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ONOMASTIC ELEMENTS OF SUFI ORIGIN IN THE GENEALOGY OF KAZAKH CLANS IN THE XIV–XV CENTURIES

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Abstract. Introduction. In the "Nasab-nameh" and in Kazakh shezhire, especially among the Argyn clan, there are anthroponyms containing the components "khoja/qoja" and "sufi/sopy", whose semantics, origin, and functions remain debated. These elements make it possible to raise the question of the connection between the early Argyns and the Sufi traditions of Central Asia. Of particular importance for such an analysis is the "Majmu'at-Tawarikh" by Sayf al-Din Akhsikendi and his son Nurmammed, a work combining the features of a historical chronicle, a genealogical record, and Sufi hagiography. **Goals and objectives.** The purpose of this study is to analyze anthroponyms with the components "khoja/qoja" and "sufi/sopy" among the forefathers of the Argyns, Akzhol biy (Dairkhoja), Karakhoja, and their descendants, as a reflection of Sufi traditions in the spiritual and clan culture of Turkic societies in the XIV–XV centuries. The objective of the article is to determine, on the basis of the "Nasab-nameh" and the "Majmu'at-Tawarikh", how spiritual practices and the Sufi milieu were reflected in genealogical memory and tradition. **Results.** The analysis of the sources shows that the elements "khoja/qoja" and "sufi/sopy" functioned not merely as components of personal names, but also indicated more complex forms of connection between the local clan environment and Sufi tariqas, including the spiritual milieu of Fergana. **Conclusion.** The Sufi onomastic elements preserved in Argyn genealogy reflect the influence of Sufi practices on the formation of spiritual culture and certain elements of clan organization in the steppe community of the XIV–XV centuries.

Keywords: Nasab-nameh, Majmu at-Tawarikh, Sufi tariqa, argyns, Akkozha, Akzhol bi, Karakozha, Aksopy, Sarysopy, Karasopy

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XIV–XV ҒАСЫРЛАРДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ РУЛАРЫ ШЕЖІРЕСІНДЕГІ СОПЫЛЫҚ ТЕКТІ ОНОМАСТИКАЛЫҚ ЭЛЕМЕНТТЕР

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Аңдатпа. *Kipicne.* «Насабнама» мен қазақ шежіресінде, әсіресе арғын руы арасында, семантикасы, шығу тегі мен қызметі әлі күнге дейін пікірталас тудыратын «қожа» және «сопы» компоненттері бар антропонимдер кездеседі. Бұл элементтер ертедегі арғындардың Орталық Азиядағы сопылық дәстүрлермен байланысы туралы мәселе қоюға мүмкіндік береді. Мұндай талдау үшін Сайф ад-Дин Ахсикенди мен оның ұлы Нұрмұхаммедтің «Мәжму ат-Тауарих» еңбегінің маңызы ерекше, өйткені бұл шығарма тарихи шежіре, генеалогиялық жылнама және сопылық агиография белгілерін ұштастырады. *Мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Зерттеудің мақсаты XIV–XV ғасырлардағы түркі қоғамдарының рухани-рулық мәдениетіндегі сопылық дәстүрлердің көрінісі ретінде арғындардың түп аталары Ақжол би (Дайырқожа), Қарақожа және олардың ұрпақтары арасындағы «қожа» және «сопы» компоненттері бар антропонимдерді талдау болып табылады. Жұмыстың міндеті «Насабнама» мен «Мәжму ат-Тауарих» негізінде рухани тәжірибелер мен сопылық ортаның рулық жад пен генеалогиялық дәстүрде қалай көрініс тапқанын анықтау. *Нәтижелері.* Дереккөздерді талдау «қожа» және «сопы» элементтері тек есімнің құрамдас бөлігі ғана емес, сонымен қатар жергілікті рулық ортаның сопылық тариқаттармен, соның ішінде Ферғана рухани ортасымен байланысының неғұрлым күрделі формаларын білдіргенін көрсетеді. *Қорытынды.* Арғындар

шежіресінде сақталған сопылық ономастикалық элементтер XIV–XV ғасырлардағы дала қауымының рухани мәдениеті мен рулық ұйымының жекелеген қырларының қалыптасуына сопылық тәжірибелердің ықпалын көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: Насабнама, Мәжму ат-Тауарих, сопылық тариқа, арғындар, Аққожа, Ақжол би, Қарақожа, Ақсопы, Сарысопы, Қарасопы

Алғыс. Мақала Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігі Ғылым комитетінің АР26101503 «Сарысу-Теңіз суайрығының Алтын Орда ғибадат мемориалдарының пәнаралық зерттеулері» гранттық қаржыландырудың ғылыми жобасын іске асыру шеңберінде орындалды.

Дәйексөз үшін: Раздыков С.З., Сыдығалиев С.М., Хайназаров Б.Б. XIV–XV ғасырлардағы қазақ рулары шежіресіндегі сопылық текті ономастикалық элементтер // Asian Journal «Steppe Panorama». 2026. Т. 13. № 3. 892–907 бб. (Ағылш.). DOI: 10. 51943/3135-8055_2026_13_3_892–907

ОНОМАСТИЧЕСКИЕ ЭЛЕМЕНТЫ СУФИЙСКОГО ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЯ В ГЕНЕАЛОГИИ КАЗАХСКИХ РОДОВ XIV–XV ВВ.

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В «Насаб-наме» и шежире казахов, особенно среди рода аргын, встречаются антропонимы с компонентами «ходжа/кожа» и «суфи/сопы», чья семантика, происхождение и функции до сих пор остаются дискуссионными. Эти элементы позволяют поставить вопрос о связи ранних аргынов с суфийскими традициями Центральной Азии. Особое значение для такого анализа имеет «Маджму»ат-Таварих Сайф ад-Дина Ахсикенди и его сына Нурмухаммеда, сочетающий черты исторической хроники, генеалогической летописи и суфийской агиографии. *Цель и задачи.* Цель исследования состоит в анализе антропонимов с компонентами «ходжа/кожа» и «суфи/сопы» у первопредков аргынов, Ақжол бия (Даирходжи), Караходжи и их потомков, как отражения суфийских традиций в духовно-родовой культуре тюркских обществ XIV–XV вв. Задача работы заключается в том, чтобы на основе «Насаб-наме» и «Маджму»ат-Таварих выявить, каким образом духовные практики и суфийская среда отразились в родовой памяти и генеалогической традиции. *Результаты.* «Ходжа/кожа» и «суфи/сопы» в составе имен связаны не просто с антропонимической

традицией. За ними просматриваются более глубокие контакты локальной родовой среды с суфийскими тарикатами, включая ферганскую духовную среду. *Заключение.* Суфийские ономастические элементы, сохранившиеся в генеалогии аргынов, передают следы этого влияния в духовной культуре и в отдельных элементах родовой организации степного сообщества XIV–XV вв.

Ключевые слова: Насаб-наме, Маджму ат-Таварих, суфийский тарикат, аргыны, Аккожа, Акжол би, Каракожа, Аксопы, Сарысопы, Карасопы

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Introduction

Islam reached the territory of modern Kazakhstan as part of the broader Arab advance into Central Asia in the 7th–8th centuries. A turning point in this early stage was the emergence of the Karakhanid Khaganate in the 10th century, when Satuk Bogra Khan accepted Islam and gave it the status of the state religion. From that moment, the incorporation of Islam into the political and cultural life of the region acquired a more stable and systematic character. This created a stable foundation for the Islamization of the settled population of Transoxiana and part of the nomads of the adjacent steppe territories. Since that time, names with religious components began to spread among the Turkic-speaking population. The earliest names included the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and members of his family, such as Ali, Hassan, Hussein, and Fatima, as well as the name of the Prophet himself, Muhammad. It seems that these names underwent phonetic adaptation in the Turkic environment. Thus, the name of the companion Saad ibn Abu Waqqas was transformed into the Kazakh Saduakas (Sadvakas), Hassan took the forms Asan or Esen, while Hussein took the form Osen (Usen). The spread of Islamic names during this period was selective and was mainly associated with the elite strata of society, such as the clergy and the educated aristocracy.

A new decisive stage in the Islamization of vast steppe territories is connected with the establishment and strengthening of the Jochi Ulus (Golden Horde). The first attempt to make Islam the state religion of the Golden Horde was made by Berke Khan. After converting to Islam in the middle of the 13th century, he became a murid (Sufi novice) of the Bukharian sheikh Shams al-din al-Baharzi, who belonged to the Kubraviya tariqa. But this initiative of the khan did not find support among his entourage, and the next ruler from the Genghis Khan dynasty was no longer a Muslim. One of the reasons for the failure of the first attempt at Islamization is probably the fact that the teachings of the Kubraviya tariqa originated in a Persian-speaking environment based on the culture of settled peoples, which was alien to the nomadic Turkic-Mongols (Podvizhniki islama, 2003: 327).

However, the declaration of Islam as the state religion by Uzbek Khan (1313–1341) became a turning point in history. This political act legitimized Islam as an official ideology and consolidated it as the basis of the socio-political life of the nomadic aristocracy.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on a set of written and ethnographic sources, such as "Nasab-nameh" and shezhire, as well as published parts of the work of Sayf ad-din Akhsikenti "Majmu at-Tawarikh" related to the history, genealogy, and spiritual traditions of the Turkic peoples.

During the research and writing of this work, a comparative analytical method was used, which made it possible to compare data from various types of sources, identify stable elements in the genealogical tradition of the Kazakhs and the nature of the nominative components of "khoja" and "sopy" using the example of the Argyns. In this way, we have attempted to explain the status of

the first ancestors of the Kazakh Argyns, such as Karakhoja and Dairkhoja, and the origin of the element "sopy" in the names of Argyn children: Aksopy, Sarysopy, Aryksopy, Nadirsopy, and Karasopy. They became the atalyk tulga (first ancestors) of large Kazakh clans, such as Kanzhygaly, Tobykty, and Atygai. Unlike shezhire, where they are represented as links in a genealogical chain, Majmu at-Tawarikh shows them as historical figures, participants in the campaigns of Tokhtamysh Khan and companions of Manas.

Discussion

Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, has long attracted the attention of both Islamic scholars and those who are interested in the culture of the Muslim East. There are many sources on the history and philosophy of Sufism. Most of them consist of publications and studies of written sources of Sufism, biographies of prominent persons, analyses of the spiritual and ritual practices of Sufi communities in various regions of the world.

An oral tradition, historical folklore, and genealogies among the Kazakh people were created and preserved in a living folk tradition thanks to the art of folk storytellers and keepers of ancient traditions. At the request of Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, a well-known expert on Kazakh life, M. Shormanov collected a wealth of material on shezhire, which was later passed on to G. N. Potanin, who published them in his book (Potanin, 2005). Genealogical traditions were also recorded by many pre-revolutionary Russian historians and travelers.

Among those who established the formation of a new written tradition of history, we should single out such scholars as Sh. Kudaiberdyuly, K. Khalid, M.J. Kopeyev, N. Naushabayev, M. Tynyshpaev. We should also highlight the names of professional historians who used Kazakh folklore materials as a historical source, E. Bekmakhanov, A.H. Margulan, M.S. Mukanov. In addition, "Nasab-nameh" and the genealogical traditions of the Khojas were studied in the works of A.K. Muminov, Z. Zhandarbek.

Sufism played a key role in the spread of Islamic anthroponymy among the steppe elite and the displacement of pre-Muslim names (Podvizhniki islama, 2003: 327, 328). Sufism is a mystical and ascetic trend in Islam. It aims at the spiritual development of the individual, inner purification, and the fight against vices through specific ritual practices. The term "Sufism" comes from the Arabic at-tasawwuf, which means the pursuit of spiritual perfection and mystical knowledge of God (Abirova, Rysbekova, 2012: 11).

Historically, Sufism originated in the Middle East by the 7th century as an ascetic movement ("zuhd"); adherents of this movement sought to renounce the pleasures of this life and focus on the inner spiritual life (Yaremba, 2021). However, due to its mystical orientation and criticism of formal piety, Sufism was initially persecuted by Orthodox Islamic theologians, who accused Sufis of heresy. Sufism gained wide recognition and development, becoming an independent movement with its own philosophy, ethics, and organizational structures only by the 10th–12th centuries. During this period, tariqa orders (brotherhoods) were formed; they comprised communities of Sufis under the leadership of spiritual mentors (sheikhs, pirs) who passed on their teachings to their students (murids) through spiritual succession (silsila). The concept of silsila is an important aspect of the Sufi tradition of spiritual succession, which ascends the authority of Sufi sheikhs to the Prophet Muhammad through a chain of teachers and students.

This line of succession is often traced through the twelve Shia imams in the Sufi genealogies of Central Asia, which emphasizes the spiritual legitimacy of the sheikhs as direct successors of the Prophet Muhammad through his grandson Hasan ibn Ali. The biographies of the twelve imams included in the work "Majmu at-Tawarikh" served as hagiographic texts as well as a tool for legitimising the spiritual authority of Sufi mentors (Akerov, 2017). It also demonstrated the continuity of the transmission of spiritual knowledge and baraka (blessing) from the Prophet to modern sheikhs.

The active spread of Sufism in Central Asia occurred between the 9th and 12th centuries. It was connected with the activities of prominent sheikhs such as Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, who lived in Yassy (Turkestan), and Burhanaddin Kylych, who lived in Uzgen. The distinctive character of

Sufi preaching in the Turkic environment was based on its missionary approach and the integration of pre-Islamic traditions and customs into the Islamic context; it was not imposed through radical or violent methods (Abirova, Rysbekova, 2012: 12–14).

Sufi sheikhs did not demand an immediate rejection of the usual rituals, but gradually integrated Islamic norms into the nomadic worldview. Unlike official, legalistic Islam, Sufi tariqas (brotherhoods) operated more flexibly and effectively within a nomadic environment. Their success was due to several factors: nonviolent missionary activity, when sermons were conducted in Turkic languages and adapted to local cultural traditions. Moreover, Sufi sheikhs did not require immediate abandonment of customary practices, but gradually integrated Islamic norms into the existing worldview; the organizational structure of tariqas consisted of hierarchically organized communities with a clear master-student system (murshid-murid). This allowed them to create stable networks of influence that extended beyond individual tribes and clans; cultural syncretism, whereby Sufism organically incorporated elements of Turkic spirituality – such as ancestor worship, reverence for natural objects, shamanic practices – into the Islamic context. Nauryz is a clear example. Despite its pagan and Zoroastrian background, the festival did not disappear after the spread of Islam among the Turkic peoples; it continued to exist, but already within a new religious reading, including a Sufi one, which gave it additional legitimacy in the Islamic environment (Abirova, Rysbekova, 2012: 13). By the 14th–15th centuries, Sufi brotherhoods had already taken firm root in the main centers of Transoxiana, above all in Bukhara, Samarkand, and the Ferghana Valley. The strongest positions belonged to the Yasawiya, Naqshbandiya, Kubraviya, and Ishkiya tariqas. Their role was not limited to spiritual guidance and the transmission of ethical teachings. They were also deeply involved in politics. At the courts of the Jochid rulers and related dynasties – the Sheibanids, Tuka-Timurids, and Ashtarkhanids – Sufi sheikhs often acted as advisers, influenced decision-making, sanctioned campaigns, participated in treaty practices, and strengthened rulers' authority through their own spiritual prestige (Akerov, 2017: 344). The same process can be seen in the cult of sacred places. Mausoleums of revered figures such as Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan, Arystan Bab in the Otrar oasis, and Zangi Ata near Tashkent turned into important centers of pilgrimage and religious life, and through this the place of Sufism in Turkic culture became even stronger (Abirova, Rysbekova, 2012: 11–15). In the case of Kazakhstan, it was precisely the Sufi tariqas that gave an institutional form to the Turkic and Golden Horde mausoleum tradition.

Sufism developed a flexible and adaptive approach toward these historical sites, considering mausoleums as maqams – “places of presence” of baraka (blessing), visits to which were interpreted as a form of pious memory and spiritual guidance, reflecting the syncretic nature of the region's religious culture.

Ancestor worship, sacred mausoleums, reverence for natural places, and even shamanic practices were not displaced by Islam in the Turkic steppe. They were absorbed into the Islamic framework and continued to exist within it, which made Sufism especially understandable and acceptable in the nomadic milieu. In this sense, Sufism was perceived not as an external religion imposed from outside, but as a spiritual tradition that adapted to the cultural world of the Turkic peoples.

The traces of Sufi motifs can also be found in the tribal traditions recorded in “Nasab-nameh”. The term “Nasab-nameh” consists of two components – the Arabic “nasab”, meaning lineage or origin, and the Old Iranian “nameh”, meaning chronicle, record, document. Thus, the “Nasab-nameh” is a source recording genealogical information in the form of a sequence of ancestral names linked by kinship ties. Like shezhire, nasab-nameh can exist in both written and oral transmission, although the term itself initially implies written record. With the spread of Arabic and Persian among the Turkic peoples who had adopted Islam, the term “Nasab-nameh” became widely used, referring both to individual genealogical records and to entire sections within various writings. The “Nasab-nameh” played a significant role in legitimizing political power and religious authority. The ruling dynasties and leaders of the Sufi tariqas compiled genealogies tracing their origins to prestigious ancestors – the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, or legendary rulers. In this regard, genealogical manuscripts of the sacred families of Central Asia functioned not only as records of lineage, but also

as instruments of ancestral Islamization and hereditary spiritual legitimacy (DeWeese, 2025: 97–120). The existence of several versions of the same genealogy, which either complement or contradict one another, reflects both the process of knowledge accumulation and competition for symbolic capital. As a result of this work, detailed genealogical texts were created with a clear sequence of generations, indicating the progenitors and lines of origin.

In Turkic communities, the concepts of "Nasab-nameh" and "shezhire" were often conflated, reflecting the complex interaction of the Islamic written tradition and pre-Islamic forms of preserving genealogical memory. Different Turkic peoples developed their own terminology. For instance, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz mostly use the term "shezhire" (from Arabic "shajara" – tree), whereas among the Khojas, who stand outside the traditional system of the zhuz, the term "Nasab-nameh" is more common. Although the "Nasab-nameh" was recorded mainly in written form, such documented genealogies are found predominantly among the "white bone" estates, that is, among the Tore and Khojas, who carefully recorded their family trees to preserve the memory of their descendants. At the same time, we cannot exclude the existence of "Nasab-nameh" in other Kazakh clans, although the term "shezhire" is more common among them; this denotes a historical source that includes traditions, legends and a genealogical chain explaining the origin of a particular clan or tribe. Among the Turkic peoples, "Nasab-nameh" was written down in Chagatai, Persian, and Arabic. Such genealogies have been found since the time of the Jochi Ulus and its successor states, such as the Sheibanid and Ashtarkhanid states, where the sources contain the genealogies of the khans and their dynasties. The "Nasab-nameh" of the Khojas can be traced back to the time of the disciples of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi, which indicates the early spread of the practice of recording genealogy in the Sufi environment.

As an example of "Nasab-nameh", we can mention the work of Mashkhur-Zhusup Kopeyev "Shezhire of the Kazakhs", where he described the legend of the formation of the Kazakh Middle Zhuz. According to this legend, Zhanarys, the legendary founder of the Middle (Orta) Zhuz, had two wives, but he had no children for a long time. One day, six khojas came to him, and he received them with honors and slaughtered six rams for them. The guests brought him good news that he would become the father of six sons. In honor of this joyful prophecy, Zhanarys named his sons after these khojas: Akkozha, Darakozha, Aktamberdykozha, Karakozha, Yesimkulkozha, Kasymkozha (Kopeiuly, 2007: 11–12). This legend demonstrates how Sufis and spiritual authorities were perceived as bearers of baraka (blessing) and patrons of the family, capable of influencing the fate of people and ensuring the well-being of offspring.

However, it should be noted that the legend of the emergence of the Middle (Orta) Zhuz itself was recorded much later and does not have a clear time frame; as a result, it has a mythical and legendary character and represents one of the many versions of the formation of all three Zhuz divisions and the Kazakh people. The legend was recorded by Mashkhur-Zhusup Kopeyev in the 19th century, several centuries later. One factor complicating the interpretation of this source is that the tradition was transmitted orally. Consequently, this means that there is a significant possibility that the original legend may have changed during transmission over several centuries. However, it should be noted that usually shezhire and ancestral traditions contain a certain degree of truth, although this may have been distorted due to the fact that each narrator of this story may have added something of their own. Probably, this legend primarily served an ideological function, justifying the unity and common origin of the Kazakhs of the Middle Zhuz. It may also help explain why these six clans appear within a single zhuz structure and why the Middle Zhuz is viewed as part of the broader Kazakh ethnic whole together with the Junior Zhuz (Kishi Zhuz) and the Senior Zhuz (Uly Zhuz). The problem, however, lies elsewhere. A clear chronological frame is missing, and the historical context itself remains uncertain.

The difficulty here lies in the absence of a clear chronological frame and a firm historical context. Without dates and without reference to concrete events, this legend cannot be treated as a reliable basis for reconstructing actual history. Still, behind its mythological layer there is a cultural reality that is hard to ignore: in the 14th–15th centuries Sufi saints and spiritual authorities were indeed regarded in Turkic society as bearers of baraka and as patrons of clans. In that sense, the legend

preserves not so much an exact record of events as an important indication of the social atmosphere of the period, when Sufism was actively taking root in the Kazakh steppe. What appears in it is the idea of Kazakh unity and the memory of shared spiritual foundations.

Sufi sheikhs occupied a place that went far beyond the religious sphere alone. They were not limited to teaching disciples and passing on moral and religious instruction. Their place was much broader, and in public as well as political life they remained highly influential figures. This is especially visible in the ties linking the Naqshbandi tariqa to the khans of the Jochi Ulus, Tokhtamysh among them. A considerable part of the Golden Horde elite consisted of murids of Naqshbandi sheikhs. Thus, these processes show that religion became part of the people's culture and a political force that also shaped religious consciousness.

Results

The influence of Sufism was evident not only in the spiritual and political spheres, but also in the naming practices of Turkic societies. Parents sought to give their children names of revered saints and spiritual authorities, hoping for their patronage and intercession. This gave rise to a group of names with religious elements, including both personal names (Yasawi, Ahmed) and composite forms with the components "khoja" and "sopy". This indicated affiliation with the Sufi environment or the spiritual status of the bearer of the name. The emergence of these names in family genealogies indicates the deep integration of the Sufi tradition into the ancestral culture and the fact that religion became part of the collective identity of the people. Such genealogical information is contained in the "Majmu at-tawarih" for the Ishkiya tariqa, demonstrating the typical nature of this practice in the Sufi literature of Central Asia.

"Majmu at-Tawarikh" ("Collection of Stories") was written in the Ferghana Valley in the late 15th to mid-16th centuries (Sabitov, 2017: 579). The work is associated with S. Akhsikendi and his son Nurmukhammed, but what matters here is also the milieu in which it emerged. Sayf ad-Din was connected directly with the Sufi environment as a murid of Sheikh Said Mir Jalil, the head of the Ishkiya tariqa in Ferghana. This circumstance itself shaped the angle of the narrative. The text was written with the sanction of a spiritual mentor, and because of that its perspective was not simply historical, but internally rooted in the Sufi tradition. Sayf ad-Din did not finish the work; after his death, Nurmukhammed continued it and added biographies of later Sufi sheikhs. In the preface, Sayf ad-Din states that he relied on written sources ("Tarikh-i Jahan-gushai", "Qisas al-Anbiya", "Tarikh-i Moghulia") and oral traditions from informants Utemish Haji and Baba Ali Khitai, the murid Said Mir Jalil, who told the legends about Tokhtamysh Khan (Akerov, 2017: 12). The source was introduced into scientific discourse at the end of the 19th century.

Zh. Sabitov writes about three well-known manuscripts: the first one is held at Leningrad University, the second manuscript at the Institute of Asian Peoples, and the third was discovered in Bishkek in 1968 (Sabitov, 2017: 578–579). For the study of the spiritual traditions of the 14th–15th centuries, the value of this source lies in the fact that it records the living practice of integrating Sufism into the Turkic ancestral culture from within the Sufi community.

Majmu at-Tawarikh includes Islamic sacred history (the legend of the "ray of prophecy"), biographies of the twelve imams (from Jafar as-Sadiq to Mahdi), genealogies of Sufi sheikhs of the cities of Kasan and Shirkent (Akerov, 2017: 12), as well as historical and epic stories related to the Turkic peoples of the 14th–15th centuries. Such a structure legitimized spiritual authority and confirmed the existence of baraka. The most important aspect is the extension of the concept of kinship. Accordingly, blood ties are intertwined with spiritual ones, the disciples of one sheikh were considered "brothers", and the Turkic nobility integrated into the order through the establishment of spiritual kinship with the Seyids and Khojas.

The fragments in "Majmu at-Tawarikh" about Aykhoja (Temirkhoja, Akzhol Biy) and his son Karakhoja, who were the ancestors of the Argyn family, are valuable for us. Aykhoja received the nickname "Temirkhoja" ("Iron Khoja") after numerous battles (Akerov, 2017: 52). This nickname combines military valor and spiritual status, marking the dual identity of a warrior and a Sufi. When he was old, Aikhoja went to Shirkent (center of the Ishkiya Tariqa), where he was met by Sheikh Said

Jalaliddin. A year later, he died, and was buried in Chartak near Shirkent. The funeral practice demonstrates religious syncretism: it was "as" (funeral feast) with the sacrifice of sheep and horses (steppe custom), the funeral prayer "janaza" was performed and the Quran was recited (Islamic rite), the ceremony was led by a sheikh, and the burial site became an object of pilgrimage (Sufi element) (Akerov, 2017: 53–54). This fact shows that Islamization did not abolish ancestral traditions, but sacralized them.

Karakhoja continued his father's activities. Khan Tokhtamysh assigned him to guard the border territories and entrusted him with the city of Manasia. The text mentions that the spirit of Aikhoja appeared to Karakhoja in his dreams, warning him of danger. For example, Aykhoja warned of an attack on Manasia. This fact reflects the synthesis of the ancient Turkic cult of the "aruakhs" (ancestral spirits) and the Sufi veneration of the awliye (saints). The ancestor of the clan was perceived as a Sufi saint, and his name with the element "khoja" became the bearer of sacred power. The mention of spiritual kinship deserves special attention: "Said Jalaliddin and Karakozho were cousins... Mir Said Jafar and Aikozho were the sons of Said Mahammad" (Akerov, 2017: 55). That was a spiritual brotherhood, where the concept of "kinship" extended to the students of a single mentor.

According to "Majmu at-Tawarikh", M. J. Kopeev's and S. Kudaiberdiev's shezhire, as well as the notes of G. N. Potanin from M. Shormanov and M. Tynyshpayev, in traditional historiography, the formation of the Argyns as a tribal community dates back to the middle to the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century. Also, the interpretation of individual anthroponyms of Argyn genealogy still continues to be discussed by researchers. The names of the Argyn ancestors Aikhoja (Temirkhoja, Akzhol Biy) and his son Karakhoja were directly connected with the structure of the Ishkiya Sufi tariqa, which operated in the Ferghana Valley. According to "Majmu at-Tawarikh", Aykhoja and Karakhoja participated in the military campaigns of Khan Tokhtamysh (Akerov, 2017: 319, 320) and maintained close ties with murids of the Naqshbandi tariqa. Their ties also extended to the sheikhs of Shirkent, which functioned as the principal center of the Ishkiya tariqa in the Ferghana Valley. Karakhoja's position was connected not only with this spiritual milieu, but also with the political tasks assigned to him by Tokhtamysh Khan. He was entrusted with the defense of the frontier adjacent to Moghulistan, and for that purpose the city of Manasia was established, where Karakhoja guarded the eastern borders together with the legendary Manas. After his death, Aikhoja was buried in Shirkent in accordance with the Muslim tradition of burying janaza (Akerov, 2017: 52), which indicates his recognition as a member of the spiritual community. Control over the border territories provided the Argyn elite with close contacts with the Sufi centers of the Ferghana Valley, such as Shirkent and Kasan. This geographical proximity contributed to the integration of the Argyns into the Ishkiya tariqa. Despite their differences in geographical centers of influence, the Naqshbandi and Ishkiya tariqas were spiritually close and actively interacted with each other (Devin Dee Wies, 2001: 211–233). Since the founder of the Ishkiya tariqa, Sayid Jalal ad-Din, studied in Samarkand, the center of the Naqshbandi tradition, spiritual ties were created between the two brotherhoods. This also allowed the Argyn elite to integrate into the Ishkiya milieu, which maintained relations with the circle of Khan Tokhtamysh and was closely connected with Naqshbandiya (Karimov, Karimova, 2025: 395–403).

Etymologically, the term "khoja" originates from the Iranian word *khwāja* – "lord", "teacher", "master", "respectable man" (Entsiklopedicheskii slovar, 1903: 473). This word was assimilated into a wide range of Turkic languages by means of the Iranian written and oral tradition: *hoca* in Ottoman, *xo'ja* in Uzbek, and *kozha* in Kazakh. Differences in phonetics reflect local adaptations, but the semantic core has remained stable, including components of respect, status, scholarship, and spiritual authority. In the written sources of Central Asia, the element "khoja" is often used to refer to people with religious knowledge or social prestige, which confirms the deep roots of this term in the cultural structure of the region.

Most researchers believe that the etymology of the term "sopy" is related to the Arabic word *ṣūfī*, meaning "Sufi" or "mystic", which came to the Turkic languages from the Iranian *ṣūfī/sofī*. In Turkic languages, "sopa" means a shekpen or chapan (traditional coat) made of camel's fur. Perhaps

the chapan was an element of the clothing of Tengrian priests. We believe that ethnologists, as well as linguists and orientalists, still need to study the etymology of this concept.

In the Kazakh tradition, the concept "sopy" became a common designation for a person associated with the practices of spiritual purification, zikr, asceticism, and internal discipline. Its meanings reflect not only the institution of Sufism as a religious trend, but also a broader cultural orientation towards piety, humility and the pursuit of spiritual perfection. The word "sopy" in folk tradition can have both a strictly religious, descriptive, and evaluative meaning, denoting a person who is "God-fearing" or "especially pious" (Entsiklopedicheskii slovar, 1903: 129). "Sopy" was perceived as a person who had moved from external rituals to internal self-improvement, a person who strives to "purify the heart" and combine this world's practices with spiritual goals. This symbolism has been steadily preserved and transmitted through oral tradition, texts of instruction, biographies of Sufis and local traditions.

Both terms, despite their common Islamic origin, were integrated into the Turkic environment in different ways. "Khoja" turned out to be more strongly associated with institutionalized religiosity and social authority, while "sopy" was associated with individual spiritual practice and mystical traditions. This difference determines the difference in their symbolic functions: the first is associated with teaching, official knowledge, and continuity; the second is connected with inner searching, pious discipline, and personal spiritual experience. At the same time, both elements have become entrenched in stable symbolic models associated with sacred geography and collective memory, including mausoleums and other archaeological and sacred complexes.

Mausoleums associated with the revered "sopy" or "khoja" served as key sites of local religious practice, where personal names acquired the status of symbolic markers of holiness, knowledge and spiritual legitimacy. Within the context of the project "Interdisciplinary Research of the Golden Horde Religious Memorials of the Sarysu-Tengiz watershed", such sites are considered as material carriers of cultural codes, enabling us to trace the transformation of the sacred semantics of names in the Golden Horde architectural and ritual environment. Thus, the analysis of memorial complexes reveals the interconnection between the onomastic traditions of the Argyns and the institutionalization of spiritual practices within the region's socio-cultural context.

The Argyns constitute the largest tribe of Kazakhs; however, their origin and genesis remain a matter of debate. Some researchers trace their origin to the Huns (ar-guns), whilst others consider them as descendants of the Basmyls (as a collective term meaning "mottled"), and so on. This study does not aim to examine the origin of the Argyns; however, we would like to present the findings of a genetic study, conducted by a group of Kazakhstani scientists, not to trace the Argyns' lineage back to ancient times, but to demonstrate their connection with Sufi tariqas even before the emergence of the Kazakh Khanate. "The ancestral homeland of the G1 (proto-Argyn) haplogroup in the Eurasian Steppe is dated to the Early Iron Age (3, 000 years ago), whilst its expansion into the Kazakh gene pool occurred 470–750 years ago" (Zhabagin et al., 2016: 68).

The genealogical structure of the Argyns, as recorded in various versions of Shezhire, demonstrates both common points of convergence and variability in the details of the account. The versions of shezhire by Sh. Kudaiberdiev and G. N. Potanin (recorded from M. Shormanov) basically coincide. It should be noted that Sh. Kudaiberdiev based his assumptions on the legend of the great migration of the Kazakhs, linked to the death of Akzhol at the hands of Karakipchak Koblandy, which allegedly led to the migration of the most numerous group from Abulkhair, and they established the Kazakh Khanate on the territory of Moghulistan. However, this version is not absolute truth, but reflects the author's attempt to build a logical connection between various legends.

G. N. Potanin, as an ethnographer, recorded shezhire from the words of the Kazakh biy (judge) Musa Shormanov and documented the main branches of the Argyn genealogy, beginning with Karakhoja and his sons (Potanin, 2005: 133). According to these sources, the ancestor of the Argyns is Kodan (in other interpretations, Kotan – S. R.), followed by Dairkhoja (Akzhol), from whom Karakhoja was born. Then Meiram was born to Karakhoja's elder wife, while Karasopy, Kenzhesopy (Aksopy), and Basentiyn were born from his younger wife, Momyn. From Meiram's elder wife were born Kuandyk, Suyundik, Begendik, and Shegendik; from his younger wife, Bolat was born. By the

third generation, names containing the elements "khoja" and "sopy" had already disappeared: the sons of Aksopy (Kenzhesopy) are Kanzhygaly and Tobykty, the sons of Kuandyk are Altai, Karpyk, Temish and Barushy. The descendants of Karasopy, Aksopy (Kenzhesopy), and Sarysopy became popularly known as "Zhety Momyn" (the Seven of Momyn), named after their grandmother (Kudaiberdyuly, 1990: 78).

M. Zh. Kopeyev's version differs slightly from the previous ones. According to his account, Meiram is not the son of Karakhoja, but the grandson of Argyn himself, through the intermediate link Kodan (Kopeiuly, 2007: 12). Furthermore, Mashhur records names with "sopy" already among Argyn's children from his wife Momyn: Aksopy (Kanzhygaly and Tobykty are his descendants), Sarysopy (the Atygai clan), Aryksopy (no descendants left), Nadirsopy (no descendants), Karasopy (Karaul and Basentiyn clans) (Kopeiuly, 2007: 14). Thus, in Mashkhour's version, Sufi onomastics rises higher and covers a wider range of names, including names with color components: Aksopy (white), Karasopy (black), Sarysopy (yellow).

It should be mentioned that according to M. -Zh. Kopeev, Sh. Kudaiberdiev, and G.N. Potanin, the name Kodan is the same anthroponym in Argyn shezhire and is recorded as Kodan (Kodan taishi) as the father of Dairkhoja and grandfather of Karakhoja (Kopeiuly, 2007: 15; Potanin, 2005: 133). Despite the differences in details, all three versions have some key points: the names of the ancestors contain "khoja" (Dairkhoja, Karakhoja), the extensive use of "sopy", and in the third generation the Sufi onomastic component disappeared. This dynamic shows the time frame of the Argyns' active connection with the Sufis at the end of the 14th - the first half of the 15th centuries.

At the same time, we consider it necessary to point out that Kodan (Kotan), Dairkhoja (Akzhol), and Karakhoja are not necessarily contemporaries of this period. Perhaps the names of the ancestors were repeated in shezhire, as occurred among the Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples.

In the sources, the name Dairkhoja appears under several names reflecting various aspects of his personality and the historical contexts of the records. The name Dairkhoja consists of two components: "Dair" and "khoja". "Dair" is a Turkic version of the Arabic name Tahir, which can mean "bird" or "persistent". It can also be translated as "bright" or "pure". "Khoja", as we have mentioned above, goes back to the Iranian "khwaja" – "lord", "teacher", "master", "respectable person". Thus, the name Dairkhoja can be interpreted as "bright teacher" or "pure mentor", which emphasizes the spiritual status of its bearer. In folk memory, the name Dairkhoja was transformed into the Kazakh Akzhol biy. The component "Ak" means "white", and "zhol" means "the way", that is, "the bright path" or "the person following the white path". The white color in Kazakh culture is a sacred symbol of purity, righteousness and spiritual perfection. That is why the folk form of the name kept the original semantics of spiritual enlightenment and moral purity.

According to "Majmu at-Tawarikh", the name is written in two ways: as Aikhoja and Temirkhoja. Aikhoja semantically corresponds to the Kazakh Akzhol, because "ai" means "moon" in Turkic languages, which is also associated with light and purity. The nickname Temirkhoja ("Iron Khoja") appeared due to combat experience: the source reports that Aikhoja fought a lot, and "there was no living place on his body without scratches or scars", for which he was given the epithet "temir" – "iron" (Akerov, 2017: 52). This nickname emphasizes physical endurance and military valor, but does not negate the spiritual status indicated by the "khoja" element.

All versions of the name—Dairkhoja, Aikhoja, Temirkhoja, and Akzhol—share a common semantic basis: the symbolism of light, spiritual purity, and the righteous path. In "Majmu at-Tawarikh", the "khoja" element is present in all variants, except for the folk form of the name Akzhol, but its spiritual meaning remained, which confirms the correspondence between Akzhol's image and the image of Aikhoja/Temirkhoja in the tribal traditions (Akerov, 2017: 52). The name Dairkhoja continues to be recorded in the works of M. Tynyshpayev and Sh. Kudaiberdiyev, which preserves the original form in the written tradition (Alpysbes, 2013).

Although there are discrepancies among versions of Argyn shezhire, Shakarim Kudaiberdiev and Mashkhour Zhusup Kopeev's versions show more consistency in key genealogical nodes. At the same time, the figure of Argyn agha remains controversial and requires a separate source analysis, which goes beyond the scope of this study. Versions of the Argyn's shezhire, recorded by

two leading experts on the Kazakh genealogical tradition, generally coincide at the main nodal points, and thus the shezhire data reveal the following structure: the first generation (late 14th – early 15th centuries) – Akzhol Biy (Dairkhoja) and his son Karakhoja, bearers of names with the element "khoja"; the second generation (early-mid 15th century) – Meiramsopy, Aksopy, Karasopy, Aryksopy, Nadirsopy and others, the last generation with a "sopy" (Sufi) component in their names; the third generation (the middle to the end of the 15th century) – Tobykty, Kanzhygaly, Kuandyk, Begendik and others, in whose names the elements "khoja" and "sopy" are absent. According to Kadyrgali Zhalairi, Karakhoja died in battle with Khan Tokhtamysh near Tyumen in 1405–1406 (Zhalairi, 1997: 11, 42, 115).

Karakhoja occupies a central place in the Argyn's genealogy, because all the main subclans originate from him. His name is mentioned in Kazakh historiography, particularly in the "Collection of History" by Kadyrgali Zhalairi, as well as in the Timurid source "Zafar-nama" by Sharaf ad-Din Yezdi, where he appears as one of the faithful nukers of Khan Tokhtamysh (Yazdi, 2008). The name Karakhoja consists of two components: "kara" and "khoja". The "kara" component has a multi-layered semantics in Turkic languages. On a superficial level, it means "black" and can indicate a social origin, for example, "kara budun" – common people, "karasuyek" – black bone, that is, commoners. However, in a spiritual and symbolic context, "kara" means "powerful" or "formidable", which especially characterizes military leaders and batyrs (warriors). The "khoja" element in his name means "lord" or "teacher", which indicates his spiritual status and belonging to the Sufi milieu. Thus, the name Karakhoja combines military power ("kara" as a symbol of strength) and spiritual authority ("khoja" as a marker of religious knowledge), reflecting the dual nature of his status as a warrior and spiritual mentor.

His sons, who were born at the beginning of the 15th century, still retained their connection with the Sufi tradition of their fathers, which was reflected in their names with the element "sopy".

The eldest son of Karakhoja, Meiramsopy, is not mentioned in well-known historical sources, except for some similarities with Sakha shezhire, where the name Meiram suppu occurs (Ushnitsky, 2019: 39–44). The component "meiram" means "holiday", "feast day" and is a variation of the word "bayram" in Turkic languages. This name indicates the joyful circumstances of birth or symbolizes blessing and joy for a family. In combination with "sopy", the name Meiramsopy means "festive" or "blessed" Sufi, a person whose life is associated with spiritual joy and religious piety. The name Aksopy is derived from the "ak" component, which is a symbol of purity, righteousness and spiritual enlightenment, as with Akzhol (Dairkhoja), his grandfather. The white color in Turkic symbolism has always been associated with a sacred, pure and righteous path (Kopeiuly, 2007: 13). In combination with the "sopy" element, the name indicates belonging to the Sufi milieu and emphasizes the spiritual purity of its bearer. In Shakarim's shezhire, the same person appears under the name Kenzhesopy (Kudaiberdyuly, 1990: 78), where "kenje" means "the youngest child in the family". The variation of the name reflects the practice of the oral tradition, when one person could be named differently depending on the context: by spiritual qualities (Aksopy) or by the order of birth (Kenzhesopy). Karasopy's name is derived from the "kara" component, which, as shown above, means not only color, but also symbolizes strength, might and power. In combination with "sopy", the name can be interpreted as "a powerful Sufi" or "a strong mystic", which emphasizes the combination of physical and spiritual strength.

Nadirsopy's name has the Arabic root "nādir", meaning "rare", "unique", "unusual", "precious". In combination with the "sopy" element, the name can be interpreted as "a rare Sufi" or "precious mystic", which emphasizes the special spiritual significance of its bearer. Such a name could be given to a child whose birth was perceived as a special blessing or a sign of divine grace.

Tanbisopy's name has a complex etymology and can be interpreted as "one who unites body and spirit" or "an ascetic who preserves body discipline". In the Kazakh language, the word "tan" means "body". The suffix "-bi" can be an affixal morpheme that gives the meaning a certain quality or completeness. In general, "Tanbi" can be understood as "one whose destiny is the body" or "the body in fullness/harmony", which may indicate physical strength, health, or completeness. On the other hand, considering the Islamic and Sufi traditions, "tan" could have a figurative meaning of

the body as the container of the soul", which emphasizes spiritual discipline or concern for the purity of the body. Sufi practice involved not only spiritual purification, but also control over bodily desires, moderation in food, and physical discipline. Thus, the name of Tanbisopy can symbolize harmony between body and spiritual nature, which is one of the key principles of Sufi ethics.

The name Sarysopy is an important onomastic element within the Argyn family structure and reflects both semantic and ideological features of the early period of the clan's formation. The component "sary" has a multi-layered semantics in Turkic languages. It means "yellow", but "sary" could have the meanings "middle", "stable", "soft" or "calm" in ancient Turkic symbolism. It also acts as a marker of age or hierarchical position. "Sary" was used as a characteristic of a person with a light appearance or a moderate, reasonable character in a number of Turkic and Kipchak traditions. In Kazakh spiritual culture, the word "sary" was often associated with the stability of the family, its continuation, and in some contexts – with land and space (i. e. Saryarka). Thus, Sarysopy's name could carry the meaning of "a composed, balanced Sufi" or "a righteous man connected with land and clan". In combination with the "sopy" element, the name emphasizes belonging to the Sufi spiritual surroundings and indicates the qualities of moderation, stability and spiritual maturity.

The name Aryksopy is formed on the basis of the ancient Turkic word "aryk", which has several meanings associated primarily with purity, lightness and separation from the mundane. The direct meanings of "aryk" are "thin", "slender" or "lightweight", but this word was often associated with asceticism, abstinence from excess and physical moderation in the spiritual and cultural tradition of the Turks. In this regard, "aryk" component can be considered as an indication of an ascetic ideal or physical and spiritual discipline, which fits into the context of 15th-century Sufi practice, where moderation, purification and self-control were fundamental virtues. In combination with the "sopy" element, Aryksopy's name can be interpreted as "an ascetic Sufi" or "a mystic practicing body abstinence" which reflects the key values of the Sufi spiritual tradition.

The third generation already lived in different historical and geographical conditions.

A significant part of the Argyns returned from the territories bordering Moghulistan to the northern steppe region of Saryarka, where their summer pastures were located, after the collapse of the Golden Horde, the weakening of Moghulistan and the fall of the Khanate of Abulkhair (1468). The main areas of their settlement are the territories of Kokshetau, Yerementau, Karkaraly Mountains, Ulytau and other mountain ranges of Central, Northern and Northeastern Kazakhstan. This migration was crucial for the transformation of the anthroponymic tradition. After moving to Saryarka, the Argyns found themselves far from the main Sufi centers of the Ferghana Valley, Shirkent, Kasan, and Uzgen, and also from the Syrdarya region with Turkestan, Otrar, and Sairam, where saintly mausoleums, khanaqahs, and tariqas were concentrated (Karimov, Karimova, 2025: 395–403).

This changed the religious setting quite noticeably. In the south, where the principal spiritual centers remained, the cult of saints continued to function actively and Sufi communities preserved their position. In the steppe and low-mountain landscape of Saryarka, by contrast, religious life took on a more moderate character. After moving to Saryarka, the Argyns found themselves outside the spaces where sheikhs and their murids were active, so Sufi onomastic markers gradually lost their social relevance. As a result, parents began to give their children names of the Kazakh anthroponymic tradition without specific Sufi markings. Thus, the specific Sufi onomastic tradition associated with spiritual affiliation and links to the tariqa lost its relevance in the new conditions.

Conclusion

In the course of our research, we came to the conclusion that names with the elements "khoja" and "sopy" in the Argyn tribe were markers of a specific historical period, the second half of the 14th – first half of the 15th centuries, when the Argyn elite was integrated into the Sufi structures of the Ferghana Valley and maintained close ties with the tariqa of Ishkiya. These names did not become a stable tradition reproduced over the centuries, but reflected a temporary spiritual affiliation determined by the specific political and geographical conditions of the Golden Horde era. However, these names have been preserved in Argyn's shezhire as a memory. This allows us to reconstruct the spiritual and cultural ties of the clan with the Sufi tradition and to understand the mechanisms of

formation of ancestral anthroponymy (the practice of giving names) during the transitional period of the Islamization of Turkic societies in Central Asia.

"Majmu at-Tawarikh", as a Sufi hagiography, allows us to reconstruct the spiritual context of the appearance of the element "khoja" in the names of the Argyn ancestors. A comparative analysis demonstrated a unique case. Unlike the khoja clan, in which the "khoja" element has been reproduced for centuries, the Sufi onomastic markers in Argyn genealogy are limited to a specific historical period: the era of connection with the Ishkiya tariqa.

It should also be taken into account that the work was created in the 16th century, and the described events relate to the 14th – 15th centuries (with a gap of 100–200 years), and there may have been folkloric distortions. Moreover, the author relied on oral traditions and focused on spiritual aspects. Nevertheless, these epistemological conventions do not negate the value of the source, as Sufi discourse allows us to see religious practices from within.

The hypothesis concerning the anthroponyms Kodan and Karakhoja deserves special attention in a deeper investigation of their historical roots. The toponymic coincidence of these names with the hillforts Khotan and Kara-Khoja in East Turkestan suggests that these anthroponyms could reflect not only historical figures of the 14th–15th centuries, but also migrations of the Hunnic period. The legend, recorded by M. Zh. Kopeyev, could be based on archaic traditions about the eastern Huns who left Central Kazakhstan and settled in Eastern Turkestan. Given the political weight the Naqshbandi tariqa had in Central Asia during the 14th–15th centuries, the possibility of contacts between the Argyn elite and influential Sufi circles can hardly be ruled out. This line of connection remains plausible, although it still requires further study.

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