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## Difficult Years of Qazaq Rulers: Zholbarys Khan between the Uzbeks, the Dzungars, and the Russians<sup>1</sup>

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**Ключевые слова:** хан; султан; батыр; казахи; Российская империя; Ташкентский оазис; Старший жуз

The article examines the personality of Zholbarys Khan, the ruler of the Senior Zhuz. Within the context of major historical events that took place in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the southern Qazaq Steppe and the Tashkent oasis, the study explores the military and socio-political activities of Zholbarys Khan. It provides brief information on members of the nomadic aristocracy who governed the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Based on historical sources and previous research, the article determines the role of Zholbarys in the political and socio-economic life of the Tashkent oasis, located in the northeast of Central Asia at the junction of the nomadic and sedentary-agricultural worlds. The nature of interactions between the Qazaq ruling elite and the local sedentary population is described in the article. It is noted that the steppe rulers limited themselves to foreign-policy governance of the agricultural oasis, restricting their involvement to tax collection and control over the movement of Central Asian trade caravans across the Qazaq Steppe. The economic and socio-cultural order of the agricultural population of the Tashkent region was regulated by a special council composed of townspeople. The study addresses the military leadership of Zholbarys Khan in the Qazaq-Dzungar wars of the first third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with particular attention given to his relations with the Russian state. By comparing eighteenth-century Russian translations with the modern translation from the original Chagatai Turkic, the article examines the texts of messages from influential figures of the Senior Zhuz (Töle Bi Alibekuly, Qodar Bi, *batyrs* Satay, Qangeldy, and Bolek) as well as several letters from Zholbarys Khan to the Russian government. The analysis reveals the true intentions of the Senior Zhuz nomadic elite regarding the Qazaqs' acceptance of Russian suzerainty in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Қазақ билігінің алмағайып жылдары: Өзбек пен жоңғар және орыс ортасындағы Жолбарыс хан

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Мақала Ұлы жүз ханы - Жолбарыс хан тұлғасын зерттеуге арналған. XVIII ғасырдың бірінші жартысында Қазақ даласының оңтүстігі мен Ташкент алабында өткен маңызды тарихи оқиғалар контексті бойынша Жолбарыс ханның әскери және қоғамдық-саяси қызметі қарастырылған. XVII ғасырдың аяғы – XVIII ғасырдың басында Ұлы жүзді басқарған қазақтың көшпелі ақсүйектері туралы қысқаша мәліметтер берілген. Тарихи деректер мен бұрынғы зерттеулерді зерделеу негізінде көшпелі және отырықшы-егінші әлемнің ортасында, Орта Азияның солтүстік-шығысында орналасқан Ташкент алабының саяси және әлеуметтік-экономикалық өміріндегі Жолбарыс ханның рөлі көрсетіліп, қазақ билеуші элитасының жергілікті отырықшы халықпен қарым-қатынасы сипатталған. Дала билеушілері отырықшы аймақты басқару кезінде тек сыртқы саяси басқару, салық жинау және ортаазиялық сауда керуендерін қазақ даласы арқылы өткізумен шектелгені атап көрсетілген. Ташкент аймағы отырықшыла-

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рының экономикалық және әлеуметтік мәдени өмір салтын жергілікті ерекше кеңес реттеп отырғаны айтылған. Зерттеуде XVIII ғасырдың алғашқы ширегінде өткен қазақ-жоңғар соғыстарындағы Жолбарыс ханның қолбасшылық қызметі қозғалып, оның Ресеймен қарым-қатынасына баса мән берілген. XVIII ғасыр деректерінің орысша аудармаларын шағатай тіліндегі түпнұсқаларының кейінгі аудармаларымен салыстыра отырып, Ұлы жүздің ықпалды тұлғаларының (Төле би Әлібекұлы, Қодар би, Сатай, Қангелді және Бөлек батырлардың) орыс билігіне жазған хаттары мен Жолбарыс ханның кейбір хаттары зерделенген. Талдау нәтижелері Ұлы жүз элитасының XVIII ғасырдың бірінші жартысында Ресей бодандығын қабылдау ниеті шын мәнінде қалай болғанын көрсеткен.

**Қаржыландыру көзі:** Жұмыс Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің гранттық қаржыландыру жобасын жүзеге асыру аясында орындалды, жобаның ЖТН АР19679738 «1869 ж. Батыс Қазақстан аумағында болған көтеріліс жаңа архивтік материалдар негізінде».

**Сілтеме жасау үшін:** Сатенова М.Р. Қазақ билігінің алмағайып жылдары: Өзбек пен жоңғар және орыс ортасындағы Жолбарыс хан. *Qazaq Historical Review*. 2025. Т. 3. № 2. 234–247-бб. (ағылшынша). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69567/3007-0236.2025.2.234.247>

## Трудные годы казахских правителей: хан Жолбарыс между узбеками, джунгарами и русскими

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Статья посвящена исследованию личности хана Старшего жуза Жолбарыса. В контексте освещения важных исторических событий, происходивших в первой половине XVIII века в южной части Казахской степи и Ташкентском оазисе рассматривается военная и общественно-политическая деятельность хана Жолбарыса. В статье отражены краткие сведения о представителях кочевой аристократии, управлявших казахами Старшего жуза в конце XVII – начале XVIII века. На основе изучения исторических источников и ранее проведенных исследований определяется роль Жолбарыса в политической и социально-экономической жизни Ташкентского оазиса, расположенного на северо-востоке Средней Азии, на рубеже кочевого и оседло-земледельческого миров. Показан характер взаимодействий казахской правящей элиты с местным оседлым населением. Отмечено, что степные власти ограничивались лишь внешнеполитическим управлением земледельческого оазиса, ограничиваясь сбором налогов и контролем передвижения среднеазиатских торговых караванов по Казахской степи. Экономический и социокультурный уклад земледельческого населения Ташкентского региона регулировался особым советом, состоявшего из числа горожан. В исследовании затронута военно-полководческая деятельность хана Жолбарыса в казахско-джунгарских войнах первой трети XVIII веков. Особое внимание уделено вопросу взаимоотношений хана Жолбарыса с Российским государством. На основе сопоставления русских переводов XVIII века и современного перевода с оригинала на чагатайском турки изучены тексты послания влиятельных лиц Старшего жуза (Төле би Алибекулы, Кодара би, батыров Сатай, Кангельды и Болека) и некоторых писем хана Жолбарыса к русскому правительству. Результаты проведенного анализа показывают истинный смысл намерений представителей кочевой элиты Старшего жуза по вопросу принятия казахами данного этнотерриториального объединения подданства России в первой половине XVIII века.

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### Introduction

What do we know about the Qazaq Zholbarys Khan, who was active in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century? In most studies, he is referred to as the khan of the Senior Zhuz, while only in some works is it specified that he ruled a certain part of the clans of this ethno-territorial union in southern Qazaqstan. The residence of Zholbarys Khan was in the city of Tashkent; however, Central Asian specialists point out that his authority over the sedentary population of the agricultural oasis was limited to tax collection and the supervision of trade caravan movement across the Qazaq Steppe.

Soviet historiography asserted that in the 1730s, Zholbarys Khan, along with other representatives of the Qazaq ruling elite, intended to accept Russian suzerainty. Yet as early as the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Aleksei Levshin, having examined the text of a personal address from the khan of the “Great Horde” to the Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna (1693–1740, reigned 1730–1740), dated 20 April 1738, concluded that “Yulbars” Khan was not thinking of “submission” to Russia, but only of securing “commercial advantage.”

There remain, however, other questions regarding the personality and activities of Zholbarys Khan that have not yet received due attention in domestic historiography. It must be acknowledged that the scarcity of materials concerning the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century still prevents researchers from fully illuminating a few events in the history of southern and southeastern parts of present Qazaqstan during this period. The study of Zholbarys Khan’s life and career could help clarify some of these matters. This is the aim of the present research, examining the activities of Zholbarys, the khan of the Senior Zhuz, who played a certain role in the political life of southern Qazaqstan and Central Asia during the period under consideration.

### Materials and Methods

The principal source base for this study consists of published archival materials from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AFPRE/АВПРИ) and the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RSAAA/РГАДА), issued at various times in document collections [Vyatkin (ed.) 1948; Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961; Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007]. These sources represent a body of documentary materials of various genres, covering the earliest contacts between the ruling elite of the Senior Zhuz and the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century, historical and ethnographic information on the Qazaqs of southern and southeastern Qazaqstan in the pre-colonial period, and various aspects of the interaction between the inhabitants of agricultural regions and Qazaq nomadic tribes. A significant addition to the above-mentioned materials is provided by the personal letters of Zholbarys Khan, discovered and published not so long ago [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231–235]. The collection contains two versions of these letters: an eighteenth-century Russian translation and a modern translation from the original in Chagatai Turkic.

The methodological framework of the study rests on the traditional general scholarly principles of historicism, systematization, scientific rigor, and objectivity, which made it possible to combine various methods of analysis. In addressing the main questions of the stated research topic, methods of historical-comparative, problem-historical, and socio-cultural analysis have been applied.

### Discussion

The earliest information about the activities of Zholbarys Khan is recorded in the works of pre-revolutionary authors devoted to the history of modern-era Qazaqstan [Dobrosmyslov 1912; Levshin 1996; Andreev 1998]. Of particular interest among them is the work of Aleksei Levshin, who examined the reasons behind Zholbarys Khan’s rapprochement with the Russian authorities in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The extent of influence exercised by the Senior Zhuz nomadic elite on the political and socio-economic life of the Tashkent oasis is discussed in the studies of Soviet Uzbek authors. Several scholarly works on the history of the Tashkent oasis in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were published during Soviet times, shed light on the facts of the region’s governance by Qazaq rulers [Ziyaev 1971; Chekhovich 1976].

Certain aspects of the topic at hand are traceable in the works of Vladimir Moiseev, who studied the relations between the Dzungar Khanate and the Qazaq Khanate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century [Moiseev 1983; Moiseev 1991]. The role of the Senior Zhuz ruling elite during the studied period is also reflected in the research of Irina Erofeeva. In her biography of a prominent Qazaq military leader and statesman of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Abulkhair Khan (1680–1748), some information is given about members of the Senior Zhuz nomadic elite of the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

[Erofeeva 1997; Erofeeva 2007; Erofeeva et al. 2008]. These works mention Steppe rulers by name, including Zholbarys Khan's father, Abdullah Khan, who maintained a permanent residence in Tashkent, and they address the participation of the Senior Zhuz ruling elite in the Qazaqs' struggle against Dzungar invaders.

In addition, the two-volume publication «Эпистолярное наследие казахской правящей элиты, 1675–1821» (*Epistolary Heritage of the Qazaq Ruling Elite, 1675–1821*), authored and compiled by Irina Erofeeva, contains detailed biographical references on Senior Zhuz khans Zholbarys and Zhabasar [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231–233, 241–243].

## Results

Only fragmentary and incomplete information has survived concerning the representatives of the aristocratic *tore* strata, the Chinggisids, who governed the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and the first two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is known that during this period, several rulers simultaneously headed the Qazaq clans of this ethno-territorial union. Iman Khan (late 17<sup>th</sup>–early 18<sup>th</sup> century) and his son Rustem-Bahadur Khan (r. c. 1681–1712) ruled over the *Zhanys*, *Seikym*, and *Shymyr* clans (all belonging to the Dulat tribe), as well as the *Syrgeli* and *Shanyshqyly* tribes [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231]. Some clans of the Senior Zhuz, who roamed in the valley of the middle reaches of the Syr Darya River and in the vicinity of the city of Turkestan, were subject to Tursun II Khan (r. c. 1694–1717), ruler of most of the clans of the *Qonyrat* tribe and some clans of the Naiman tribe of the Middle Zhuz. Tursun II's residence was in the city of Ikan [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 25, 380].

From the beginning of the second decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, sources mention Rustem-Bahadur Khan's son, Asfandiyar Khan (r. c. 1712–before 1730), and Abdullah Khan (d. 1718/19) [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231]. The dynastic origin of Abdullah Khan is unknown. According to some sources, he administered the city of Tashkent and the adjacent agricultural districts jointly with his full brother, Qarabak Sultan [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 25]. At the same time, nothing can be said with certainty about the members of the Steppe aristocracy who ruled the tribes of the Senior Zhuz in Zhetysu. According to historical data from the political map of Dzungaria in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, compiled by the Swedish cartographer and prisoner of war Johan Gustaf Renat (1682–1744), at that time these areas were under Dzungar rule, which makes it significantly more difficult to shed light on the socio-political situation in the region [Erofeeva 2007: 83].

After Abdullah Khan's death, his son, Zholbarys Sultan (1690–1739), ascended the khan's throne. In 1720, he was proclaimed ruler of the *Shymyr* clan of the *Dulat* tribe and of the *Sary-Uysun*, *Qangly*, *Shanyshqyly*, *Alban*, *Suan*, and *Ysty* tribes of the Senior Zhuz [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231]. Like his father, he maintained a permanent residence in Tashkent. His pasturelands were in the valleys of the Chirchik, Chu, Talas, and Arys rivers, in the area between Turkestan and Tashkent, as well as in that part of the Fergana Valley adjacent to Tashkent [Qozybaev et al. (eds.) 2000: 99; Erofeeva 1997: 76]. In the history of eighteenth-century Qazaqstan, Zholbarys Khan is known primarily as the first among the Senior Zhuz Steppe elite to attempt rapprochement with Russia. Information on Zholbarys's activities is found mainly in Russian sources; no references to him have been identified in Kokand historiography.

According to Steppe tradition, the primary function of the Khan's authority among the Qazaqs was military-political activity, that is, organizing the armed defense of the population against foreign invasion and conducting military campaigns into neighboring ethno-cultural regions [Erofeeva 2007: 57]. During peacetime, the Khan authority's importance was reduced to a minimum. Consequently, Zholbarys Khan exercised administrative and judicial-arbitration authority over the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz in the Tashkent oasis jointly with the influential elder of the *Zhanys* clan of the *Dulat* tribe, Töle Bi Alibekuly (1663–1758). During Zholbarys's reign, and with the

participation of this influential *bi*, the inhabitants of Tashkent and nearby urban settlements were required to pay an annual monetary levy of 40,000 tenge to the Khan's treasury [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 96]. The tribute was collected in both money and goods: one-fifth of the grain harvest and one-tenth of the livestock.

The nomads did not interfere in the internal governance of the sedentary agricultural population, limiting themselves to collecting *yasak* and monitoring the movement of trade caravans. The urban population was governed by a special administrative body, referred to in Russian archival sources as a “magistrate,” consisting of ten “city holders.” Judicial proceedings for urban residents were conducted according to Sharia law, while for nomads they were based on customary law. It should be noted that tax collection was not always carried out peacefully; tax collectors often plundered the inhabitants of the oasis, which inevitably led to clashes between the nomads and the urban population [Ziyaev 1971: 54]. Eventually, this led to more tragic events.

Before the Dzungar invasion of Qazaqstan in 1723, Zholbarys's co-rulers included: the senior khan of the three Qazaq zhuzes, Abulkhair Khan (1721); the khan of certain divisions of the *Shymyr* clan of the *Dulat* tribe, Tursun III Khan, son of Tauke Khan; the khan of the *Qapal* branch of the *Zhanys* clan of the *Dulat* tribe, Jahangir Khan (or Zhangir; killed in 1741/42); and Jaubasar Khan (d. 1749), most likely a close relative of Zholbarys Khan [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231].

Zholbarys's reign coincided with the most difficult stage of the Qazaq–Dzungar confrontation. In the early decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, despite ongoing Oirat incursions into southeastern and southern Qazaqstan, the Qazaqs managed to withstand the onslaught of external enemies. As a result, up until the early 1720s, the khans and sultans of the southern regions remained independent rulers of their domains [Moiseev 1983: 180].

However, in the early 1720s the political situation began to turn against the Qazaq khanates. In February–March 1723, Dzungar forces commanded by Noyon Louzan-Shono (d. 1732), the son of Tsevan-Rabdan Khuntaiji (1697–1726), invaded Qazaqstan. The Qazaqs of the southern and southeastern regions were the first to bear the brunt of the attack. Between 1723 and 1725, having lost a significant portion of their population and property in a fierce and bloody struggle with the Dzungars, Zholbarys Khan and the Qazaq clans under his authority were forced to migrate deep into Central Asia, into the regions of Samarkand and Bukhara [Tynyshpaev 2007: 201].

The Central Asian historian Khojamquli-bek Balkhi recorded accounts of joint actions by Qazaq nomads and the inhabitants of Tashkent:

*«Поскольку кунтайджи (калмык) назначил своего сына для завоевания юрта казахов: Ташкента, Андижана, Сайрама и прибрежных районов Сейхуна (реки Сырдарья), примерно три лака казахов совместно с ташкентцами перепоясались поясом ратоборства. Построив войска, обе стороны (в течение) месяца непрерывно сражались с утра до вечера. Творец премудрый дал неверным победу над мусульманами. Примерно лак людей испили щербет мученической кончины. Казахи потерпели жестокое поражение. Более одного лака пятидесяти тысяч домов, обращенных с бегство, поспешили в сторону Самарканда. Население Ташкента и Андижана с дарами и подношениями вышло навстречу (победителям) и согласилось на уплату хараджа»*

*“Since the khuntaiji (Kalmyk) appointed his son to conquer the yurt of the Qazaqs: Tashkent, Andijan, Sayram, and the coastal areas of the Seykhun (Syr Darya River), approximately three lakhs (300000) of Qazaqs, together with the Tashkentis, girded themselves with the belt of battle. Having drawn up their forces, both sides fought continuously from morning to evening for the space of a month. The All-Wise Creator granted the infidels victory over the Muslims. About one lakh of people drank the sherbet of a martyr's death. The Qazaqs suffered a crushing defeat. More than one lakh and fifty thousand households, driven to flight, hastened toward Samarkand. The population of Tashkent and Andijan, bearing gifts and offerings, went out to meet the victors and agreed to pay kharaj” [Moiseev 1991: 73–74].*

After seizing Tashkent, Sayram, Karamurt, and other southern cities, the Dzungars, with some brief interruptions, held this region under their control for several decades.

The scale of the calamity suffered by the Qazaq clans in these years can be gauged from the fact that, by the mid-1720s, the frontier of Qazaq lands under Oirat authority lay near the Aral Qaraqum in western Qazaqstan [Erofeeva 2007: 183]. The loss of many pastures, the forced migration of Qazaq clans from their traditional territories, the devastation of *auls*, and the loss of life led to a realization of the need to unite the fragmented Steppe alliances.

In the autumn of 1726, in the locality of Ordabasy, on a high hill above the Badam River, a *qurultai* of representatives of all three zhuzes was convened [Qozybaev et al. (eds.) 2000: 69]. According to another version, this landmark event took place in the Aral Karakum, which at that time was the border zone between Qazaq territories and the possessions of the Dzungars [Erofeeva 2007: 183].

Participants in the assembly included Khans Abulkhair, Abulmambet, Zholbarys, and Sameke, as well as influential *biys* of the Qazaq clans led by Töle Alibekuly, Qazybek Keldibekuly, and Ayteke Baybekuly, together with renowned *batyrs* and military leaders. The assembly adopted two significant decisions: the organization of a united Qazaq militia against the Dzungars, and the election of a supreme commander of the all-Qazaq militia. The choice fell upon Abulkhair Khan, who by that time was already well known among the people for his organizational skills and military valor.

Zholbarys Khan, as one of the military commanders, took an active part in the liberation struggle of the Qazaq people against foreign invaders. Having distinguished himself on the battlefield, he earned, for his military merits, the honorary title of *bahadur* (Turko-Mong. *batyr*) among the people. This significantly strengthened Zholbarys's military and political position among the Qazaq clans of the Senior Zhuz.

In May 1730, the khans of the three *zhuzes*, i. e. Abulkhair Khan, Zholbarys Khan, and Sameke Khan, concluded a peace treaty with the Oirat ruler Galdan-Tseren (1695–1745), which brought an end to the longest and bloodiest Qazaq–Dzungar war [Erofeeva et al. 2008: 81]. Zholbarys Khan reasserted his authority in Tashkent, as later reported to the College of Foreign Affairs by Ivan Kirillov (1695–1737), head of the Orenburg Expedition [Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 120–121]. Compared to the prewar period, the Khan's political influence grew substantially: he managed to extend his authority not only over Tashkent and its surroundings, but also over towns located in the valleys of the Keles, Chirchik, and Akhangaran rivers, such as Sayram, Shymkent, Chodak, Khandalak, Khodzhikent, Nushba, Namdanak, Parkent, Zatkent, Qaramurt, and several others [Dobrosmyslov 1912: 18]. At this time, Zholbarys's only co-ruler over the Tashkent oasis was Jaubasar Khan [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 231, 242].

With the assistance of the prominent Senior Zhuz *bi* Töle Alibekuly, the Khan also collected tribute from the inhabitants of nearby small towns. During this period, to secure the support of certain minor khans and sultans, Zholbarys Khan granted them temporary control over sedentary districts adjacent to Tashkent [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 28].

However, despite the relatively stable situation in the region, the Qazaq tribes, being heavily devastated in previous years, were unable to fully restore their economic position or consolidate the military successes achieved by the people's militia between 1727 and 1730. Moreover, the Dzungar rulers had no intention of abandoning their ambitions to subjugate Qazaq lands. Raids on Qazaq encampments continued.

In 1734–1735, Galdan-Tseren, eldest son of Tsevan-Rabdan, once again established political control over southern Qazaqstan and the Tashkent oasis. Zholbarys Khan was forced to submit to the Dzungar ruler and, at his demand, send his son, Abylai Sultan, as an *amanat* (hostage) [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 54; Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 232]. In addition, the Qazaqs of the

Senior Zhuz were obliged to pay the Dzungar ruler an annual tribute of one steppe fox pelt per household. At the same time, the Dzungar authorities conducted a census of households in Tashkent and surrounding urban settlements (a practice considered a “sinful deed” under Muslim customs of the period) [Moiseev 1991: 108]. Around this same period, presumably in 1733, Zholbarys Khan was compelled to cede part of the cities under his control in the southern Tashkent oasis to the Kokand ruler, who had consolidated his position in the Fergana Valley [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 30].

In 1733, Zholbarys Khan took his first steps toward establishing political relations with Russia. In December of that year, together with the Abulkhair Khan embassy which included the latter’s son, Eraly Sultan, the envoys of the “Great Horde,” Aralbai and Arazgeldy Batyr, arrived in St. Petersburg bearing a letter from influential elders of the Senior Zhuz: Töle Bi Alibekuly, Kodar Bi, and *batyrs* Satay, Qangeldy, and Bolek, addressed to the Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna. At an audience held by the College of Foreign Affairs, the envoys verbally declared:

*Большая орда е. и. в. будет служить, как и протчия подданные е. и. в. и все повеления исполнять будут и желают купечество распространять в Ташкент, в Самарканд, в Бухары, в Хиву, в Тюркюстан, в Хожани в протчия тамошие места, и от тех – в российские города*

*The Great Horde will serve Her Imperial Majesty as do all other subjects of Her Imperial Majesty, will carry out all commands, and wishes to expand trade to Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Turkestan, Khojand, and other places there, and from those—to the Russian cities* [Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 101–103].

The content of the letter from the influential figures of the Senior Zhuz was interpreted by the translator as:

*Вам, великой государыне императрице и белой царице, в подданство пришли.*

*We, to you, Great Sovereign Empress and White Tsarina, have come into subjecthood.*

However, Timur Beisembiev’s modern translation from the original Chagatai Turkic text shows that the true meaning of these words differed from the eighteenth-century rendering. The literal meaning of the phrase is:

*Преклоняем голову перед белым ханом, великим падишахом*

*We bow our heads to the White Khan, the Great Padishah* [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 56].

This fact also casts doubt on the accuracy of the translated verbal statement made by Aralbai and Arazgeldy to the imperial court. Nevertheless, the Russian government, eager to secure the inclusion of the Senior Zhuz Qazaqs into the Russian Empire as soon as possible, interpreted the address of the tribal-union representatives in a manner favorable to its aims.

The result was the “highest” charter signed by the Empress on 10 June 1734, instructing the influential figures of the “Kirghiz-Kaysak Great Horde” to come to the head of the Orenburg Expedition, State Councillor Ivan Kirillov, and Colonel Kutlu-Mukhammed Tevkelev (1674–1766), “and having taken the oath of allegiance to us... serve us faithfully” [Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 118–119].

In the spring of 1735, upon learning of the arrival in Abulkhair’s camp of Colonel Kutlu-Mukhammed Tevkelev, translator of the College of Foreign Affairs, Zholbarys Khan sent to the Russian envoy Qonay-murza Balyquly, a *batyr* of the *Shymyr* clan of the *Dulat* tribe, and an ordinary Qazaq, Syrymbet, accompanied by Tashkent merchant Nurmukhammed Alimov, with a letter. However, they failed to meet the Russian representative in Abulkhair Khan’s encampments: shortly before, Tevkelev had departed for St. Petersburg, and Zholbarys Khan’s message never reached its recipient [Erofeeva 2007: 286–287].

In the meantime, the Orenburg authorities seized the opportunity to question Nurmukhammed Alimov and record his “accounts” of the Qazaq khans, of the cities of Tashkent and Turkestan, and of “other noteworthy places” in the Central Asian region. In fact, the information provided by the Tashkent merchant became the earliest known historical and ethnographic materials on the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz and on the cities of southern Qazaqstan and the Tashkent oasis [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 24–31].

In the summer of 1738, Vasily Tatishchev (1686–1750), head of the Orenburg Expedition, organized the first ever Russian trade caravan to Tashkent. The head of the trade-political mission was appointed Lieutenant Karl Miller of the Penza Garrison Infantry Regiment, accompanied by geodesist Second Lieutenant Aleksei Kushelev, tasked with describing the route. In the special instructions prepared for this mission, Miller was ordered to “*obtain duty-free trade for Russian merchants and endeavor to travel to the Bukhara cities,*” to study the assortment of Russian goods in demand in local Asian markets, to compile a list of goods that might interest Russian consumers, to gather information on Russian captives located there and secure their release from the Tashkent khan, to collect data on valuable deposits in the vicinity of Tashkent, and to prepare a topographical description of the route taken. In addition, Lieutenant Miller was to deliver a personal letter from Vasily Tatishchev to Zholbarys Khan [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 7–8, 37].

The expedition, however, failed to reach Tashkent safely. In November 1738, near Turkestan, by the Balakampir tract, the merchants were attacked by Qazaqs of the Middle Zhuz. All goods were plundered, and members of the trade caravan, except for the mission leader, were taken captive. The attackers also seized the letter from the Russian representative in Orenburg addressed to Zholbarys Khan. Karl Miller himself was able to reach Tashkent thanks to the patronage of Qonay-murza Balyquly, an influential elder of the southern Qazaqs [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 36–37].

Meanwhile, even before Lieutenant Miller’s arrival in Tashkent, an event of significance for the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz took place at the imperial court. On 19 September 1738, Empress Anna Ioannovna signed a charter accepting Zholbarys Khan, together with the clans of the Senior Zhuz under his authority, into Russian subjecthood, and instructed the head of the Orenburg Commission, Tatishchev, to deliver the said charter to its recipient and to conduct the oath-taking ceremony soon. It may be assumed that this decision was based on Zholbarys Khan’s personal letters to the Russian Empress and to Privy Councillor Vasily Tatishchev dated 20 April 1738 [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 233–235]. The way these messages were delivered to the Orenburg administration remains unknown. The texts of these letters, along with two subsequent ones dated 3 April 1739, became accessible to a broad circle of researchers only after the 2014 publication of the two-volume document collection, the above-mentioned *Epistolary Heritage of the Qazaq Ruling Elite, 1675–1821*.

From Lieutenant Miller’s travel notes, it is known that the Russian trade caravan departed from Orenburg for Tashkent on 29 August 1738. The translations of Zholbarys Khan’s letters had been completed by Mansur Abdrakhmanov, the regular interpreter of the Orenburg Commission, on 2 August. From this, it can be inferred that Karl Miller was aware of the contents of these documents.

In the publication, the texts of the letters are presented in two versions: the eighteenth-century translation and Timur Beisembiev’s modern translation from the Chagatai Turkic original. As it was with the translation of the 1733 letter from the influential *biys* and *batyrs* of the Senior Zhuz (Töle Alibekuly, Kodar, and batyrs Satay, Kangeldy, and Bolek), Tatar interpreter Mansur Abdrakhmanov mistranslated the text of Zholbarys Khan’s personal letter to Empress Anna Ioannovna of 20 April 1738. In the letter, the ruler of the southern Qazaqs expressed his wish to “unite” with Russia in anticipation of a likely external attack, assuring the “White Padishah” that “...we will be your



Fig. 1. The skin of a Turanian tiger, which covered the tombstone of Khan Zholbarys in the mausoleum of Ahmad Yasawi in Turkestan for about three centuries. 18th century. The Republican National State Enterprise National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve «Aziret Sultan». Source: [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014].

1-сур. Қожа Ахмет Ясауи кесенесіндегі Жолбарыс хан құлпытасына үш ғасырдай жабулы тұрған Тұран жолбарысының терісі. XVIII ғасыр. Түркістан, «Әзірет Сұлтан» Ұлттық тарихи-мәдени музей-қорығы. Дереккөз: [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014].

Рис. 1. Шкура туранского тигра, покрывавшая около трех веков надгробие хана Жолбарыса в мавзолее Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави в Туркестане. XVIII век. Национальный историко-культурный музей-заповедник «Әзірет Сұлтан». Источник: [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014].

slaves” and “...are ready to carry out any of your orders.” In the eighteenth-century translation, however, this passage was rendered as:

*Ея императорскому величеству я, Юлбарыс-хан, в подданство отдаюь ...и какой е.и.в. указ к нам будет, и мы исполнять готовы.*

*To Her Imperial Majesty, I, Yulbarys Khan, submit myself into subjecthood...and whatever order Her Imperial Majesty gives to us, we are ready to fulfill.*

There are also significant differences in meaning between the translations of Zholbarys’s letter to the head of the Orenburg Commission, Privy Councillor Tatishchev [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 233–234]. At that time, Zholbarys Khan’s main aim was to establish regular transit trade between Russia and the sedentary population of the Tashkent oasis under his authority, as well as with neighboring Central Asian states.

The Russian envoy, Lieutenant Karl Miller, stayed in Tashkent from 9 November 1738 to 3 April 1739. During his time in the city, he met several times with Zholbarys Khan, his close relative and co-ruler Jaubasar Khan, and the influential elder Töle Bi Alibekuly. On visiting Zholbarys Khan’s camp the day before his departure, Miller received two letters from the Khan: one addressed to Empress Anna Ioannovna and the other to Privy Councillor Tatishchev. In his messages, Zholbarys Khan, while acknowledging the regrettable incident of Russian merchants being plundered by

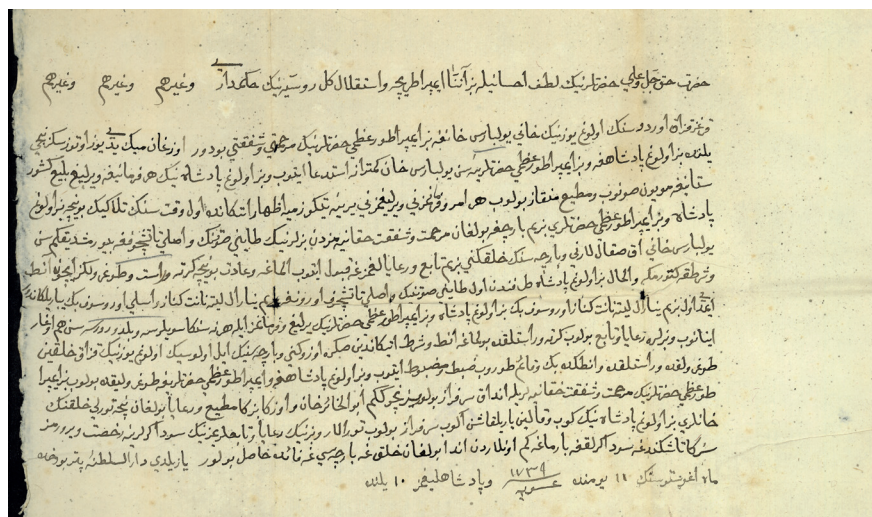
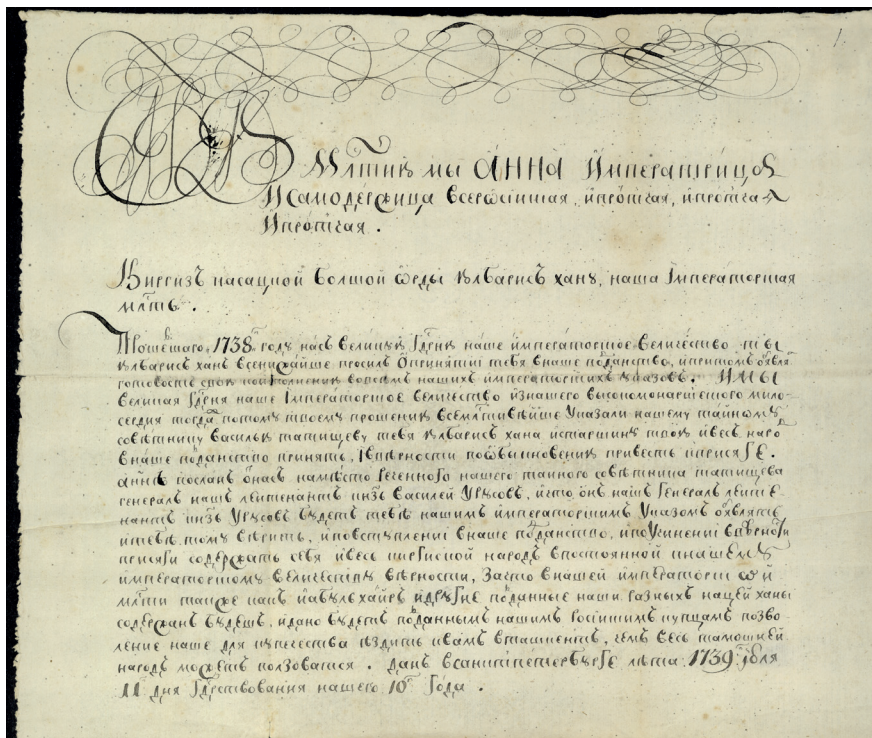


Fig. 2–3. Letter from Empress Anna Ioannovna to Khan of the Kirgis-Kaisak Great Horde Yul-Boris on accepting him and his people into Russian citizenship. St. Petersburg, July 11, 1739. Text in Russian and Turkic. Fragments of the wax seal are partially preserved on the sheet. 2 sheets. Source: Nikolay Lobachevsky Scientific Library of Kazan Federal University. Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books. Inv. No. 4864.

2–3-сур. Императрица Анна Иоанновнаың Ұлы жүз ханы Жолбарысқа «оны және оның халқын Ресей бодандығына қабылдау» туралы грамотасы. Санкт-Петербург, 11 шілде, 1739. Орыс және түркі тілдеріндегі мәтін. Парақта балауыз мөрдiң фрагменттерi iшiнара сақталған. 2 парақ. Дереккөз: Научная библиотека имени Николая Лобачевского атындағы Қазан федералдық университетiнiң ғылыми кiтапханасы. Қолжазбалар мен сирек кiтаптар бөлiмi. Инв. № 4864.

Рис. 2–3. Грамота императрицы Анны Иоановны хану Киргис-кайсацкой Большой орды Юл-Борису о принятии его и его народа в русское подданство. Санкт-Петербург, 11 июля 1739 г. Текст на русском и тюрки. На листе частично сохранились фрагменты сургучной печати. 2 листа. Источник: Научная библиотека имени Николая Лобачевского Казанского федерального университета. Отдел рукописей и редких книг. Инв. № 4864.

nomads, nevertheless expressed hope for the further development of trade relations with Russia [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 235].

However, the sudden assassination of Zholbarys Khan by Uzbek khojas, the *batyrs* Qara and Sara, on 5 April 1739, during a religious service in a Tashkent Mosque, pushed back for many decades the process of rapprochement between the ruling elite of the Senior Zhuz and the Russian Empire [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 45]. According to Aleksei Kushelev, companion of Lieutenant Karl Miller on the 1738–1739 journey, in retaliation for Zholbarys Khan's murder by the Uzbek khojas, the *Shymyr* clan of the *Dulat* tribe of the Senior Zhuz carried out a *pogrom* in Tashkent's urban quarters and plundered several trade caravans of Tashkent merchants [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 53; Dobrosmyslov 1912: 22]. The Senior Zhuz khan was buried with honors in Turkestan, in the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi. According to a surviving tradition, Zholbarys Khan's grave was covered with the skin of a Turanian tiger, upon which "ram's horns, the gift of pilgrims, were placed, and beside it stood the 'lamp of the khan,' heavily blackened from the abundant burning of tallow candles" [Masson 1930: 17–18].

Few details have survived about Zholbarys Khan's descendants. Two adult sons survived the Khan. The elder son, Abulgazy Sultan, accompanied his father and assisted him in governing the Qazaqs of the Senior Zhuz. In 1740, with the support of the Dzungar Khuntaiji Galdan-Tseren, Abulgazy Sultan received the Khan's title and leadership over the Senior Zhuz clans in the Tashkent residence [Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 188]. His rule, however, proved short-lived; already in early 1742, the Dzungar Khuntaiji removed Abulgazy Khan, replacing him with one Kusek-bek, who came from the sedentary population of Tashkent. The second son, Abylai Sultan, after returning from the Dzungar Khanate, where he had been sent as an *amanat*, ruled certain divisions of the *Shymyr* clan of the *Dulat* tribe and the *Sary-Uysun* tribe of the Senior Zhuz [Andreev 1998: 75–76]. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to Russian historian Andreev, Abylai Sultan's son and Zholbarys Khan's grandson named Churegai had under his authority the *Qanly* and *Shanyshqyly* clan groups of the Senior Zhuz, who roamed in southern Qazaqstan.

Jaubasar Khan, a close relative of Zholbarys Khan, retained his influence in the Tashkent region until the end of his life. Research by Irina Erofeeva shows that Jaubasar was recognized as khan of the *Zhanys* clan of the *Dulat* tribe and the *Seikym* tribe of the Senior Zhuz no later than 1724 and appears repeatedly in Kokand chronicles under various names (Bahadur Khan, Bahadur-Ferman). After Zholbarys Khan's death, he jointly ruled the Tashkent oasis with Zholbarys's elder son, Abulgazy Khan, maintaining political influence in the region even under the Dzungar appointee Kusek-bek in 1742–1744. He took an active part in the Qazaq–Dzungar wars, as attested by the honorary title of *bahadur* on his personal seal [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 241–243]. In March–April 1739, Jaubasar Khan personally met several times with the Russian envoy Lieutenant Karl Miller and likewise expressed interest in developing trade relations between the sedentary and nomadic populations of the Tashkent oasis and Russian merchants [Erofeeva, Zhanaev (eds.) 2007: 40–45]. In 1745, in a personal letter to the Orenburg governor, Privy Councillor Ivan Nepliuyev, the Khan reaffirmed his interest in promoting transit trade [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 243].

In the summer of 1744, Dzungar forces again surrounded Tashkent. Töle Bi and Jaubasar Khan, who had sided with the Kokandis, were forced to withdraw from the city. Responding to the southern Qazaqs' calls for aid, Zhanibek Batyr of the Middle Zhuz, and Qarasaqal, the leader of the 1739–1740 Bashkir Uprising, who had been hiding in the Steppe under the name of the Khuntaiji's brother Shono-Louzan, came to their assistance [Moiseev 1983: 74]. According to the Orientalist historian Olga Chekhovich, in 1747 the tribal leadership of the Senior Zhuz managed to restore its authority in the region, but in 1749, repeating Zholbarys Khan's tragic

fate, Jaubasar Khan was killed by Uzbek khojas, and the property of his relatives was plundered [Chekhovich 1976: 152].

## Conclusion

Based on the historical materials at our disposal, it is difficult to determine to what extent Zholbarys Khan stood out for personal bravery or possessed any exceptional organizational and military leadership abilities. The foregoing analysis of Zholbarys's military and socio-political activities shows that he was repeatedly compelled to adapt to the circumstances into which fate placed him. To some degree, dependence on several external and internal political and socio-cultural factors shaped his decision-making.

At the same time, the study of his letters to the Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna and to the head of the Orenburg Commission, Privy Councillor Tatishchev, dated 20 April 1738, indicates that the Senior Zhuz khan had a clear understanding of the foreign policy situation surrounding him. He did not envision rapprochement with Russia as the conclusion of any form of military-political alliance with the distant northern neighbor, but rather as the establishment of trade relations. His last letters, sent through Lieutenant Karl Miller in early April 1739, confirm this. Lacking any expressions of deference toward the recipient, the letter to the Russian Empress merely conveyed regret over the robbery of the Russian caravan by nomads; an expedition intended to be the first step toward establishing trade relations between Steppe elite of the Senior Zhuz and the Russian state. This is most likely the context for his words:

*И устыдясь, посланцов не могли послать*

*And being ashamed, we could not send the envoys* [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 235].

Another noteworthy point relates to the question of Zholbarys Khan's acceptance of Russian subjecthood. In his work, Aleksei Levshin expressed the opinion that Abulkhair Khan persuaded the Senior Zhuz khan to accept Russian allegiance. We believe that the author's conclusion is based on the decision of the College of Foreign Affairs to reward Abulkhair Khan with a special charter for "bringing the Great Horde into subjecthood" [Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 104, 106]. This idea is also partly reflected in Empress Anna Ioannovna's charter to the *biys* and *batyrs* of the Senior Zhuz:

*А подданной наш Абулхаир-хан всеподданнейше нам доносил, что он вас уже в подданство наше и принял и с тем прислал сюда, ко двору нашему*

*And our subject, Abulkhair Khan, most humbly informed us that he has already accepted you into our subjecthood and has sent you here, to our court, with that.*

This statement is further supported by the protocol records of the College of Foreign Affairs for April of the same year (Kireev et al. (eds.) 1961: 105–106, 118). However, an analysis of Abulkhair Khan's letter to the Russian Empress, sent through his son Eraly Sultan, does not confirm Levshin's view [Erofeeva (ed.) 2014: 111]. Notably, this letter contains not a single mention of Zholbarys Khan or of the Senior Zhuz envoys who arrived in St. Petersburg in December 1733 as part of the embassy from the senior khan of the three Qazaq zhuzes. A definitive confirmation or refutation of this fact will be possible only after further analysis of the sources.

The foreign policy activity of Zholbarys Khan and other rulers of the Senior Zhuz in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was closely tied to Central Asia. On the one hand, this was because during the Qazaq–Dzungar wars, the main encampments of the Senior Zhuz Qazaqs shifted into Central Asian territory, which contributed to maintaining the khans' permanent residence in Tashkent. On the other hand, control over the Tashkent oasis which was a major sedentary agricultural and trade-craft center in the northeast of Central Asia, was of considerable economic and strategic importance for the Steppe elite, providing the nomads with stable trade with the sedentary

population and revenue for the treasury. Moreover, the proximity of the Qazaq political center of Turkestan, home to the main sacred site of the nomads, the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmad, enabled the Senior Zhuz to maintain steady connections with the Junior and Middle zhuzes. All of this formed the basis for the Senior Zhuz tribal leadership's determination to defend its position in the region.

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