. Prominent Qazaq and Qyrgyz figures were invited to this ceremonial event. Following the official part, a secret congress was held in a nearby house. The organizers of the congress included the renowned Qazaq public figure Barlybek Syrtanov, the famous orator and former volost

¹³ CSA RQ, h. 44, r. 1, f. 2173, fol. 13, 17.

¹⁴ National Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NA RU), h. 1, r. 27, f. 1222, fol. 10.

administrator of Kalghuty in Verny Uezd, ensign Nogaybai Dauletbakov, and leading Qyrgyz figures Shabdan Zhantayev and Dur Sauranbayev. The congress participants condemned the colonial policies of the Tsarist government and emphasized the urgent need to halt the resettlement of Russian peasants into the region. It was resolved that a petition be submitted to the Tsar demanding the cessation of land allocations and resettlement in Zhetisu Oblast. To this end, a delegation would be sent to St. Petersburg. Fund for the delegation's expenses would be raised from each volost, and the delegates were to seek assistance from the Emir of Bukhara in securing an audience with the Tsar.

The congress decided that the delegation to St. Petersburg would consist of two members – Barlybek Syrطانov and Dur Sauranbayev.¹⁵ Although the authorities eventually learned of the congress and its resolutions through informants, they acted to prevent any steps toward their implementation. The military governor of Zhetisu Oblast instructed the heads of Qapal, Verny, Lepsinsk, Pishpek, and Przhevalsk uezds to prevent any fund raising efforts for the delegation's journey. District pristavs were ordered to identify who was collecting fund, how the resolutions of the congress were being received by Qazaq and Qyrgyz communities, and who had attended the meeting.

Despite the colonial administration's efforts, Qazaq and Qyrgyz communities in Zhetisu continued fund raising covertly. From each volost, approximately 200 rubles were collected, amounting to around 5,000 rubles in total across the oblast.¹⁶

The orator (*sheshen*) Nogaybai passed away in 1910 at the age of 76. Overall, Nogaybai Dauletbakuly was a highly respected figure, well known among the Qazaq and Qyrgyz communities of Zhetisu. This point is further substantiated by the following details. According to the information provided by Rittmeister Khokhlachev, Head of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes for the Verny and Zhetisu regions, to the Governor-General of Turkestan, a grand *As* (memorial feast) was held in June 1911 to mark the one-year anniversary of Nogaybai's death. It was attended by many prominent Qazaq and Qyrgyz leaders. Among them were: Manke Izmailov from Shamalghan Volost; Ydyrys Sadybekov from the Ulken Almaty Volost; Bekbolat Ashekeev from Zhaiylmys Volost; Erkebai Bazarov from Qordai Volost; Alimqul Baisalov from Baytiq Volost; Alim Qozybekov from Shu Volost; Shaltabai Qudaibergenov from Eastern Qastek Volost; Usenbai Tankin from Botbai Volost; Mukysh, the son of the famous Qyrgyz manap Shabdan Zhantayev; and representatives of the Qazaq and Qyrgyz intelligentsia such as Ibyrai Zhaynaqov, Qyrgyz intellectual and volost administrator of Tynai Volost Dur Sauranbayev, among others. Rittmeister Putintsev, assistant to the Pishpek district chief, also participated, accompanied by a translator.¹⁷ During this *As* held for Nogaybai, a major council was convened among the gathered Qazaq and Qyrgyz dignitaries and intellectuals, where the land issue and the general situation of the Qazaq and Qyrgyz peoples in Zhetisu were discussed. Particular attention was paid to the growing tensions caused by the arrival of Russian settlers and their appropriation of local lands. As a result, it was decided to send the Qazaq intellectual Barlybek Syrطانov to St. Petersburg to present a petition to the Tsar demanding a halt to land expropriation for Russian peasants. To cover travel expenses, each volost agreed to contribute 200 rubles. The Qyrgyz manap, Lieutenant Colonel Shabdan Zhantayev, was entrusted with the authority to personally request an audience with the Governor-General of Turkestan regarding the issue.¹⁸

According to an intelligence report from the head of the Verny surveillance division regarding preparations to send Barlybek Syrطانov to St. Petersburg:

¹⁵ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 17.

¹⁶ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 67.

¹⁷ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 45.

¹⁸ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 51–52.

Verny, 28 November 1911. Top Secret. On this day, the head of the Verny surveillance division, provincial secretary Sklyuev, received the following intelligence: the provincial administration's translator Ibyraim Zhaynaqov received a letter from the former advisor Barlybek Syrtanov, currently on leave in Qapal. The letter concerns issues related to provincial and district administrations and the so-called resettlement institutions. Recently, a Qazaq from the Turgai Oblast, whose name is unknown, arrived in Qapal and stayed in Turkestan quarters. He brought the above-mentioned letter to Jaynaqov. After receiving it, Jaynaqov gathered volost administrators and respected Qazaqs at his residence. Unfortunately, the exact topic of their discussion remains unknown. However, it is rumored that Syrtanov asked Zhaynaqov to inform the volost officials and respected community members about his upcoming visit to Verny and to collect 100 rubles from each Qazaq volost to fund his trip to St. Petersburg.¹⁹

Further intelligence was obtained on December 7, 1911:

According to someone named Tashen, who is close to Barlybek Syrtanov and resides in Zatylnikov's house (possibly surnamed Utenov), Syrtanov wrote several times to biy Mirqasym and sent a telegram to Sat Niyazbekov, asking him to send 300 rubles to Qapal and to prepare letters of attorney from all volosts. Furthermore, it was said that the former translator of the Governor-General of Omsk, Ablaykhanov, came here at the invitation of local Qazaqs and Shabdan Zhantaev, because local authorities were mistreating Qazaqs in matters concerning land usage. The governor and other administrative officials had allegedly appropriated for themselves the fund intended as earthquake relief, leaving the Qazaqs with nothing. Zhaynaqov began verifying this with committee reports, and a certain Toqash Bokin reportedly relayed these complaints from the Resettlement Office. In response to all these grievances, it is said that either Syrtanov, Zhantaev, or Ablaykhanov would go to petition the Tsar. If that happened, none of the local administrators would retain their positions, the confiscated lands would be returned, and the intelligence services would no longer interfere in Qyrgyz life, since they have their own people's courts. Father Ablaykhanov reportedly assured that all of this would indeed be carried out.²⁰

During such gatherings, the reasons for the failure of Syrtanov's mission—initiated at the Uzynaghash Congress to deliver the petition on behalf of the Qazaq and Qyrgyz peoples of Zhetisu to the Tsar in St. Petersburg—were also discussed. It was concluded that further collaboration with other Turkic-Muslim communities of the Russian Empire was necessary. Moreover, at the memorial As for Nogaybai Dauletbakov, attendees also promoted Mirjaqyp Dulatov's famous 1909 work *Oyan, Qazaq!* ("Awaken, Qazaq!"), published in Ufa and reprinted in 1910.²¹

Representatives of the national political elite working as translators in administrative offices also played an active role in disseminating and explaining the decisions of the Uzynaghash Congress. According to a report submitted by an undercover agent to the gendarmerie under the pseudonym *Qara* ("Black"), the political movement among Qazaqs and Qyrgyz in Zhetisu was being led by semi-educated individuals and low-level officials such as Tymbai Serikbaev, Naizabek Tulin, Dur Sauranbayev, Mambetali Muratalin, Ibraim Zhaynaqov, and Ermuḥamed Ablaykhanov.²²

On October 20, 1912, the head of the Turkestan District Security Department reported the following to the Director of the Police Department:

According to report No. 2099 from the head of the Verny criminal investigation unit dated October 10, a certain Tatar named Qudys Gabdulvaliev, a resident of Verny, is suspected of maintaining covert contacts between the Muslims of Zhetisu and other ethnic groups. It is believed that this network, covering all ethnic Muslim communities of the region, pursued Pan-Islamist objectives. On December 7 of the previous year, a search was conducted at Gabdulvaliev's residence and shop, where many letters and journals he had sent to Rittmeister Astrakhansev and to the department I oversee were found. Gabdulvaliev likely acquired some

¹⁹ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 149.

²⁰ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 157.

²¹ NA RU, h. 416, r. 1, f. 1026, fol. 117.

²² NA RU, h. 461, r. 1, f. 1172, fol. 41.

of these materials through bribes. However, personal searches of his shop assistants yielded no results. Based on the found documents, it was concluded that Gabdulvaliev maintained ties with people in Toqmaq, Przhevalsk, Zharkent, Lepsinsk, Qapal, and the village of Gavrilovka. These searches also failed to produce further evidence, and no letters addressed to these individuals were recovered. Among Gabdulvaliev's correspondence was mention of a plan to send a Qazaq named Barlybek Syrtanov from Qapal to St. Petersburg. The journey ostensibly concerned land issues, but also seemed to involve undisclosed, covert matters, which were not elaborated upon in writing. This prompted an official investigation.

Gabdulvaliev raised fund for Syrtanov's journey, but it was not possible to identify who exactly contributed to Syrtanov's secret trip. According to witness testimonies, the matter appeared to concern entirely public issues, in particular: the opening of a muftiate in the oblast, matters related to schools, and the issue of granting leave to prikaznichy (clerks or officials). Due to the established customs and traditions among Muslims, it is difficult to clarify the matter based on witness testimonies alone. A decisive outcome in the case could likely have been achieved only through a search of Syrtanov himself, who was seen as the main initiator of all activities. However, the Qapal district chief, who was tasked with conducting the search, did not act promptly, instead exchanging correspondence with Captain Astrakhantsev. The search was only carried out after Syrtanov submitted a complaint to the military governor. As a result, rumors of a search in connection with Gabdulvaliev's case naturally reached Syrtanov in advance, and not a single written document was found in his possession. Syrtanov, being highly educated, held considerable influence among Muslims, was widely known beyond the region, and had stored his correspondence far from the places of residence of those obligated to respond. Some of those residing in the districts had already been questioned, and delays in correspondence were due to the need to complete the questioning of individuals who resided in Verny but were currently absent, as well as inquiries being made in Orenburg, Semipalatinsk, and St. Petersburg.²³

Archival documents also contain information that these activists were following instructions from Barlybek Syrtanov. One of the documents states that, along with being a driving force in the political life of the Qazaqs and Qyrgyz of Zhetisu, Barlybek Syrtanov traveled around the districts of Lepsinsk, Qapal, Przhevalsk, and Pishpek to promote the decisions of the Uzynaghash Congress, after which he departed from Pishpek to St. Petersburg.²⁴

In the 1913 issue of Qazaq newspaper, No. 17, it is reported that

When the 22 volosts of the Qapal district gathered, Mr. Barlybek Syrtanov spoke with sadness: 'They say, dress according to the times (Zamanyñ qalai bolsa, börkiñdi solai ki). Then it is not appropriate for us to remain idle. Whatever the cost, we must educate our children, build schools and gardens, and open a progymnasium or a real school in Qapal from among ourselves.' Although 9 volosts of the Matai agreed, the volosts of the Zhalaiyr did not. All they said was: 'Why don't you just become Russian...' The Qapal district chief, Colonel Lebedev, supported Mr. Syrtanov's words, but the Zhalaiyr volosts refused again, claiming, 'They're trying to convert us.' In short, the Zhalaiyr here are choking in a fog of ignorance, living like livestock – consuming and surviving. May God grant them wisdom [Smagulova, Anes, Zamzayeva 2018].

That same year, among those who financially supported Bazarbai Mametov, a native of Zhetysu studying at Kazan University, was his fellow countryman Barlybek Syrtanov [Smagulova, Anes, Zamzayeva 2018].

In 1914, an examination in Russian was held on March 31 at the Mamanov School in the Qapal district. Barlybek Syrtanov participated in this exam and assessed the children's academic level. In the 1915 issue of Qazaq newspaper, No. 95, it states:

Barlybek was from the Naiman tribe, specifically from the Matai clan, and within it, the Kaptaghai branch. His known ancestor was Qulshan. Barlybek, the third son of Syrtan Batyr, was born

²³ State Archive of the Russian Federation (SA RF), h. 102, r. 7, f. 1912, fol. 97–98.

²⁴ NA RU, h. 461, r. 1, f. 1172, fol. 44.

in 1867 in the Aksan volost of the Qapal district, Zhetysu region. When a gymnasium and Qazaq boarding school opened in Almaty, Syrtan Batyr was the first among the Zhetysu Qazaqs to send his child to a Russian school. The first Qazaq boy to begin Russian schooling was his second son Turlybek. Later, in 1877, when Barlybek turned 10, he too was enrolled in the gymnasium. Turlybek managed to complete four grades but had to withdraw due to illness caused by the city climate and later became a translator at the consulate in Chuguchak. In 1886, Barlybek graduated from gymnasium and entered the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University (then called Petrograd). At that time, there were only 2–3 Qazaq students in Petrograd, and they were the first Qazaqs to be admitted to university. After studying for four years, Barlybek graduated in 1891 and returned to his homeland in Qapal.

In issue No. 184 of Qazaq newspaper (1916), it was reported:

On May 25, the famous Syrtan Batyr passed away in the Qapal district. In his youth, he gained fame as a warrior, and later he sent his sons Barlybek and Turlybek to study. While they were living in Almaty, his name became widely known. On November 26, 1914, Barlybek passed away. In 1915, Turlybek passed away. Last summer, in 1915, his elder son Kerimbek, who had been ill for many years, also died. Now the batyr himself has also passed away [Anes, Zamzayeva 2023].

Barlybek Syrtanov was buried in the city of Qapal.

Conclusion

Barlybek Syrtanov received his secondary education at the Verny Men's Gymnasium, which was established in the second half of the 19th century, and continued his studies at a higher educational institution in St. Petersburg, Russia. Under the strong influence of the progressive democratic Russian intelligentsia, and through this exposure to advanced European thought and the principles of the Great French Revolution, the Qazaq intellectuals, including Syrtanov, wrote these ideals onto their own banners. They did not limit themselves to their initial natural duty of promoting education and enlightenment but also actively engaged in politics with the determined aim of serving their people in that realm as well. At the beginning of the 20th century, Barlybek played an active role in the socio-political events taking place within Qazaq society. Notably, his efforts to protect his native land from settlers (pereselentsy) stand out. Archival evidence confirms that significant work was done to spread the writings and ideas of the national intelligentsia throughout the Zhetysu region. Barlybek Syrtanov's sharp intellect and insightful conclusions can continue to serve as a valuable lesson for the Qazaq people.

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