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## THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF KOZHABERGEN BATYR IN THE EASTERN FRONTIER POLICY OF THE KAZAKH KHANATE

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**Abstract.** *Introduction.* This article explores the historical significance of the warrior Kozhabergen Zhanibekuly within the framework of relations between the Qing Empire and the Jungar nobility, with particular attention to his role in restoring traditional Kazakh grazing territories in the Zhetysu and Tarbagatai areas. *Goals and objectives* of the study are to examine the actions of Kozhabergen batyr who carried out in alliance with Kazakh sultans and khans in the spheres of military cooperation, trade contacts with Qing officials, and the defense of the eastern frontiers of the Kazakh steppe. The study draws upon archival sources from the State Archive of the Orenburg region, the Archive of foreign policy of the Russian Empire, the First Historical Archive of China, as well as descriptions recorded by Russian travelers. The methodological foundation of the research is based on systematization, critical examination, source criticism, comparative-historical approaches, and logical analysis. *Results.* The conducted analysis provides new perspectives on the role of Kozhabergen batyr as an important figure of his era. The article addresses central issues concerning territorial conflicts between the Qing Empire and the Kazakh Khanate, as well as between the Jungar Khanate and the Kazakh steppes. *Conclusion.* Through the study of archival evidence and historical sources, the research highlights Kozhabergen batyr as a prominent leader in international relations of the latter half of the 18th century, distinguishing him both as an experienced military commander and a capable diplomatic strategist.

**Key words:** Kazakh-Qing relations, steppe diplomacy, Kazakh khanate, Qing Empire, Kazakh-Jungar relations, Kozhabergen batyr, border policy, interethnic relations, nomadic diplomacy, diplomatic missions

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## ҚАЗАҚ ХАНДЫҒЫНЫҢ ШЫҒЫС ШЕКАРАЛАРЫНДАҒЫ САЯСАТЫНДА ҚОЖАБЕРГЕН БАТЫРДЫҢ ТАРИХИ РӨЛІ

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**Аңдатпа.** *Kіріспе.* Автор мақалада батыр Қожаберген Жәнібекұлының Цинь империясы мен ойрат нояндары арасындағы қарым-қатынасы, батырдың Жетісу мен Тарбағатай өңірлеріндегі жайылымдық жерлерін қазаққа қайтару жолындағы күресі тақырыбына зерттеу жүргізіледі. Зерттеудің *мақсаты* Қожаберген батырдың қазақ халқының хан-сұлтандарымен бірлікте Қытай билігімен әскери-сауда байланыстары және қазақ даласының шығыс шекарасын қорғаудағы қызметін сипаттау. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Жұмыстың деректік негізін Орынбор облысы мемлекеттік архиві, Ресей империясы сыртқы саясатының архиві, Қытайдың Бірінші тарихи архивінің құжаттары, орыс саяхатшыларының жазбаларындағы материалдар құрады. Мақала жүйелеу, сыни-талдау, баға беру, салыстырмалы-тарихи, логикалық талдау әдістері негізінде жазылды. *Нәтижелер.* Тақырыпты қарастыруда алынған нәтижелер мен ой-қорытындылар негізгі зерттеу объектісіне айналып отырған батыр Қожабергеннің тарихтағы рөлін бағамдауға мүмкіндік берді. Зерттеу нәтижесінде Цин патшалығы мен Қазақ хандығы, Жоңғар хандығы мен Қазақ даласы арасындағы жер мәселесіне қатысты кейбір мәселелер талқыланды. *Қорытынды.* Зерттеуде қолданылған архив құжаттары мен тақырып аясындағы зерттеулерді талдау нәтижесінде XVIII ғасырдың екінші жартысындағы халықаралық қатынастар тоғысындағы беделді тұлға Қожаберген батырдың ержүрек күрескер, ойлы дипломат ретіндегі тұлғалық келбеті тарихи деректер негізінде ашылды.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қазақ-Цин қатынастары, дала дипломатиясы, Қазақ хандықтары, Цин империясы, шекара саясаты, этносаралық қатынастар, көшпенділер дипломатиясы, дипломатиялық миссиялар

**Алғыс.** Мақала Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің «Қазақстан тарихы бойынша иллюстрацияланған өмірбаяндық энциклопедия жазу» атты бағдарламалық-нысаналы қаржыландыру (тіркеу нөмірі: BR24993173) аясында дайындалды.

**Дәйексөз үшін:** Оралова А.А. Қазақ хандығының шығыс шекараларындағы саясатында Қожаберген батырдың тарихи рөлі // Asian Journal “Steppe Panorama”. 2025. Т. 12. № 6. 1707-1719 бб. (Ағылш.). DOI: 10.51943/2710-3994\_2025\_12\_6\_1707-1719

## ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ РОЛЬ КОЖАБЕРГЕНА БАТЫРА В ПОЛИТИКЕ КАЗАХСКОГО ХАНСТВА НА ВОСТОЧНЫХ РУБЕЖАХ

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**Аннотация.** *Введение.* В данной статье рассматривается историческая значимость воина Кожабержена Жанибекулы в контексте отношений между Цинской империей и ойратской знатью, с особым вниманием к его роли в восстановлении традиционных казахских пастбищных территорий в районах Жетысу и Тарбагатай. *Цель исследования* – проанализировать деятельность Кожабержена батыра, осуществлённую им в союзе с казахскими султанами и ханами, в сферах военного сотрудничества, торговых контактов с цинскими чиновниками и защиты восточных рубежей Казахской степи. Исследование опирается на архивные источники Государственного архива Оренбургской области, Архива внешней политики Российской империи, Первого исторического архива Китая, а также на описания, оставленные русскими путешественниками. Методологическая основа работы включает систематизацию, критический анализ, источниковедческий подход, сравнительно-исторические методы и логическое осмысление. *Результаты.* Проведённый анализ позволяет по-новому взглянуть на роль Кожабержена батыра как значимой фигуры своей эпохи. В статье рассматриваются ключевые проблемы территориальных конфликтов между Цинской империей и Казахским ханством, а также между Джунгарским ханством и казахскими степями. *Заключение.* На основе изучения архивных данных и исторических источников в исследовании подчёркивается значимость Кожабержена батыра, талантливого военного руководителя и искусного дипломатического стратега.

**Ключевые слова:** Казахско-цинские отношения, степная дипломатия, казахские ханства, Цинская империя, пограничная политика, межэтнические отношения, кочевая дипломатия, дипломатические миссии

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## Introduction

In this turbulent era, when the historical fate and freedom of the Kazakh people were under constant threat for several centuries, and grew serious in half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ablai khan was supported by his trusted ally and military commander, Kozhabergen batyr Zhanibekuly, the head of the Kerei tribe. Despite his significant role, Kozhabergen Zhanibekuly's place in Kazakh history remains insufficiently explored in domestic historiography due to a lack of focused academic research and comprehensive scholarly literature.

Given the available historical data and the tools of modern historiography, it is of critical importance to investigate the relationships between the Kazakh khans and sultans, prominent batyrs, Jungar noyans, and Qing rulers during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These relationships were not limited to military confrontations; they also encompassed diplomatic, economic, and even kinship ties. Alongside military conflicts, there were instances of alliance and cooperation between Kazakh and Jungar elites, as well as with Qing officials.

In this context, analyzing the role of Ablai khan and the batyrs under his command – especially their military and trade relations with Qing diplomats and Jungar noyans – offers valuable insight into the military-political activities of Kozhabergen batyr. Particular attention must be given to his heroic and diplomatic contributions in safeguarding the eastern borders of the Kazakh steppe during a period of great instability.

## Materials and Methods

The research is grounded in a rich base of primary sources, including documents from the State Archive of the Orenburg region, Manchu-Chinese records from the First Historical Archives of China, and accounts by Russian travelers. The study is guided by functionalist theory, which helps elucidate the historical role and actions of figures in Kazakh history whose paths intersected with that of Kozhabergen batyr. Phenomenological analysis is employed to interpret his defense of the eastern frontier, his advisory role to sultan Ablai, and his contributions to international diplomacy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The research also incorporates materials from rare book collections and oral histories recorded from Kozhabergen’s descendants.

## Discussion

The earliest recorded interactions between the Kazakh and Qing peoples date to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was through their mutual entanglement with the Jungar khanate that both tensions and cooperation in Kazakh–Chinese relations began to evolve. While the Kazakhs sought to reclaim ancestral lands occupied by the Jungars, the Qing dynasty at times sought to use the Jungars strategically to weaken and destabilize the Kazakhs. Thus, the Jungar khanate served both as a common concern and a geopolitical tool in shaping early Kazakh–Chinese relations.

In the difficult period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at the crossroads of major states, Kazakh batyrs, like Kozhabergen, distinguished themselves with their military and diplomatic service in protecting the eastern borders of the Kazakh steppe from the enemies. Kozhabergen batyr fought against them on the side of Ablai. Around 1757, the Kozhabergen batyr surrendered to China, who had sided with the Jungars together with Ablai khan, wintered on the banks of the Ishil River and, as the senior officer of the Abak Kerei, led the Kerei in 1750 (Aristov, 1897: 84).

At this point, there is reason to refute the view of researcher Aristov that Kozhabergen submitted to the Chinese. Because Kozhabergen distinguished himself by establishing diplomatic relations with the Chinese not only in military relations, but also through peaceful means, in order to preserve the integrity of the territory.

In his work on the settlement of the Middle Zhuz Abak-Kerei tribe, Kraft, a researcher on the management of the Kirghiz (*auth.* Kazakhs) in the steppe regions, divides the descendants of Abak-Kerei into three groups: Abak, Gerei (Kerei) and Tarakly (Tarakly) (Kraft, 1898: 16). Russian historian G.N. Potanin states that the Kirghiz (*auth.* Kazakhs) occupied the steppe valley of the Black Irtysh, the northern slopes of the Tarbagatai and Saura ranges, and the southern region of Altai, and some Kirghiz (*auth.* Kazakhs) lived as nomads on the banks of the Kobda River. In his writings about the Kirghiz (*auth.* Kazakhs) of 1876-1877, he left information about the Abak-Kerei tribe, the origin of Kozhabergen. “The lands of the Kirghiz (*auth.* Kazakhs) who inhabited the steppe regions of the Black Irtysh were owned by the Abak-Kerei and Kara-Kerei tribes: the former settled in the eastern part of the Irtysh-Zaisan lowland, the latter occupied the western region (Potanin, 1881: 2).

After the establishment of Manchu-Chinese rule in Jungaria, the land issue in the eastern part of Kazakhstan became more acute. The Chinese began to build military fortresses on the Ili River and Tarbagatai in order to prevent Kazakhs from settling in the territories captured from the Dzungars. In August 1757, Kozhabergen and Kara Barak (Kokzhal Barak) visited the Qing military camp, met with the Qing nobles, and demanded them to withdraw from the Tarbagatai region (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 12).

However, the Qing authorities left this request of Kozhabergen unanswered. Of course, when the Chinese authorities did not like this action of the Kozhabergen family, they resorted to attacks on the Kazakhs and the robbery of their horses. Kozhabergen destroyed the Kazakhs under his rule and deprived them of peace. Despite the destruction of his livestock and the people he owned, Kozhabergen was able to fight steadfastly.

In general, in the history of Kazakh-Chinese relations, direct bilateral relations began to develop after the collapse of Dzungaria. In 1757, 1758, 1762, some of the Middle, Minor and Great Zhuz dynasties of the Kazakh Horde separately recognized themselves as vassals of the Qing Empire. The foreign policy of the Qing Empire was the system of vassal dependence that had developed since

ancient times and was the basis for regulating relations with nomadic states. The Qin Empire divided the border peoples surrounding it into "internal vassals" and "external vassals". "Internal vassals" were incorporated in the administrative system of the Qin Empire, while "external vassals" were not included, but maintained relations. The Kazakh khanate's relations with the Qin Empire were recognized as within the "internal vassal" system.

The history of the formation of the border has its own peculiarities and stages. The period before the annexation of the territories of the Middle and Minor Zhuz tribes in Central, Southern and South-Eastern Kazakhstan by Russia is characterized by the efforts of the Kazakh khanate to legally return the lands occupied by the Jungar khanate for some time. Some of these lands were already settled by Kazakh tribes when the Jungar Khanate fell. This task was solved through negotiations with the new conqueror, the Qing Empire, which had taken over all of the Jungar possessions, as well as by the voluntary order of the Kazakhs to resettle in the Northern Tien Shan, Tarbagatai and Mongol-Altai Mountain ranges without permission (Khafizova, 2000: 71).

Ablai's decision to intervene in the difficult issue with China led to the active involvement of Kozhabergen batyr, who sought to resolve bilateral relations peacefully, rather than by military means. Thus, under the direct instruction of Ablai, he developed strategic plans for the Qing Empire and tried to use diplomatic tactics in addition to military action.

In the history of Kazakh-Chinese relations, direct bilateral contacts began to develop after the collapse of Dzungaria. The rulers of the Qing Empire also always took steps to establish close relations with Kozhabergen: "On the evening of the 6th day of the [7th month], the following information came from our guards sent to the Narit Pass: "The Kazakhs – Kozhabergen and Kara Barak – are coming this way with an army [On the 6th], while chasing the traveler's trail, we met 10 of them and greeted each other. According to these Kazakhs, Kozhabergen and Kara Barak are coming this way with an army of 700 people to meet the Junjun nobles" (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 161) - it is said. From the information provided in the document, there is reason to draw the following conclusions: firstly, the names of Kozhabergen and Kara Barak are mentioned together and are considered among the most influential figures after Ablai; secondly, Kazakhs such as Kozhabergen also served as ambassadors in establishing diplomatic relations with the Chinese nobility; thirdly, the Chinese emperor, sensing Kozhabergen's friendly ties with the Jungar noyans, the main opponent of the Qing Empire, focused on Kozhabergen and sought to turn him into an ally.

That is confirmed by the following document: "Khozhahbergen and Kara Barak are considered to be the most important people in your country after Ablai, and moreover, they are coming from afar to meet us, so we will send two of our people with you to greet those Kojabergen and Kara Barak." We decided to send Nawang, the head of the Karachin army, and Sakhtai, the funde-boshoku, who held the position of gabisikhian in the vanguard army, who had met Kojabergen last year" (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 163). That is, the actions of Nawang and Kozhabergen, high-ranking officials of the Qing Empire, to meet Sakhtai, who was previously acquainted with them, in advance, testify to the high prestige of Kozhabergen before the Chinese empire.

Being a close associate of sultan Ablai, Kozhabergen was at the center of Kazakh-Dzhungar and Kazakh-Qing relations. The Jungars often visited his villages, for that reason batyr was sometimes mistaken for Jungar. Kazakh elders and batyrs also entered into kinship relations with neighboring families of Jungar feudal lords or had kinship ties with Jungar batyrs. Jungar women were considered the most attractive prey for the Kazakh army at all times. Kazakh warriors often fought knightly battles with Kalmyk batyrs (Khafizova, 2019: 480). "Kozhabergen (Mongolian sniper, shooter) is a hero of the Kerey tribe of the last century; he lived nomadically with his army on the banks of the Shar River in the southeastern region of the city of Semey and participated in campaigns against the nomadic Kalmyk hordes during the period when the Jungar Khanate was collapsing due to the blows of the Chinese army; but here, of course, we are talking about a person whose name has become legendary" (Potanin, 1881: 35).

Of course, Kozhabergen fought together with the Jungar princes in order to weaken the military power of the Qing government. This is evidenced by the statement of the vizier of the Chinese emperor Agui dated as of August 29, 1758. The message read: "I, the vizier of the emperor Agui, am



sending this statement in connection with the following matter. On July 31, Bukuchagan and Khashoqi were captured by the Kazakhs. When we received the report, the remnants of the Dzungar army, Khashoqi, were retreating along the Irtysh River, when the Russian border guards said: "If you do not obey us, we will contact the Chinese side," and also said that the Kazakh Ablai had set out in pursuit of them with 30 thousand people and that the Russians wanted to force the remnants of the Jungar army to cross the Irtysh River inland. Then, fleeing from the Russians and fearing the troops approaching Dauashik, he said: "...I crossed the river at night, then traveled 6 days, went to the Kazakhs, and met with Kozhabergen. Then, in that village, I learned that Nauan, who had been chasing Bukuchagan, was among the Kazakhs. Then, Kozhabergen's younger brother Zholbasar (Zhaubasar) took me to Baibarak's house, where Bukuchagan lived, and met Bukuchagan. After that, I came with the Kazakhs who were bringing Nauan and Bukuchagan" - (Qazaq Khandığı men CİN patşalıgınıñ, 2018: 75-76).

Thus, the Qin Empire, taking advantage of the internal strife of the Jungar leaders, launched continuous attacks between 1755 and 1757 and completely destroyed the Jungar state. After the Jungar khanate was destroyed, the Kazakhs sought to return to the territories previously occupied by the Jungars. Some of the Jungars captured by the Kazakhs sought to flee to the Qin kingdom, while others were taken by Kazakhs. The Chinese king Heshoqi states that some of the defeated Dzungarians were taking refuge along the Irtysh. The Russian authorities, in order to take advantage of this opportunity wanted to annex the remnants of the Jungar troops. On the one hand, fearing the Russian border guards, and on the other hand and that the Russians would subjugate the remaining Jungar troops, Kheshochi, a vassal of the Chinese emperor and commander of the Jungar unit of the imperial guard, was forced to ask for help from the Kazakhs. It is no coincidence that he met Kozhabergen batyr among them. At this point, it is clear how high the authority and honor of Kozhabergen was. It is clear that he took the Jungar noyans under his protection. Kozhabergen, who was holding Bukuchagan, one of the Jungar leaders who was persecuted by the Kazakh army of Nauan and the Qin, in his village, introduced Kheshochi to Bukuchagan. It is impossible not to notice from these actions of Kozhabergen that was a skillful diplomat and politician.

The following Manchu document states that Kozhabergen batyr as a successor to Ablai, performed military and diplomatic duties on the Qing border along with sultan Abilpeiz: "Although Navan could not meet Ablai himself, Ablai's brother Abilpeiz and Dauletbai batyr, Kozhabergen, and other people live near our border, so Navan could not fail to meet the latter as well..." (Ejenkhanuli, 2007: 216). There is reason to believe that Kozhabergen batyr, who aimed to return the Kazakhs in these regions to their homeland, also performed the duties of a border guard on these lines.

According to historical data, in 1756, the Kazakhs in the eastern regions became the main enemies of the Qin Empire, as a result of which a two-sided war began in the fall. The batyr Kozhabergen fought several battles with the Chinese in July-August 1756. One of such battles was in Yarla (Urzhar). Ablai and Kozhabergen's troops entrenched themselves in a ravine, set up a defense and fought against the Chinese (Qazaqstan tarıhı. Ėnciklopediya, 2018: 645). Another fierce battle of the Kozhabergen Zhanibekuly with the Chinese took place near Yesil.

In 1756, he led the Jungar noyan Amirsana in the Kazakh-Shurshit war, and in the bloody battles that took place in the valleys of the Bayanaul, Ku, and Karkaraly mountains against the Manchu-Chinese invaders, he stood out along with batyrs such as Bogenbai and Zhaugash. In April 1758, he fought with the Mahachins and explored the area from the Irtysh to Lake Ayarak with 1,000 soldiers. In 1766, he fought with the Chinese for the Urzhar and Tarbagatai pastures. In subsequent Chinese documents, the name of Kozhabergen is mentioned among the "prominent" and "reputable Kazakhs" along with the Kabanbai, Dauletbai, and Abilpeyiz sultan (Qazaqtıñ xanı Abılay, 2011: 478). Kozhabergen was at the forefront of the war with the Chinese army and served as a commander.

The Kazakh-Shurshit war took place in 1756-1757. In the Manchu language, general Tseren's statement about the war with the Kazakhs, a man named Duzhbur from the Ulet (Dzungarian Kalmyk) came to us and said: "I am a man of the Karachin tribe. I was sent to build a post in Abrary. On the 8th of this month, more than 200 Kazakh soldiers came and plundered our guard post. Then they

captured me and tortured me, plundered our post. Despite the fact that I was captured, beaten and interrogated, I only told them that our great army was advancing in three directions, one after the other, and that our troops were very numerous. Then they took me with them and brought me here. When I learned that our great army had arrived here, I quietly escaped" (Ejenkhanuli, 2017:194).

The response of the Jungar Duzhbur to the Chinese nobles went like this: "On the 3rd of the 7th month, when we were in the land of Zharly, we were informed that the Kazakhs Kabanbay, Nauryzbay, and others, led more than 2,000 troops and were in the land of Nura with the robber Amirsana and Kozhabergen, and we immediately sent a Kazakh prisoner named Shurman, and we made a decision to go quickly and arrest the robber Amirsana, and we sent a statement about it to the Tsar. Then, in accordance with the Tsar's order, we rode horses and reached the land of Nura on the 11th day of the 7th month, where we captured two Kazakhs named Shulyk and Aralbay and interrogated them" (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 112).

The document mentions the place name "Zharly" as "Yarla", that is, the modern Urzhar region. Unfortunately, the Kazakh batyr and the army led by the Jungar prince were defeated in the battle near Yarla. As a result, the Kazakhs were forced to retreat, and the Chinese army pursued them to the Nura River. The statements of the captured Kazakhs named Shulyk and Aralbay indicate that they were together with the Kozhabergen, Amirsana and that one of their supporters was Kabanbay, one of the prominent Kazakh batyrs. However, the Manchu nobles sent false information about this war to their great kings, claiming that they had defeated the Kazakhs to pieces. The reason for this is that although the Chinese empire had eliminated the Jungar state, they did not mention that their people suffered very heavy losses. The reason for this is that we assume that the Qin kingdom, which attacked the Kazakhs and the peoples of Central Asia in general, aimed to glorify and raise its status.

According to popular legends and oral sources, the story of "Shurchit (Chinese) was killed" is widely told. The geographical area of this historical place covers the plain between Lake Shybyndy and the Shiderty River near Bayanaul. In this historical event, the Kozhabergen, along with his fellow batyrs Kabanbai and Nauryzbai, repulsed the Shurshit army. In this battle, the Jungar noyan Amirsana led the army as a faithful companion of Kozhabergen.

V. Kuznetsov's book "Amursana" also mentions the name of Shulyk, who became a prisoner of China. The Manchu general Dardana tells the story of how he took the captured Kazakhs to question him about Amirsana and demanded his extradition: "Do you know why we came here? We need the bandit and rebel Amirsana. If you do not hand him over to us voluntarily, we will have to use force and slaughter you all. What do you think of this statement?"

There was no response. Understanding the situation, Dardana called the officer and ordered: "Work with these! Make them talk!" After a few hours, the walls of the tent were filled with the terrible sounds of people. At this moment, a Kazakh entered the tent and said: "Stop torturing others. My name is Shruk. I am a close friend of Ablai. I will try to persuade Ablai to give Amirsana." Dardana pretended to agree and ordered her release. As a result, Dardana gave the Kazakh Shruk 15 days and made a sound as if asking him to think about the other prisoners left with him. This incident took place in August. At this time, Amirsana was searched for by Hadakha's soldiers. However, although they did not find Amirsana, they defeated and drove away the Kazakh army led by Ablai himself. Ablai's men promised to persuade the sultan to part with Amirsana as a result of the torture. Hadakha sent one of these mediators, Zhaugash, and the other, Hangeldy, as a hostage.

Having met each other by chance or on purpose, Shruq and Zhaugash went to the Chinese palace at the appointed time. Through them, Ablai expressed his intention of not making war on the Qin Empire. At the same time, he said that it would not be difficult to capture Amirsana, and that the Chinese king would not benefit from capturing her, and asked him to leave Amirsana alone. This statement did not please Hadakha and Dardana. The Chinese nobles said that if we did not capture Amirsana right now, it would be too late. He also sternly told the Kazakh ambassadors not to say that if they hid Amirsana, they would not warn them.

On hearing that the Kazakh prisoners Shruk and Zhaugash asked the Chinese nobles to give them 15 days more. The Manchu nobles, who did not listen to the words of the two Kazakh ambassadors, gave them another chance, believing that Ablai himself had asked for this. However,

the Manchu nobles Hadakha and Dardana declared that "if you do not bring Amirsana to us within the appointed time, we will follow your footsteps and destroy your villages, regardless of anything" (Kuznetsov, 1980: 122).

As an illustration of Kozhabergen batyr's diplomatic activity, his attempts to conduct trade at the Semipalatinsk Fortress proved successful. Evidence of that can be found in the letter dated 12 March 1745 from Colonel Y. S. Pavlutskiy to the Chief of the Siberian Military Chancellery, Major General H. Kinderman: "By the secret order of Your Excellency of last February 13, concerning the petition of colonel Zarin (and reliably, that a similar petition from me has already been submitted to Your Excellency) regarding the permission for the Kirghiz-Kaisaks to trade at the Semipalatinsk Fortress with the son of Kozhabergen and his Kirghiz-Kaisaks, while not allowing them into the town, and without causing any hostility, and regarding the intelligence gathering about the intentions of the Zengor owner, and that anything communicated to those Kirghiz shall remain confidential, Captain Karachintsov at that Semipalatinsk Fortress immediately reported to Your Excellency, confirming that the fortress guard and outposts were maintained with all precautions so that, against expectations, no ill actions could occur from the mentioned Kyrgyz, and as long as these Kyrgyz remained in the fortress for trade, the guard under the officer was to be increased during the day and at night, and the gates were to be reinforced except for the wicket, and at night the fortifications were to be further strengthened, and the number of sentries around the fortress was to be increased. The number of Kyrgyz and the quantity of their goods upon arrival were to be reported to Your Excellency. Received on 11 March" (SHAO, F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 3. P. 345).

Furthermore, the report dated 20 October 1746 from wachtmeister S. Sobolev to colonel T.G. Zarin at the Yamyshov Fortress regarding events in the Jungar khanate provides evidence of the friendly relations between batyr Kozhabergen and the Jungar noyan Amirsana. The document states: "During our stay with Amursana, thirty Kirghiz-Kaisak men from the retinues of sultans Ablai and Barak came to us for the purchase and exchange of camels. The aforementioned noyan received from Kozhi-Bergen's son, Baytaylak, a horse as a gift. In return, the said noyan presented the Kyrgyz-Kaisak with a silk caftan and a bow. It is evident from all this that they were in close friendship" (SHAO, F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 30. P. 318).

It is further noted that approximately thirty men from the retinues of sultans Ablai and Barak arrived at Amirsana's domain to trade and exchange camels. In response, the Jungar prince Amirsana presented a silk caftan and a bow as gifts. The act of batyr Kozhabergen's son, Baytaylak, offering a horse to Amirsana demonstrates the establishment of a reciprocal and durable friendship between the Kazakh batyr and the Jungar noyan.

Thus, the main object of the planned policy of the Qing Empire towards the Kazakh lands was to conquer the eastern part of the Kazakh steppe. After the collapse of the Jungar Khanate, one of the main goals of Ablai khan was to regain the lands lost to the Jungars and expand them. To achieve this goal, in 1756–1756, the Kozhabergen people, who inhabited the Arka steppe and Nura, were quickly relocated (within 2 months) and settled in places such as Temir-Chrga, Ulan-Erhe (Kyzylzhar-Urzhar), Uliyasutu (Kayindy), (Karun-Mulu (Kara River), Zhimersek (Shemirshek), which they had liberated from the Jungars (Ulı dala batırı, 2019: 38).

A Manchu language document mentions the expedition of the hero Kozhabergen to the territory between the Irtysh and Lake Ayarak: "After we, the king's slaves, had set out on the 16th of the 2nd month, a special person sent us the remaining troops that were behind us, and brought 11 Kazakhs, including Kalybay. We, the king's slaves, asked the Kalybays about the situation, and they replied: "Kozhabergen led 1,000 soldiers and plundered the territory between the Irtysh and Lake Ayarak. The prisoners we captured during the expedition were insignificant, and they returned to the village of Kozhabergen (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 99). It is clear that Kozhabergen, along with his thousand soldiers, freely and unhindered by anyone, marched on the vast territory between the Irtysh and Lake Ayarak. The reason for the Kozhabergen's invasion of these regions was to search for and capture the Jungars (Makhachins) who had been scattered and hiding in the mountains after the collapse of the Jungar state. Traveling between the Irtysh and Ayarak lakes, Kozhabergen captured the nearby Makachins and intended to return the indigenous lands of the Kazakhs in the Zhetysu, Ili, and

Tarbagatai regions. After the fall of the Jungar state, Ablai and his trusted chieftains Kozhabergen immediately began to develop the lands previously occupied by the Jungars. To this end, they settled Kazakhs in the regions liberated from the Jungar people and forced the people to develop those lands. The Chinese Empire, which did not like this action of the Kazakh leaders, raided, threatened, and intimidated the Kazakh villages that had settled in these areas, depriving them of a peaceful life. Despite the plundering of their world and the oppression of their people, the Kazakhs fought back.

On the 5th day of the 10th month of the 26th year of the Qianlong Annals, Agui, Izhu and Funnehen reported to the Tsar: "Recently, we heard from the tribes that fled from the Kazakhs and came to our subjugation, saying, 'The Kazakhs have quarreled with us and have come to the northern and southern parts of Tarbagatai,' and we will complete our current work of searching and capturing the mahakhins, and then we will start chasing these Kazakhs away." (Ejenkhanuli, 2017: 256).

Kozhabergen was able to foresee the situation described in the document. Batyr, together with his people who were settled in the Uliyasutu area of Shorgha, estimated the time when the Chinese army would attack him from behind and moved away from there. It is known that one of the largest battles in the Eastern region took place in this Shorgha area. As a result, the Kazakhs conquered Tarbagatai, which was facing Dzungaria.

According to Bergen's statement, the Chinese military commander Agui could not reach the Shorgha region and capture Kozhabergen without first informing the Kazakhs and sending his troops. The following conclusions can be drawn from the document: First, the Chinese commanders used all possible means, including using force and threats against the Kazakhs in order to permanently seize the lands in the Kazakh border regions. Second, Kozhabergen, despite the slaughter of his army and the plundering of his property, fought to preserve the integrity of the Kazakh land. Third, the fact that the commanders of the Chinese empire came to the places where Kozhabergen and his army were stationed and stayed overnight indicates that the Manchu-Qin kingdom always wanted to establish dominance over the Kazakhs. Fourth, the statement left by the commander Agui, who served in the court of the Chinese kingdom, shows manifestations of colonial ideology. For example, there are instances where he makes statements as if he easily expelled the Kazakhs from Tarbagatai to Ayagoz from their homeland, and tries to portray the hero Kozhabergen as a subordinate or a "coward", "heartless", or "favorable" person.

It is said that the Jungarian prince Amirsana went to the court of Ablai khan, explained the situation, asked for help in the struggle for independence against the Chinese, and reached an agreement. However, at that time, news arrived that the Manchu army led by Hadakha, Dardana and Fude had crossed the Irtysh and Tarbagatai and was approaching the Kazakh border. Upon hearing the news, Ablai and Amirsana consulted with each other and decided to jointly fight against the Chinese army. Thus, Amirsana, together with Khozhabergen, gathered 3,000 troops against Dardana and Fude, and Ablai united another 3,000 troops for the battle with the Khadakha army (Kalan, 2008: 110).

## Results

In Kazakh-Chinese relations, not only military-political tensions between the two peoples occurred, but also peaceful diplomatic agreements were concluded, and trade and economic ties also developed. Kozhabergen Zhanibek uly was recognized as a person who, in addition to military-diplomatic relations, established a golden bridge in trade relations and diplomatic agreements. Among the Chinese kings and ambassadors, the name of Kozhabergen Batyr is mentioned among a number of authoritative ambassadors. This topic was discussed on October 18, 1757, in a letter to the commander of the Siberian Corps of Prime Minister Major Tiryan, Brigadier K.L. Frauendorf was informed by the head of the Kerei clan Kozhabergen that the Kirghiz-Kaisaks had arrived at the Yamyshev fortress near Akkol.

In the report of October 17 of this year, Mr. Terpigarev reported to Frauendorf that the chief of the civil guard, captain Felshman of Vologda, had received a message from the commander of the regiment: from the tower near the Irtysh River, the guards stationed in that fortress had seen unknown people on horseback from the bank and across the Irtysh River. Then Terpigarev ordered Frauendorf



and the Tatar interpreter Apsalimov, who had a decent military team, to find out who the people who had been seen from the bank of the Irtysh River were. At this point, they announced that this was Kozhabergen, the head of the Kerey Big of the Kirgiz-Kaisak detachment. And he said that if the hero and his army found a suitable area near the Irtysh, they were ready to move here this winter. Later, we learn that the foreman Kozhabergen and his army camped for about a week, about four thousand miles from Akkol, and fifteen versts from the Yamyshev fortress. It is said that Sultan Ablai was in the Bayan Oblai gorge at that time, and the Mongol troops reported that Sultan Ablai had seen him in the Baranal gorge in Kalmyk territory two months ago. There is information that the number of troops who arrived here was six thousand, including about four thousand armed ones (SARO, F.1. Inv. 1. C. 58. P. 410.).

From this document, we can see that Kozhabergen was one of the people who contributed to the development of Kazakh-Chinese trade. For example, this document contains information that the remaining troops did not have any weapons or tools for barter. At this point, a two-year-old child should be brought and exchanged for a certain type of goods by a willing person. Thus, we learn that the adjutant of the Vologda Dragoon Regiment, Rudnev, exchanged this young Kalmyk boy for seven arshins of silk fabric from the Kirghiz Kubaysh (one arshin was worth one ruble). With this announcement, we learn that Rudnev specifically went to the border customs office in the Yamyshev fortress to pay the duty and received extracts from that customs office. Thus, the last fragments of the text of this message show that Kazakh-Chinese trade relations were quite well developed.

Chinese sources prove that the Chinese were interested in the qualities and natural features of the Kazakh horse. In the history of Sino-Kazakh trade relations, it is known that the Qing Empire was very interested in Kazakh horses and carried out the "Horse - Silk" trade. Kazakhs were also active in trade relations with the Chinese.

Trade was the first manifestation of normal, but not always effective, mutual contacts and the establishment of diplomatic relations. The political and economic interests of feudal and tribal nobles converged in trade - they willingly participated in mediation, joining the trade caravans of their compatriots, as well as those formed together with merchants of other rulers of Central Asia. In the Russian documents of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs and the Manchu documents of the Military Council, among the main traders and warriors who brought large livestock, the names of Sultan Khanbaba, Kabanbai (Khabamubai), Karabarak, Kozhabergen (Khojiboergen batyr) and other heroes are found.

In 1757, General Zhao Hui, who commanded the Qing troops in Kazakhstan, managed to agree with the sultans Ablai, Abilfeyiz, Khanbaba, and the warriors Kabanbai, Kozhabergen, and Dauletbai to open a trading post in Dzungaria. In 1758, Kabanbai sent the son of the Oirat, Buku-Shagan, with more than 300 herds of horses to scout for trade. They arrived in Urumqi on October 18, 1758 (Khafizova, 2019: 379).

Kozhabergen batyr, along with his contemporaries and fellow Kazakh batyrs who shared his common interests, played an active role in military and diplomatic relations with such a huge empire as China, as well as in trade relations. Kozhabergen, along with his fellow batyrs Kabanbai, Dauletbai, and sultans Abilpeyiz and Sultanmamet, worked to develop trade relations, to bring the Kazakh people to a peaceful life, and to improve their living conditions. In this matter, the main goal of the Qing government was to take up border trade and purchase and use Kazakh horse breeds for the development of new lands.

The following Manchu-language document confirms that Tui-zhangin Nusan conducted horse trade with the son of the Kazakh Kabanbai on October 9, 1758. The document states: According to our understanding, Kabanbai is the highest status of 4-5 people of the Middle Zhuz (of the Kazakhs) like Kozhabergen. Last year, the king's slaves Shundena and Nusan wrote a statement, received permission (from the king), and distributed to Kabanbay some of the molun torka for sewing okaly coats, which the king had given as a gift to Ablai and Kozhabergen, and were grateful for the king's intercession. Moreover, all the people of the Kazakh state expressed their gratitude and, one after another, captured the leaders of the Dzungars and brought them to us" (Qazaq Khandığı men C'in patşalığı, 2018: 40).

The information contained in the document can be summarized as follows: First, that Kozhabergen batyr was among the top five most influential people in the Kazakh Middle Zhuz; second, that the Chinese emperor paid valuable tributes primarily to Ablai and Kozhabergen; third, that the Chinese rulers, in order to completely destroy the Dzungar state, rewarded Kazakh batyrs and sultans with valuable gifts, and drove the Kazakhs into the Dzungar noyans. It is clear that the Chinese empire's cunning policy was to use such tricks to subjugate the Dzungars and then attack the Kazakhs.

This document states: "Although Navan could not meet Ablai himself, Ablai's brother Abilpeyiz and Dauletbai, Batyr, Kozhabergen, all live near our border, so Navan could not help but meet the latter" (Qazaq Khandığı men C'in patşalıǵınıñ, 2018: 41). This information, which is a continuation of the document, shows that batyr Kozhabergen was in charge of some issues in Kazakh-Chinese trade relations instead of Ablai. It also further proves that batyr Kozhabergen was stationed with his army in the eastern region of Kazakhstan, bordering the Chinese. The fact that one of the officials of the Chinese empire, Nauandy, explicitly stated that he was obliged to meet people like Kozhabergen, also indicates that batyr Kozhabergen Zhanibekovich played a decisive role in diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The explanatory letter of the 24th year of the Qianlong Annals, dated the 6th day of the 8th month, reports on Kazakh-Chinese friendly and trade relations. The document states: "When the Kazakh Karabarak met us and went out before us, he gave us, the king's slaves Chebdenjab, Fulu, Chinukhun, Chemchukjab and Ulden, one horse each, and we gave him a group of torgins as weapons. Then, when Dauletbay himself came to meet me, he gave me, the king's slave, 1 horse, and I gave him a group of torgins as weapons. In addition, Abilpeiz and Kozhabergen also sent their men one after another. Your poor Abilpeiz gave 1 horse to Chebdenjab, and we gave them a group of torgins as weapons (Qazaq Khandığı men C'in patşalıǵınıñ, 2018: 41).

If we pay close attention to the document, we can see that the famous Kazakh heroes Kozhabergen, Dauletbay, and Abilpeiz Sultan exchanged gifts and gifts based on friendly relations with Chinese ambassadors. Also, from the content of the document, we can see that Chinese ambassadors freely organized diplomatic visits to Kazakh villages, and Kazakh dignitaries to the Chinese kingdom.

Looking into the details of the document, the following question arises. What positive aspects did the development of Kazakh-Chinese trade relations have for the Kazakhs? First, the active manifestation of bilateral trade cooperation and diplomatic ties with the Qing kingdom contributed to the strengthening of the Kazakh state, the growth of its international prestige, and the increasing role of Kazakh diplomats and commanders such as Kozhabergen in the political life of the peoples of Central and Central Asia. As a result, the Kazakh people and their prominent leaders gained popularity among the rulers of East Turkestan.

## Conclusion

Kozhabergen batyr, together with his contemporaries and fellow Kazakh leaders, played a crucial role in shaping both the military and diplomatic dimensions of Kazakh-Qing relations. His active involvement in trade negotiations, border defense, and diplomatic missions underscores the complex and strategic engagement of the Kazakh Khanate with the Qing Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is evident that the diplomatic journeys to the Qing court, led by prominent sultans and batyrs such as Kozhabergen, were carried out under the direct orders of Khan Ablai, reflecting a coordinated state policy rather than isolated personal initiatives.

In our assessment, figures like Kozhabergen demonstrated a high degree of political foresight, particularly in anticipating the expansionist intentions of the Qing Empire. Their focus on defining and defending the eastern borders of the Kazakh steppe was not merely a tactical necessity but a deliberate effort to assert Kazakh sovereignty and historical claims to these lands. These leaders sought recognition of the Kazakhs as the indigenous stewards of the territory, positioning themselves as legitimate actors in the regional political landscape.

Kozhabergen's military tactics also demonstrate his strategic acumen. His use of calculated strikes followed by feigned retreats exemplifies a sophisticated understanding of guerrilla warfare,

allowing smaller Kazakh forces to resist much larger Qing armies effectively. At the same time, his diplomatic posture reveals a nuanced perspective—one that advocated for maintaining peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with China in order to safeguard territorial integrity.

Importantly, it was through the steadfast courage, leadership, and diplomatic skill of figures like Kozhabergen – acting on the directives of Ablai khan – that the Kazakh khanate was able to resist Qing encroachment and preserve its sovereignty in the east. Their military-embassy campaigns not only prevented the Qing Empire’s aggressive expansion but also reinforced the legitimacy and continuity of Kazakh statehood.

From a broader historical perspective, it is our view that Kozhabergen batyr stands out as a rare figure who effectively combined the roles of warrior, statesman, and diplomat. He exemplifies a model of leadership that was both principled and adaptable – firm in defending national interests, yet flexible in navigating the complexities of regional power dynamics. His ability to balance military strength with diplomatic engagement contributed significantly to halting the Qing Empire’s eastward expansion and stabilizing Kazakh-Chinese relations.

There is ample reason to conclude that the collective actions of Ablai khan and Kozhabergen batyr significantly contributed to the strengthening of the eastern frontier and the restoration of ancestral Kazakh territories following the upheaval caused by the Dzungar invasion. Their legacy endures as a testament to the resilience, foresight, and strategic diplomacy of the Kazakh leadership during one of the most critical periods in the region’s history.

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