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KAZAKH–DZUNGAR RELATIONS IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Annotation. *Introduction.* Historians have long approached Kazakh–Dzungar relations mainly through warfare and its political consequences. The broadening source base and the appearance of new research perspectives have gradually altered this emphasis, making it necessary to reconsider how the subject has developed in recent historiography. *Purpose and objectives.* This article examines the principal interpretations found in Kazakhstani and international scholarship and identifies the questions that have attracted the greatest attention. It also considers how changes in sources and methodology have affected historians' understanding of relations between the two khanates. *Materials and methods.* The analysis draws on historical studies of Kazakh–Dzungar relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The works were grouped according to their main interpretative concerns and compared in their treatment of conflict, diplomacy and regional politics. Historiographical, comparative-historical and problem-chronological methods were used to trace both continuities and differences among the approaches. *Results.* The comparison shows that military confrontation remains a major theme, but no longer provides the only framework for explaining the relationship. Recent studies give greater attention to diplomatic negotiations, dynastic connections, amanatship, trade, prisoner exchanges and periods of temporary accommodation. They also place the two khanates within a broader political setting shaped by the Kalmyk Khanate and the Russian and Qing Empires. Important disagreements remain, particularly over whether the confrontation should be

understood as a continuous struggle or as a changing sequence of warfare, negotiation and compromise. *Conclusion.* Modern historiography has therefore moved towards a more complex interpretation of Kazakh–Dzungar relations. Further research should examine social, economic and cultural contacts as closely as it has studied military campaigns and high-level diplomacy.

Keywords: Kazakh–Dzungar relations, historiography, Kazakh Khanate, Russian Empire, Dzungar Khanate, Central Asia, international relations, diplomacy.

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ҚАЗІРГІ ТАРИХНАМАДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚ-ЖОҢҒАР ҚАТЫНАСТАРЫ

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Аңдатпа. *Кіріспе.* Мақалада қазақ-жоңғар қатынастарының қазіргі заманғы тарихнамасының дамуы қарастырылады. Бұл тақырып қазіргі тарих ғылымында маңызды орын алады. Соңғы онжылдықтарда дереккөз базасы едәуір кеңейіп, проблеманы зерттеудің жаңа әдіснамалық тәсілдері қалыптасты, бұл қалыптасқан тарихнамалық тұжырымдамаларды қайта қарауды қажет етті. *Мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Зерттеудің мақсаты-қазақ-жоңғар қатынастарын зерттеудің негізгі тәсілдерін жүйелеу, оларды ғылыми түсіндірудің ерекшеліктерін анықтау. Негізгі міндеттер-зерттеу тәсілдеріндегі өзгерістерді анықтау, мәселенің ең дамыған аспектілерін сипаттау және оны әрі қарай зерттеудің негізгі тенденцияларын белгілеу. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Зерттеудің қайнар көзін отандық және шетелдік тарихшылардың қазақ-жоңғар қатынастарына арналған еңбектері құрады. Әдіснамалық негіз тарихшылық, объективтілік және жүйелілік принциптерінен құралды. Зерттеудің негізгі әдістері-тарихнамалық талдау, салыстырмалы тарихи, проблемалық-хронологиялық әдіс, жіктеу әдісі. Осы әдістерді кешенді қолдану қазіргі тарихнаманың дамуының негізгі тенденцияларын байқауға, оның әдіснамалық эволюциясының ерекшеліктерін анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. *Нәтижелер* Қазіргі тарихнама қазақ-жоңғар қатынастары проблематикасының кеңеюімен және қарулы қарама-қайшылықты басым зерттеуден екі хандық арасындағы байланыстардың әртүрлі нысандарын кешенді

карауға көшумен сипатталатыны анықталды. Қақтығыстардың себептері мен салдарымен қатар дипломатиялық қатынастар, династияаралық байланыстар, сауда-экономикалық және мәдени байланыстар зерттеледі. Жаңа мұрағаттық құжаттарды тарту қалыптасқан тарихи дәстүрді нақтылауға ықпал ететіні көрсетілген. *Қорытынды.* Жүргізілген зерттеу тарихнамалық тәсілдерге жүгіну қазақ-жоңғар қатынастары туралы ғылыми көзқарастардың эволюциясын бақылауға, тарихи оқиғаларды түсіндіруге дереккөздік база мен әдіснаманың әсерін анықтауға, сондай-ақ одан әрі зерттеудің перспективалық бағыттарын белгілеуге мүмкіндік беретінін растайды. Тарихнамалық талдау жинақталған ғылыми тәжірибені объективті бағалауға ықпал етеді және кең Орталық Азия контекстінде қазақ және Жоңғар хандықтарының өзара қарым-қатынастарының тарихын одан әрі әзірлеу үшін әдіснамалық негіз қалыптастырады.

Түйін сөздер: қазақ-жоңғар қатынастары, тарихнама, Қазақ хандығы, Ресей империясы, Жоңғар хандығы, Орталық Азия, халықаралық қатынастар, дипломатия.

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КАЗАХСКО-ДЖУНГАРСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье рассматривается развитие современной историографии казахско-джунгарских отношений. Данная тема занимает важное место в современной исторической науке. За последние десятилетия значительно расширилась источниковая база и сформировались новые методологические подходы к изучению проблемы, что обусловило необходимость переосмысления сложившихся историографических концепций. *Цель и задачи.* Цель исследования заключается в систематизации основных подходов к изучению казахско-джунгарских отношений, выявлении особенностей их научной интерпретации. Основными задачами является определение изменений в исследовательских подходах, характеристика наиболее разработанных аспектов проблемы и установление основных тенденций ее дальнейшего изучения. *Материалы и методы.* Источниковую

базу исследования составили труды отечественных и зарубежных историков, посвященные казахско-джунгарским отношениям. Методологическую основу составили принципы историзма, объективности и системности. Основные методы исследования – историографический анализ, сравнительно-исторический, проблемно-хронологический метод, метод классификации. Комплексное использование указанных методов позволило проследить основные тенденции развития современной историографии, выявить особенности ее методологической эволюции. *Результаты.* Установлено, что современная историография характеризуется расширением проблематики казахско-джунгарских отношений и переходом от преимущественного изучения вооруженного противостояния к комплексному рассмотрению различных форм контактов между двумя ханствами. Наряду с причинами и последствиями конфликтов исследуются дипломатические отношения, междинастические связи, торгово-экономические и культурные контакты. Показано, что привлечение новых архивных документов способствует уточнению сложившейся исторической традиции. *Заключение.* Проведенное исследование подтверждает, что обращение к историографическим подходам позволяет проследить эволюцию научных взглядов о казахско-джунгарских отношениях, выявить влияние источниковой базы и методологии на интерпретацию исторических событий, а также обозначить перспективные направления дальнейших исследований. Историографический анализ способствует объективной оценке накопленного научного опыта и формирует методологическую основу для последующей разработки истории взаимоотношений Казахского и Джунгарского ханств в широком центральноазиатском контексте.

Ключевые слова: казахско-джунгарские отношения, историография, Казахское ханство, Российская империя, Джунгарское ханство, Центральная Азия, международные отношения, дипломатия.

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Introduction. Relations between the Kazakh and Dzungar Khanates have occupied an important place in the historiography of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Central Asia. For much of the twentieth century, scholars approached the subject chiefly through military campaigns, territorial disputes and the political consequences of Dzungar expansion. The growth of the available source base in recent decades has made this framework increasingly difficult to maintain without qualification. Kazakh oral traditions, Eastern chronicles, Russian archival records and newly published materials have brought other forms of contact into clearer view and prompted historians to revisit earlier interpretations.

Military confrontation remains essential to the subject, particularly because of the scale of the invasions and their consequences for Kazakh society. It did not, however, define every stage of the relationship. Warfare alternated with diplomatic missions, negotiations, temporary agreements, trade and prisoner exchanges. Relations between the two khanates were also affected by internal political divisions and by the involvement of the Kalmyk Khanate and the Russian and Qing Empires. The historiographical problem is therefore not whether conflict or cooperation was more important, but how historians have explained their coexistence within a changing regional order.

This article examines recent scholarship according to its principal interpretative approaches rather than the dates on which individual studies appeared. It considers how researchers have explained the causes and continuity of the confrontation, the place of diplomacy and the influence of external powers. Particular attention is given to the points on which their interpretations differ and to aspects of Kazakh–Dzungar relations that remain insufficiently studied.

Materials and methods. The material for this article consists of works by Kazakhstani and foreign historians on relations between the Kazakh and Dzungar Khanates in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The publications were selected to represent the main directions in the historiography. They include studies of warfare, diplomacy, state formation and the place of the two khanates in Central Asian politics. Works that introduced new sources or influenced later interpretations were examined more closely.

The analysis began by identifying the main question addressed in each publication and the evidence used by its author. The works were then compared in terms of how they explained Dzungar expansion, the

duration of the conflict and the role of diplomacy. This comparison also made it possible to see which interpretations continued ideas developed during the Soviet period and which were offered a different reading of the relationship.

Historiographical analysis was combined with comparative-historical and problem-chronological methods. The first was used to examine changes in scholarly interpretation, while the second helped trace how particular questions developed across different periods of research. The publications were finally grouped by their main subject rather than discussed only in order of publication. This organization makes clear which aspects of Kazakh–Dzungar relations have received sustained attention, and which remain less thoroughly studied.

Discussion. Results. The reviewed literature can be divided into several broad lines of interpretation. The first traces changes in the historiography itself, particularly the movement from Soviet accounts centred on military confrontation towards studies based on a wider range of sources and questions. Other works examine the relationship through state formation, regional politics, diplomacy and forms of non-military contact. These approaches overlap, but they differ in the weight they assign to warfare, political institutions and external powers.

R.B. Suleimenov provides one of the earliest systematic assessments of Soviet scholarship on the subject [Suleimenov, 1983]. His study shows that historians paid most attention to Dzungar expansion, major battles, the activities of Kazakh khans and the effect of the conflict on Kazakhstan's relations with Russia. Diplomatic and commercial contacts between the two khanates remained at the margins of this literature. Since Suleimenov was writing in the early 1980s, his article mainly records the state of the field at that time and does not attempt a fundamental revision of its assumptions.

A broader historical survey appears in the works of S.A. Edilkhanova [Edilkhanova, 2005, 2026]. She examines pre-revolutionary, Soviet and post-Soviet scholarship together with the different bodies of evidence on which these traditions relied. Eastern chronicles, shezhire, historical narratives and Kazakh oral traditions provide material on diplomatic contacts, peace agreements and contemporary perceptions of Dzungar expansion. Their inclusion enlarges a source base previously dominated by official written records and makes it possible to reconsider conclusions formed within Soviet historiography.

V.A. Moiseev identifies a related change in the work of Kazakhstani historians [Moiseev, 1993, 2001]. He notes their growing tendency to treat the Kazakh Khanate as an independent actor in international politics and to draw more extensively on Kazakh, Chinese and other Eastern materials. D.G. Kukeev, in turn, approaches the historiography through Dzungaria's foreign relations and its position in the international system of Central Asia [Kukeev, 2011]. Together, these studies show that the reassessment of Kazakh–Dzungar relations involved both a wider source base and a shift away from interpretations limited to bilateral warfare.

Several historians examine Kazakh–Dzungar relations within the wider social, economic, political and international context of Kazakhstan and Central Asia. M.K. Kozybayev, for example, sees the conflict as more than a series of separate military events, arguing that it played a decisive role in preserving Kazakh statehood and strengthening social ties under external pressure. His emphasis on the ethnic and political development of the Kazakh Khanate and the formation of national statehood places the survival and consolidation of the state at the centre of his interpretation [Kozybayev, 2006].

According to Kozybayev, the Kazakh Khanate's stability depended on forms of political integration that had developed within nomadic society, while the Dzungar threat encouraged greater unity among the Kazakhs. Where Soviet historiography tends to describe these wars mainly as a struggle between feudal powers, he places the defense of Kazakh independence and historical continuity at the centre of his interpretation.

Kozybayev also examines how the Dzungar threat shaped the Kazakh Khanate's foreign policy in the eighteenth century. He interprets the Kazakh rulers' decision to accept Russian protection as a measure forced by difficult military and political conditions, including pressure from the Dzungar Khanate, the Volga Kalmyks, the Central Asian states and the Qing Empire.

The wider Central Asian context is also important to this interpretation of the Kazakh–Dzungar conflict. Changes in the regional balance of power help explain why the confrontation intensified. Another methodological contribution is the criticism of Soviet interpretations and the call to use Eastern written sources together with Russian archival records and oral historical accounts. Yet Kazakh–Dzungar relations were not a separate focus of Kozybayev's research. His main concerns were the development of Kazakh

statehood and the methodological foundations of national historiography. His contribution thus lies in linking the conflict to these broader questions, an approach that influenced later Kazakhstani scholarship.

V.Z. Galiyev [2007, 2013] traces the confrontation from the second half of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, linking its development to internal changes in the Kazakh Khanate and the expansionist aims of Dzungaria. His periodization distinguishes the emergence of the conflict in the second half of the seventeenth century from the events of 1698–1712, which he presents as the immediate lead-up to the wider Kazakh struggle against Dzungar aggression.

Galiyev connects the Kazakh Khanate's internal development with its response to growing Dzungar pressure, while also considering how territory shaped relations between the two states. Using written sources, archival records, maps, archaeological findings, place names, historical and ethnographic expedition materials, and oral accounts, he reconstructs settlement areas, routes of expansion, battle sites and conditions along the border. His treatment of Ablaykit, Kyzylkent, "Sem Palat", the Kent fortress and other sites as parts of Dzungaria's military and strategic infrastructure extends this spatial analysis beyond the location of battles to the places that supported its military presence.

The reconstruction of military events presents the fighting from the second half of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century as a continuous struggle across large parts of Central, Northern and Northeastern Kazakhstan. Alongside diplomatic contacts and the wider international situation, the study considers Dzungaria's relations with the Qing Empire, Russia, the Volga Kalmyks and the Yenisei Kyrgyz, placing the course of the conflict within regional politics rather than explaining it through Kazakh–Dzungar relations alone.

Kabuldinov et al. [Kabuldinov et al., 2025] interpret Kazakh–Dzungar relations as a long-term process that helped reshape the balance of power in Central Asia. Contacts between the two khanates became more sustained during this period, making their relationship an important factor in regional politics. The study connects internal developments in the Dzungar Khanate with the nature of its contacts with the Kazakh Khanate. Central to this explanation is the link between political centralization and expansion. The authors argue that a stronger military and administrative system enabled the Oirat state to extend its influence and territory through sustained expansion. In this interpretation, the confrontation grew out of Dzungaria's increasingly centralized political structure, rather than simply comprising a series of separate conflicts.

The study argues that the Oirat state had a more developed and effective system of government, supported by a larger administrative apparatus and greater material and human resources. These advantages strengthened its military and political organization, allowing it to mobilize forces quickly, sustain lengthy campaigns and respond flexibly to changes in international affairs. By tracing the main stages of the Kazakh–Dzungar confrontation, the authors conclude that Dzungaria had become a leading nomadic power by the end of the seventeenth century, capable of imposing its will on neighbouring states. They also identify an ideological dimension to its expansion, arguing that attempts to impose religious commitments favorable to the state on conquered populations formed an integral part of this strategy.

Toraygyrov [Toraygyrov, 2025] places Kazakh–Dzungar relations within the political developments of Central Asia in the 1720s. While some studies treat the war as a bilateral conflict, this account considers the Kazakh, Dzungar and Kalmyk khanates as parts of a single political system.

The events following the Dzungar invasion of 1723 ("Aktaban Shubyryndy, Alkakol Sulama") are presented as a turning point in both the Kazakh–Dzungar conflict and international relations in Central Asia. The invasion changed the foreign-policy priorities of Kazakh rulers and encouraged them to seek new alliances.

The Kazakh Khanate's policies were shaped both by resistance to Dzungar expansion and by relations with the Kalmyk Khanate, the Russian Empire and other regional powers, placing Kazakh–Dzungar relations within a wider redistribution of power across Central Eurasia.

The study explains Dzungar military successes through the strength of the Dzungar army and political divisions within the Kazakh Khanate, which hindered coordination among the zhuzes. External pressure thus had a dual effect in this account: it exposed the difficulties of organising a common defense while also encouraging the zhuzes to unite their forces.

The Kalmyk Khanate's influence adds another dimension to this account of Kazakh–Dzungar relations. The need to maintain security on several fronts limited the Kazakh Khanate's foreign-policy options and shaped its dealings with Dzungaria, showing how pressures elsewhere affected the relationship between the two states.

In his monograph, Zlatkin [Zlatkin,1983] links the conflict to political developments across Central Asia. He identifies competition for pasturelands in Zhetysu, Eastern Kazakhstan and the upper Irtysh, together with the growing strength of Dzungaria and weakening unity within the Kazakh Khanate, as its main causes. In this account, warfare served Dzungaria's wider pursuit of control over strategic territories and trade routes, connecting competition for land with the expansion of state power. Relations between the Kazakhs and Oirats are described as initially peaceful for an extended period, with regular armed clashes beginning in the second third of the sixteenth century and the conflict intensifying after the formation of the Dzungar Khanate.

Despite the intellectual constraints of the Soviet period, Zlatkin's introduction of a wide range of Eastern sources into scholarly use laid a foundation for later research, giving his work lasting value for the study of the conflict's causes, character and consequences.

Other scholars place greater emphasis on diplomacy and interstate relations, explaining Kazakh–Dzungar interactions through the geopolitical interests of both khanates.

V.A. Moiseev develops this perspective in his studies of Kazakh–Dzungar relations [Moiseev, 1991, 1998, 2000]. He explains the confrontation as an outcome of competition for dominance in Central Asia, linking this rivalry to control over grazing territories, trade routes and strategically important areas.

Moiseev places Dzungar expansion within a broader effort by the Dzungar Khanate to extend its regional influence; it was not a policy directed solely against the Kazakh Khanate. Yet he does not portray relations between the two states as an uninterrupted war. Armed clashes gave way at different moments to negotiations, peace agreements, diplomatic missions and short-lived political or military alliances. Their relationship therefore changed with circumstances rather than following a single course.

The growing involvement of the Russian and Qing Empires further altered the setting in which the two khanates pursued their interests. Shifts in the Central Asian balance of power shaped the foreign policies of both sides. Moiseev also connects periods of heightened conflict to divisions within the Kazakh Khanate, which limited its ability to coordinate resistance to Dzungar expansion. In his interpretation, Kazakh–Dzungar relations combined warfare with diplomacy, temporary accommodation and responses to pressure from other regional powers.

Moiseev also compares recent interpretations with pre-revolutionary and Soviet scholarship [Moiseev, 2000]. Some of his conclusions remain debatable, but the value of his work lies in its wider frame of analysis. It situates the Kazakh–Dzungar confrontation within the international politics of Central Asia and draws attention to connections that earlier studies often treated separately.

A.Sh. Kadyrbayev examines the relations of the Dzungar and Kalmyk Khanates with the Kazakhs, Nogais and Turkmens, placing them within the wider military and political history of Central Asia [Kadyrbayev, 2015]. He traces the growth of Dzungar power, its administrative organization and the gradual escalation of conflict with the Kazakh Khanate. The study follows this development from the first diplomatic contacts of the early seventeenth century to the large-scale military campaigns of the first half of the eighteenth century. Dzungar policy is presented as a sustained expansion into Kazakh territory. Kadyrbayev argues that the political unity maintained under Tauke Khan enabled the Kazakh Khanate to resist more effectively. After Tauke's death, however, internal fragmentation weakened its defenses. The early Dzungar victories of 1723, associated with the catastrophe remembered as Aqtaban Shubyryndy, are attributed to centralized command, superior military organization, artillery and the element of surprise. The invasion brought severe demographic, economic and political consequences for the Kazakh Khanate.

Kadyrbayev also discusses the joint mobilization of the three zhuzes, the role of Abulkhair Khan and the Kazakh batyrs, and the significance of the Bulanty and Anyrakai battles in organising resistance. Yet disagreements among the Kazakh khans prevented them from eliminating the Dzungar threat entirely. Another important aspect of the study is its attention to Russia's place in the regional political setting. According to Kadyrbayev, the westward movement of Kazakh communities following the Dzungar invasion complicated their relations with both the Kalmyk Khanate and the Russian Empire. The need to protect the western frontier consequently became one of the factors that reshaped the foreign policy of the Kazakh rulers.

The Kazakh–Dzungar confrontation, in this account, had consequences extending well beyond the battlefield. It affected the political structure of the Kazakh Khanate, altered the regional system of international relations and contributed to the subsequent expansion of Russian influence in the steppe. Kadyrbayev further observes that cultural contacts and forms of mutual integration gradually intensified after the fall of the Dzungar Khanate brought the period of armed confrontation to an end.

V.T. Tepkeev adopts a similarly broad geopolitical perspective [Tepkeev, 2025]. His analysis extends beyond relations between the Kazakh and Dzungar Khanates to include the Kalmyk Khanate and the regional policies pursued by the Russian and Qing Empires.

A central question in Tepkeev's study concerns the conditions that made the Dzungar invasion of 1723 possible. He attributes it not only to Dzungaria's expansionist ambitions but also to a favorable military and political situation. By this point, the Dzungar Khanate had secured its eastern frontier, while divisions among the Kazakh zhuzes had weakened their ability to mount a coordinated defense. Changes in the regional balance of power further contributed to the invasion. Tepkeev thus presents the confrontation as an international conflict in which the Kalmyk Khanate influenced both the distribution of military resources and diplomatic calculations.

Tepkeev also considers how Kazakh rulers responded to this pressure. Alongside armed resistance, they turned to diplomacy and sought assistance from Russia, the Kalmyk Khanate and other regional powers. The conflict consequently emerges as part of a triangular relationship among the Dzungars, Kazakhs and Kalmyks. This perspective clarifies how shifting political ties shaped events during the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

O.N. Boldyreva examines Kazakh–Dzungar relations alongside the developing political and legal ties that both khanates established with the Russian state during the first half of the eighteenth century. Her analysis centres on diplomacy, the institution of allegiance and the foreign policies of the steppe states [Boldyreva, 2014].

Boldyreva challenges the assumption that allegiance necessarily amounted to permanent political submission. She interprets it instead as a diplomatic means of seeking allies and strengthening security. Increasing Dzungar pressure encouraged closer contact between the Kazakh Khanate and Russia, although the decision to accept Russian allegiance reflected a combination of internal circumstances and external threats. Relations with Russia also occupied an important place in Dzungar foreign policy.

A key part of Boldyreva's study compares the diplomatic strategies pursued by the Kazakh and Dzungar Khanates. Diplomatic correspondence, imperial charters and other official records show that allegiance had no single or fixed meaning in the eighteenth century. Its terms depended on the immediate political situation, while the parties involved did not always understand their obligations in the same way. This reading moves the discussion beyond warfare and reveals the negotiated character of relations between the steppe states and Russia.

K.Sh. Khafizova approaches Kazakh–Dzungar relations primarily through diplomacy [Khafizova, 2019]. Her monograph examines diplomatic missions, negotiation practices and the political culture of the steppe states. Diplomatic contact, she argues, continued even during periods of intense warfare. Envoys still travelled between the two sides, negotiations were held, prisoners exchanged, migration routes coordinated and border disputes addressed. These practices were not separate from the military conflict but formed part of the same interstate relationship. Khafizova's work therefore offers a broader account of how the two khanates managed both confrontation and temporary accommodation.

Khafizova also places these relations within the wider international politics of the eighteenth century. The interests and interventions of the Russian and Qing Empires repeatedly altered the balance of power around the two khanates. Diplomatic manoeuvring was therefore not secondary to military strength; it was one of the principal means through which Kazakh and Dzungar rulers responded to a changing regional order.

I.V. Erofeeva develops this diplomatic and international perspective in several of her studies [Erofeeva, 1990, 2006, 2007]. She argues that Galdan Tseren's policy was aimed less at destroying the Kazakh Khanate through military force than at bringing Kazakh rulers into political dependence. Military pressure and diplomatic negotiations were used together in pursuit of this objective.

Erofeeva presents relations between the Kazakhs and Dzungars as a complex field of political, economic and cultural interaction. Warfare formed only one part of this history. Periods of conflict also included peace negotiations, trade, prisoner exchanges and contact between communities on both sides. On this basis, she challenges the familiar image of the two peoples locked in a continuous struggle, arguing that it was shaped to a significant degree by Soviet historiography.

Erofeeva argues that the conflict must also be examined in relation to the internal development of both khanates. Their political institutions, social organization and economic systems shaped not only their military capacities but also the interests they pursued. Competition over pastures, strategic routes and regional influence therefore cannot be separated from the way Kazakh and Dzungar societies were organized. From

this perspective, Dzungar expansion was not simply a succession of military campaigns. It was also connected to the consolidation of Oirat statehood and to changes in the balance of power across Central Asia.

Her studies place the confrontation within an international setting that included the Russian Empire, Qing China and the states of Central Asia. Their policies influenced the choices available to both the Kazakh and Dzungar rulers. Erofeeva also maintains that the prolonged conflict encouraged greater political coordination within Kazakh society and contributed to the strengthening of its institutions. Taken together, her works present Kazakh–Dzungar relations as a changing and multidimensional relationship rather than a history defined by warfare alone.

Kabuldinov, Chernienko and Berkinbayev reconsider the institution of amanatship as a form of diplomatic practice rather than simply a sign of political submission [Kabuldinov et al., 2024]. Their study focuses on Sultan Abulfais's stay at the court of Galdan Tseren and his part in securing Abylai's release from Dzungar captivity. It also follows his subsequent military and diplomatic activities during the collapse of the Dzungar Khanate and the establishment of relations with the Qing Empire. In this account, sending a sultan as an amanat helped preserve a temporary settlement and kept negotiations open. Such arrangements arose from immediate political pressures and could be used to protect Kazakh communities, strengthen security and avert further hostilities. Amanatship thus appears not merely as evidence of vassal dependence but as a flexible instrument of steppe diplomacy.

E.M. Toraygyrov likewise treats Kazakh–Dzungar relations as a combination of military, diplomatic, dynastic and commercial ties [Toraygyrov, 2024]. Periods of peaceful coexistence, he argues, were as important as episodes of warfare in shaping the political situation of eighteenth-century Central Asia. His study reconstructs diplomatic missions and negotiations between Kazakh khans and Galdan Tseren, as well as the exchange of prisoners. Particular attention is given to amanatship. Toraygyrov interprets this institution not only as a guarantee that agreements would be observed but also as a practical means of maintaining stability and preventing renewed hostilities.

Toraygyrov also draws attention to marriages between members of the Kazakh and Dzungar ruling elites. Such unions could reinforce political agreements, lend legitimacy to alliances and create more durable ties between the two sides. Trade formed another channel of contact. Commercial exchange tended to expand during periods of political stability, creating practical economic interests that existed alongside continuing political rivalry.

Taken together, the works of Kazakhstani and foreign historians show that Kazakh–Dzungar relations encompassed political rivalry, armed conflict, diplomacy, economic exchange and cultural contact. The use of a broader range of sources has made it possible to examine these forms of interaction within their regional setting rather than as separate developments. Interdisciplinary approaches have widened the field further, although military and political history still receives considerably more attention than social, economic and cultural relations. This imbalance points to areas in which the historiography remains incomplete and where further research is needed.

Read together, these works show that the field has changed not only in scope but also in the questions it asks. Historians are no longer concerned solely with the causes and consequences of warfare; they are also reconsidering what should count as part of Kazakh–Dzungar relations. Earlier studies were largely organized around wars, invasions, major battles and the political consequences of Dzungar expansion. This emphasis was understandable, given the scale of the violence and its place in Kazakh historical memory. Yet it also encouraged a linear narrative in which relations between the two khanates appeared to move continuously towards confrontation. Recent scholarship has complicated this interpretation. Military conflict remains central, but it is increasingly examined alongside diplomacy, trade, dynastic ties, the movement of envoys, prisoner exchanges and temporary agreements.

The newer literature is far from uniform. Its clearest disagreement concerns whether the conflict was continuous or interrupted by substantial periods of negotiation and accommodation. Galiev describes the struggle as a prolonged and largely continuous process extending across broad territories. Moiseev, Khafizova and Erofeeva, by contrast, question the idea of uninterrupted warfare. Their studies draw attention to periods in which armed clashes subsided and relations were managed through negotiation, compromise or the exchange of diplomatic missions. The difference is partly conceptual. If the history of the relationship is reconstructed primarily through military campaigns, continuity becomes its defining feature. When diplomatic correspondence and other forms of contact are included, a less uniform pattern emerges. Kazakh–Dzungar relations then appear as a sequence of confrontations, negotiations and provisional settlements rather than as a single continuous war.

Historians also differ in their explanations of what drove Dzungar expansion. Several studies explain it as a consequence of the military and administrative consolidation of the Dzungar Khanate. Linking expansion to state formation makes sense of campaigns that might otherwise appear unrelated. The explanation becomes less convincing, however, when Kazakh political action is reduced to a series of defensive responses. The works considered here show that Kazakh rulers did not merely respond to events imposed upon them. They sought allies, negotiated with neighbouring powers, coordinated resistance and adjusted their policies as the regional situation changed. Their actions were constrained by internal divisions and pressure on several frontiers, but those constraints did not eliminate political initiative.

The bilateral model becomes harder to sustain once Kalmyk, Russian and Qing actions are brought into the analysis. Tepkeev and other researchers demonstrate that the distribution of military resources, the search for alliances and the timing of campaigns cannot be understood by examining the Kazakh and Dzungar Khanates in isolation. Relations between them formed part of a shifting regional order. Pressure in one direction could alter policy in another: conflict with Dzungaria affected Kazakh relations with the Kalmyks and Russia, while developments along the Dzungar–Qing frontier influenced Dzungar military priorities. The growing attention to these connections has moved the discussion from a national narrative of invasion and resistance towards a history of competing political strategies in Central Eurasia.

Research on allegiance and amanatship raises a different problem: diplomatic terms did not carry a single, stable meaning. Boldyreva's work shows that allegiance cannot always be read as an unambiguous transfer of sovereignty. Its meaning depends on the circumstances in which it was offered, accepted and recorded. Likewise, the research on Sultan Abulfais suggests that amanatship was not merely evidence of submission. It could serve as a means of preserving negotiations, securing the release of captives or preventing renewed conflict. These interpretations are valuable because they restore uncertainty to diplomatic practices whose meanings were not fixed in advance. They also reveal a discrepancy between the language of official documents and the political expectations of the participants. Terms that appeared to establish hierarchy could be used by steppe rulers in more provisional and strategic ways.

Yet the field has not developed evenly. Although many historians call for a comprehensive approach, warfare and elite diplomacy remain much better documented than trade, everyday cross-border contact or cultural exchange. The social groups involved in these less visible forms of interaction also receive far less attention than rulers, sultans, military leaders and envoys. The field has therefore broadened conceptually faster than it has developed empirically. Claims about peaceful coexistence and cultural exchange still require closer evidence of where such contacts occurred, who participated in them and how they changed over time.

The vocabulary used in this literature also needs closer scrutiny. Terms such as “geopolitical interests,” “balance of power” and “expansion” often conceal differences among periods, places and political actors. The interests of a khan, a group of sultans and communities seeking access to pasture were not necessarily identical. Nor did Russian or Qing involvement remain constant throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Future research should therefore connect regional explanations more closely to particular decisions, locations and bodies of evidence. Comparison of Kazakh oral traditions with Russian, Qing and Central Asian written records may also reveal where later historiographical interpretations have imposed greater coherence on events than contemporary actors themselves possessed.

Few recent historians now describe Kazakh–Dzungar relations simply as a succession of wars. The main advance in the field lies in recognizing that warfare and diplomacy did not operate separately. Violence altered the conditions under which negotiations took place, while diplomacy influenced the timing, direction and possible termination of military action. Kazakh–Dzungar relations are therefore better understood as a changing political relationship shaped by internal struggles within both khanates and by developments across the wider region. This interpretation preserves the importance of military conflict without reducing more than a century of interaction to an uninterrupted sequence of invasions and battles.

Conclusion. The works examined in this article show that Kazakh–Dzungar relations cannot be explained only through military confrontation. Wars and invasions had serious consequences for the Kazakh Khanate, and for this reason they remain central to the historiography. Relations between the two states, however, did not end whenever military activity stopped. Negotiations continued, envoys were exchanged, prisoners were released, and temporary agreements were reached. Amanatship, dynastic marriages and trade also connected the two sides during certain periods.

Historians do not agree on every aspect of this history. Galiev describes the confrontation as a long and continuous struggle, whereas Moiseev, Khafizova and Erofeeva draw attention to the intervals between

military campaigns and to the role of diplomacy. Another important result of recent research is the inclusion of the Kalmyk Khanate and the Russian and Qing Empires in the analysis. Their actions influenced the decisions of Kazakh and Dzungar rulers and often changed the regional balance of power.

The source base has become wider, but its different parts have not been studied equally. Military campaigns and official diplomacy are described in considerable detail, while trade, cultural exchange and everyday contact between communities remain less clear. Future research should pay closer attention to these areas and compare Kazakh oral materials with Russian, Qing and other written sources. Such work may provide a more balanced understanding of both conflict and cooperation in the history of the two khanates.

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<i>Dinasheva L.G., Alimbekuly A.A., Saparbekova B.</i> HISTORIOGRAPHY OF WRITTEN SOURCES ON THE HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTAN FROM THE 6th TO THE EARLY 13th CENTURIES: EVOLUTION OF TRANSLATIONS, TEXTUAL CRITICISM, AND HISTORICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL INTERPRETATION.....	964
<i>Suleimenova D.K., Agatay O.M.</i> ULUS OF JOCHI AND THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA, 1380–1395 FROM VASSALAGE TO ALLIANCE.....	973
<i>Порсин А.А.</i> ВЛИЯНИЕ КЛИМАТА И ЭПИДЕМИЙ НА ПОЛИТИЧЕСКУЮ СИТУАЦИЮ В ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЕ В КОНЦЕ XIII – НАЧАЛЕ XIV ВВ.....	985
<i>Джумагалиев Д.А., Сабитов Ж.М.</i> «КРИЗИС XIV ВЕКА» И ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ НОВЫХ МЕХАНИЗМОВ ЛЕГИТИМАЦИИ ВЛАСТИ (ПО МАТЕРИАЛАМ «МАДЖМУ АТ-ТАВАРИХ»).....	997
<i>Амирбекова С.К., Саркыткан К., Дюсенов Б.Д.</i> ХОРЕЗМ, МАВЕРАННАХР И ДЕШТ-И КИПЧАК В АРАБСКИХ РУКОПИСЯХ ВАТИКАНСКОЙ АПОСТОЛЬСКОЙ БИБЛИОТЕКИ.....	1011
<i>Koshymova A.O., Nogaibaeva M.S.</i> TOPONYMS IN KAZAKH EPICS: HISTORICAL, TOPONYMIC AND ETHNOCULTURAL ANALYSIS (BASED ON THE POEM “KOBYLANDY BATYR”).....	1032
<i>Kambarbekova G.A.</i> CENTRAL ASIA THROUGH THE LENS OF AN INDIAN TRAVELER: PEOPLE, CUSTOMS, AND TOPONYMY.....	1044
<i>Тылахметова А.С., Черниенко И.Б.</i> ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ХАНА АБИЛМАМБЕТА В ОЦЕНКАХ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ.....	1063
<i>Abenova G.A., Tokishkadirov B.B., Mamyrbekov A.M.</i> KAZAKH–DZUNGAR RELATIONS IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY	1079
<i>Beisembayeva A.R.</i> KAZAKH–DZUNGAR RELATIONS FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY TO THE 1750S: THE SOURCE BASE OF THE RESEARCH.....	1092
<i>Galimov Ye.A., Kabuldinov Z.Ye.</i> UPRISINGS OF THE KAZAKHS OF THE JUNIOR ZHUZ AGAINST THE ABOLITION OF THE AUTHORITY OF SULTAN-RULERS.....	1104
<i>Toraigyrov Ye.M.</i> THE KAZAKH POPULATION AND THE MILITARY- ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE IRTYSH RIVER (SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY TO THE EARLY XIX CENTURY).....	1117

Төлебаева Ж.М., Хайрулдаева А.М.

ШОҚАН УӘЛИХАНОВ ЕҢБЕКТЕРІНДЕГІ ҚАЗАҚТАР МЕН ОРТА АЗИЯ
ХАЛЫҚТАРЫНЫҢ XIX ҒАСЫРДАҒЫ ҚАРЫМ-ҚАТЫНАСТАРЫ.....1131

Құрманбек Қ., Қайполла Қ., Нұржанбек Н.

ҚАЗАҚ АҒARTУШЫЛАРЫНЫҢ ЕҢБЕКТЕРІНДЕГІ
ШАҒАТАЙ ТІЛІНДЕГІ ДІНИ ТЕРМИНДЕР
(Зәкірия бин Ибраһимнің «Мұхтасар ‘илм-И Ғал» еңбегі негізінде).....1143

Ахметова Г.М.

ТОРГОВОЕ ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВО В ПРОЦЕССАХ
ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ МОДЕРНИЗАЦИИ СЕВЕРО-ВОСТОЧНОГО
КАЗАХСТАНА (КОНЕЦ XIX – НАЧАЛО XX ВЕКА).....1156

Черниенко Д.А., Тойбаев А.Ж.

ЭТНОДЕМОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ В ЖЕТЫСУСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ
В КОНЦЕ XIX – НАЧАЛЕ XXI В. (ПО ДАННЫМ ПЕРЕПИСЕЙ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ).....1173

Оразов Р.Е., Тілеубаев Ш.Б., Қоңқабаева А.Н.

ЖЕТІСУ ОБЛЫСЫНДАҒЫ 1916 ЖЫЛҒЫ КӨТЕРІЛІСТІҢ КЕЙБІР АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ.....1195

Abdrakhmanova G.S., Kalenova T.S., Tuleubayev Zh.Z.

THE IDEA OF NATIONAL REVIVAL IN THE WORKS
OF THE ALASH FIGURES: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.....1213

Жүсіп С.А., Маслов Х.Б.

ЧЕХИЯ МЕН СЛОВАКИЯ ДЕРЕККӨЗДЕРІНДЕГІ ҚАЗАҚ ХАЛҚЫНЫҢ
БЕЙНЕСІ: МӘДЕНИЕТ, ҰЛТ ЗИЯЛЫЛАРЫ ЖӘНЕ АЛАШ ОРДА.....1228

Сулейменова Г.Ж., Оразаева Ж.Ж., Аликулова Н.С.

XX ҒАСЫР БАСЫНДА ҚАЗАҚ ӨЛКЕСІНДЕГІ
БІЛІМ БЕРУДІҢ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ, ЖАҢАША
ТЕНДЕНЦИЯ, ОҚЫТУ ЖҮЙЕСІНДЕГІ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕР.....1241

Байсалдина Г.Ж., Козыбаева М.М.

1918–1936 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ САЙЛАУ
ҚҰҚЫҒЫНАН АЙЫРУ САЯСАТЫ: ҚҰҚЫҚТЫҚ НЕГІЗДЕР,
ӨҢІРЛІК ПРАКТИКА ЖӘНЕ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК САЛДАРЛАР.....1254

Shakenov A.

HISTORICAL FIGURES IN RURAL STREET NAMES
OF NORTHERN KAZAKHSTAN: FROM SOVIET TO NATIONAL PANTHEON.....1268

Сулейменова А.

1925–1933-ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ «КІШІ ҚАЗАН» НАУҚАНДАРЫНЫҢ
ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ШЫҒЫС ӨҢІРЛЕРІНДЕ ЖҮРГІЗІЛУ ТАРИХЫ:
АРХИВТІК ДЕРЕККӨЗДЕРГЕ ШОЛУ.....1281

Омарова Г.А., Төленова З.М., Қожаханова Қ.К.

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ 1931–1933 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ
АШАРШЫЛЫҚТЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК-ДЕМОГРАФИЯЛЫҚ ЗАРДАПТАРЫ:
АЛМАТЫ ОБЛЫСЫ МЕН ҚАЛАСЫ МАТЕРИАЛДАРЫ НЕГІЗІНДЕ.....1301

Әлібек С.Н., Косанбаев С.К., Пазиров Е.Д.

1930-ШЫ ЖЫЛДАРЫ ОҢТҮСТІК Өңірде саяси

қуғын-сүргінге ұшыраған оқу-ағарту

саласы қызметкерлерінің қасиетті тағдыры.....1316

Issabek M.K., Gündoğdu A.

WOMEN OF SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN IN THE CONTEXT

OF STALINIST REPRESSIONS: THE FATE OF MOTHERS

AND THE FORMATION OF HISTORICAL MEMORY.....1331

Kassymova D.B., Abdrakhmanov B.N., Kenzhegalin A.K.

MIGRATIONS IN THE SYSTEM OF THE SOVIET-CHINESE

BORDER IN THE 1940S: SOCIETAL SECURITY IN THE KAZAKH SSR.....1347

Turgunbayev I.E., Makhayeva A.Sh., Zhanatayeva K.B.

MODERNIZATION IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE:

INTELLECTUAL EMIGRATION AND THE IDEOLOGICAL TRANSFER.....1360

Сауыркан Е., Каипбаева А.Т.

ТРАНСШЕКАРАЛЫҚ КӨШІ-ҚОН: XX ҒАСЫРДЫҢ

БАСЫНДА ҚЫТАЙ МЕН МОҢҒОЛИЯҒА ӨТКЕН

ҚАЗАҚ БОСҚЫНДАРЫ ЖӘНЕ БАЛАЛАР ТАҒДЫРЫ.....1371

Базарбаев К., Батырбекқызы Г., Эрен Акдениз

ТҮРКІЯ–ҚАЗАҚСТАН ҚАТЫНАСТАРЫНДАҒЫ

ЖҰМСАҚ КҮШ ПЕН ЭТНИКАЛЫҚ СӘЙКЕСТІК ЫҚПАЛЫ.....1388

Zharylgassynova B., Duisenbay D.

AGRICULTURAL CULTURE OF THE KARAKUYS

SETTLEMENT: BASED ON ARCHAEOBOTANICAL

MATERIALS OF THE EARLY IRON AGE.....1405

Турганбаева Л.Р., Азитаев С.С.

АРХИТЕКТУРНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ СРЕДНЕВЕКОВОГО МАВЗОЛЕЯ

НА ГОРОДИЩЕ КЫШКАЛА (КЫЗЫЛОРДИНСКАЯ ОБЛАСТЬ).....1418

Ергали Г., Қалыш А.Б., Исаева А.И.

ЭТНОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ БРАЧНОЙ НЕСТАБИЛЬНОСТИ

СРЕДИ КАЗАХОВ КАРАГАНДИНСКОЙ И УЛЫТАУСКОЙ ОБЛАСТЕЙ.....1432

Ахантаева Ә.Ж.

ЖЕТІСУ Өңіріндегі егіншілік өнімдері

және оның тұрмыста қолданылуы.....1445



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