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THE SOURCE BASE FOR THE STUDY OF THE LIFE AND STATE
ACTIVITIES OF ABILMAMBET KHAN

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Abstract. Introduction. Abilmambet Khan occupied an important place in the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century. Despite the existence of a substantial body of written evidence concerning his life and state activity, the source base relating to this topic has not yet been comprehensively examined. *Goals and objectives.* The goal of this article is to characterize and systematize the main groups of sources containing information about Abilmambet Khan. The study is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and scholarly rigor. The research employs source criticism, historical-comparative, and historical-systemic methods. *Results.* The study established that the source base is primarily composed of materials from Russian archival repositories, Qing-period documents, Kazakh narrative sources, and published collections of archival documents. The main groups of Russian archival materials were identified, and the information potential of Chinese written sources, as well as Kazakh historical legends, genealogies (shezhire), and epic traditions, was characterized. The contribution of Kazakh and foreign scholars to the identification, publication, and introduction into scholarly circulation of documents on the history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century is also examined. *Conclusion.* The study concludes that the corpus of Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources constitutes a representative documentary basis for further research on the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan, as well as on the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century.

Keywords: Abilmambet Khan, Kazakh Khanate, source base, archival documents, Russian sources, Chinese sources, Kazakh narrative sources, diplomatic relations, Irtysh Region, Irtysh Line, 18th century

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ӘБІЛМӘМБЕТ ХАННЫҢ ӨМІРІ МЕН МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК ҚЫЗМЕТІН ЗЕРТТЕУДІҢ ДЕРЕКТІК НЕГІЗІ

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Аңдатпа. *Kipicne.* Әбілмәмбет хан XVIII ғасырдағы Қазақ хандығының саяси тарихында ерекше орын алады. Оның өмірі мен мемлекеттік қызметіне қатысты жазба деректердің ауқымды болуына қарамастан, аталған мәселенің деректік негізіне осы уақытқа дейін арнайы кешенді деректанулық талдау жасалған жоқ. *Зерттеудің мақсаты.* Әбілмәмбет хан туралы мәліметтерді қамтитын деректердің негізгі топтарын сипаттау және жүйелеу болып табылады. *Зерттеу әдістері.* Зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізін тарихилық, объективтілік және ғылыми дәйектілік қағидаттары құрайды. Жұмыста деректанулық талдау, тарихи-салыстырмалы және тарихи-жүйелік әдістер қолданылды. *Нәтижелер.* Зерттеудің деректік негізін Ресей мұрағаттарында сақталған материалдар, Цин империясы дәуірінің құжаттары, қазақтың нарративтік деректері, сондай-ақ жарияланған құжаттар жинақтары құрайтыны анықталды. Ресей мұрағаттық материалдарының негізгі топтары айқындалып, қытай жазба деректерінің, қазақтың тарихи аңыздарының, шежірелері мен эпикалық мұраларының ақпараттық мүмкіндіктері сипатталды. Қазақ хандығының XVIII ғасырдағы тарихына қатысты құжаттарды анықтау, жариялау және ғылыми айналымға енгізу ісіндегі отандық және шетелдік зерттеушілердің үлесі қарастырылды. *Қорытынды.* Ресейлік, қытайлық және қазақ деректерінің жиынтығы Әбілмәмбет ханның өмірі мен мемлекеттік қызметін, сондай-ақ XVIII ғасырдағы Қазақ хандығының саяси тарихын зерттеуге мүмкіндік беретін репрезентативті деректік негізді қалыптастыратыны туралы қорытынды жасалды.

Түйін сөздер: Әбілмәмбет хан, Қазақ хандығы, деректік негіз, мұрағат құжаттары, ресейлік деректер, қытай деректері, қазақтың нарративті деректері, дипломатиялық қатынастар, Ертіс өңірі, Ертіс шебі, XVIII ғасыр

Алғыс айту. Мақала Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің АР26104261 ИРН «Ертіс он шақырымдық белдеуінің құрылу тарихы және оны қайтару үшін қазақтардың күресі (1765–1921 жж.)» атты гранттық қаржыландыру жобасы аясында дайындалды.

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ИСТОЧНИКОВАЯ БАЗА ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЖИЗНИ И ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ АБИЛМАМБЕТ-ХАНА

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Абилмамбет-хан занимал важное место в политической истории Казахского ханства XVIII века. Несмотря на наличие значительного комплекса письменных свидетельств о его жизни и государственной деятельности, источниковая база исследования данной проблемы до настоящего времени не получила специального комплексного источниковедческого анализа. *Цель и задачи исследования* заключаются в характеристике и систематизации основных групп источников, содержащих сведения об Абилмамбет-хане. Методологическую основу исследования составили принципы историзма, объективности и научной достоверности. В работе использованы источниковедческий, историко-сравнительный и историко-системный методы. *Результаты.* В результате исследования установлено, что основу источниковой базы составляют материалы российских архивохранилищ, документы цинского происхождения, казахские нарративные источники, а также опубликованные сборники архивных документов. Выявлены основные группы российских архивных материалов, охарактеризованы информативные возможности китайских письменных источников и казахских исторических преданий, шежире и эпических произведений. Рассмотрен вклад отечественных и зарубежных исследователей в выявление, публикацию и введение в научный оборот документов по истории Казахского ханства XVIII века. *Заключение.* Сделан вывод о том, что совокупность российских, китайских и казахских

источников образует репрезентативную документальную основу для изучения жизни и государственной деятельности Абилмамбет-хана, а также политической истории Казахского ханства XVIII века в целом.

Ключевые слова: Абилмамбет-хан, Казахское ханство, источниковая база, архивные документы, российские источники, китайские источники, казахские нарративные источники, дипломатические отношения, Прииртышье, Иртышская линия, XVIII век

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Introduction

Abilmambet Khan occupies an important place in the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century. His activities coincided with a period of major military-political and geopolitical transformations in Central Asia associated with the Kazakh–Dzungar wars, the expansion of the influence of the Russian and Qing Empires, and the transformation of the system of international relations in the steppe region following the collapse of the Dzungar Khanate. During this period, Abilmambet was one of the key representatives of the Kazakh ruling elite and played an active role in addressing major issues of both domestic and foreign policy.

Despite considerable scholarly interest in the history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century, the source base for the study of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan has not yet been the subject of a comprehensive and specialized analysis. Information about him is preserved in numerous Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources of different origin and character. A significant portion of these materials is held in archival repositories in Russia and China or has been introduced into scholarly circulation through documentary publications. At the same time, these sources differ in their provenance, informational value, and degree of scholarly examination, which necessitates their systematization and source-critical analysis.

In this regard, the identification and comprehensive characterization of sources containing information on the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan acquire particular significance. The analysis of various groups of written sources makes it possible to assess their informational potential, determine their representativeness, and identify their value for reconstructing the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the mid-18th century.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the source base for the study of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan. To achieve this objective, the article examines materials from Russian and Chinese archival repositories, Kazakh narrative sources, and published collections of documents containing information on the activities of the Kazakh ruler.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the comprehensive systematization and characterization of the principal groups of Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources containing information about Abilmambet Khan, as well as in determining their significance for the study of the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century.

Materials and Methods

The methodological framework of the study is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and scientific reliability. The research employed source-critical, historical-comparative, and historical-systemic methods. Source criticism made it possible to determine the provenance, content, and informational value of the identified documents. The historical-comparative method was used to compare information derived from Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources, while the

historical-systemic approach enabled the source base to be examined as an integrated body of interconnected materials reflecting various aspects of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan.

Results

The source base for the study of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan consists of unpublished and published materials identified in archival repositories of Russia and China, as well as sources introduced into scholarly circulation through documentary collections and publications.

Within the structure of the source base, a special place is occupied by Russian archival materials represented by documents of diverse origin and content. Their analysis makes it possible to distinguish several principal groups of sources relating to the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan. These include letters of Kazakh rulers, including Abilmambet himself, addressed to Russian civil authorities and military officials of various ranks; reports of the College of Foreign Affairs submitted to the Imperial Court; decrees and directives issued by the central authorities of the Russian Empire; reports of the Orenburg and Siberian governors; and communications, testimonies, and reports prepared by interpreters, envoys, and other officials.

These sources contain information on the diplomatic contacts of the Kazakh Khanate with the Russian Empire and neighboring states, reflect the characteristics of the domestic and foreign policies pursued by Kazakh rulers, and make it possible to reconstruct the main stages of Abilmambet Khan's political activity.

Valuable documentary evidence is preserved in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire of the Historical and Documentary Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, the Archive of the St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian State Military Historical Archive, the Russian State Historical Archive, the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region, and the State Archive of the Orenburg Region.

These materials are housed in both central and regional archival repositories of Russia, including the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire (AFPRES, Moscow), particularly Collection (Fond) No. 122 «Kirghiz-Kaisak Affairs»; the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region (HAOR, Omsk), Collection (Fond) No. 1 «Divisional Chancellery of the Commander of the Troops of the Siberian Frontier Lines (Siberian Corps)»; and the United State Archive of the Orenburg Region (USAOR, Orenburg), Collection (Fond) No. 3 «Orenburg Provincial Chancellery», among others.

Materials preserved in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire (AFPRES) occupy an important place in the source base of this study. The documents of this archive contain information on the political situation in the Kazakh Steppe during the first half of the 18th century, the relations of Kazakh rulers with the Russian Empire, and make it possible to clarify the position and status of Abilmambet Khan among representatives of the Kazakh political elite.

For example, a report submitted by the envoys of Khan Abulkhair to the Ufa Military Chancellery contains a letter from the khan transmitted through his envoys, in which Abilmambet is also mentioned:

«There are 40,000 kubitkas of the nomadic Kazakh people, and their principal ruler is Abulkhair Khan, by whom these envoys have been sent. Besides him, there are two other khans – Barak and Abilmambet. They roam in the mountains of Ulatau and Kichitau, along the Syr, Sarysu, and Torgai rivers, in the Karakum steppe and other places thereabouts. The Kazakhs also possess towns: the principal town is Tashkent, ruled by Cholbars Khan, the brother of Abulkhair Khan; the second town is Turkestan, ruled by Shemyaki Khan; and the third town is Sairam, ruled by Kuchuk Khan» (AFPRES. F. 122. Inv. 1. 1730–1731. C. 1. P. 31–32).

Another document preserved in the AVPRI indicates that in 1736 Sultan Ablai, together with Abilmambet Khan, established relations with officials of the Orenburg Expedition and, from that time onward, began exchanging written correspondence with local and central authorities of the Russian Empire concerning the development of bilateral relations (AFPRES. F. 122. Inv. 1736. C. 2. P. 12–14).

The materials of this major archival repository also demonstrate that Abilmambet and Ablai, and at times in alliance with Abulkhair Khan of the Junior Zhuz, sought to obtain permission for Kazakhs to conduct trade in Russian frontier fortresses, including Orenburg. Thus, a report of the Siberian Provincial Chancellery to the College of Foreign Affairs dated 20 December 1743 stated:

«Envoys sent by Sultan Ablai arrived at the frontier commander, the colonel, with a message expressing their desire to live in peace and to trade with Russia. They had travelled for fifteen days from Sultan Ablai, whose encampments were located near Kokchei (Kokshetau – author's note)... Furthermore, Ablai requested that he be granted permission to trade in Orenburg, just as his elder brothers Abulkhair and Abilmambet Khan had been, travelling from his horde by a separate route, from which considerable trade might result» (AFPRES. F. 122. Inv. 1743. C. 8. P. 2–2 rev.).

Another document preserved in the same archival repository indicates that on 28 November 1759 the tsarist administration openly proposed that Ablai depose the legitimate senior Kazakh ruler, Abilmambet Khan, and assume his position, promising him «every possible support» (AFPRES. F. 122. Inv. 1759. C. 4. P. 461).

A substantial body of sources relating to the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan is concentrated in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA). As evidenced by one of the archival files, in a letter dated 25 August 1736, Sultan Abilmambet wrote to Ivan K. Kirillov, State Councillor and head of the Orenburg Expedition, informing him about himself, his leading associates, trade matters, and the Bashkirs who had attacked his people, against whom the khan had dispatched Sultan Ablai:

«Abulmukhamet-Bagatur Khan appointed Ablai Sultan as chief over ten thousand five hundred men... This year we have not seen any trade, but if trade takes place, we shall come with sheep and horses. To the brother-general of the White Tsar we bring bread and salt, yet the Bashkirs have ravaged us, the humble descendants of the Minor Giray line, three times. Therefore, Abulmukhamet Khan ordered Ablai Sultan to set out; and the said sultan went, killed eighty men, seized their horses, and returned in good health...» (AFPRES. F. 248. Inv. 1164. P. 20–20 rev.).

A significant body of archival documents on this subject is preserved in the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region (HAOR, Omsk). These materials indicate that on 23 March 1759 a memorandum from the Orenburg Provincial Chancellery was addressed to Brigadier K. L. von Frauendorf, commander of the Siberian Corps, concerning negotiations between Abilmambet Khan and Sultan Ablai and Chinese envoys, their categorical refusal to assist the Qing military forces, and the need to employ the Kazakhs to prevent the Chinese from advancing into the territories of the Central Asian states. The document stated:

«The envoys also requested from Abilmambet Khan and Sultan Ablai armed Kazakhs to assist them in the capture of Samarkand, Tashkent, Bukhara, and other cities. For this purpose, the Chinese army had already been set in motion and had reached Dzungaria. However, the khan, the sultan, the Kazakh elders present, and the Kazakhs themselves not only rejected this proposal but also declared that if the Chinese were to engage in such conquests, they would thereby demonstrate hostile intentions toward the Kazakhs. They further stated that in such a situation they placed great hope in protection from the Russian side and emphasized that they had been subjects of Her Imperial Majesty for nearly thirty years. Therefore, before their departure, the envoys sent word in advance to the commander of the Chinese forces urging him to halt any further advance. They reassured the khan and the sultan of peaceful intentions and then departed themselves» (HAOR. F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 76. P. 230 rev.).

Another noteworthy document from the same fond demonstrates the alliance between Abilmambet and Ablai in a number of political and military matters, including campaigns against the Alatau Kyrgyz. Military hostilities, with varying degrees of intensity and success, continued for many years after the destruction of the Dzungar Khanate in 1758. This is evidenced by a report submitted by Lieutenant I. Urakov and interpreter Ya. Gulyaev to the Orenburg Provincial Chancellery on 10 April 1760, which referred to «the intention of Abilmambet Khan and Sultan Ablai to wage war against the Trans-Stone Kirghiz who were obstructing trade» (HAOR. F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 88. P. 664–664 rev.).

Moreover, even after the death of Abilmambet, close relations continued between his son Abulfayiz and Ablai, who had by then become the senior khan (Khafizova, 2022: 39–65).

The nature of Abilmambet's relations with the Qing Empire and the foreign-policy activities of his close associates are reflected in a wide range of Chinese documentary sources. These include imperial decrees, orders, directives, and edicts addressed to the Grand Council, governors, and officials of various ranks; memorials submitted by the Grand Council to the emperor; imperial charters granted to Kazakh rulers and their heirs; letters of Kazakh khans and sultans to Qing officials; records of diplomatic audiences and official receptions of Kazakh envoys; reports of the Ili governors-general and military commanders to the emperor concerning events along the Qing–Kazakh frontier and in the Kazakh steppe; registers of imperial gifts and awards bestowed upon Kazakh rulers, including descendants of Abilmambet Khan; and petitions and complaints submitted by Kazakhs concerning actions of the Qing authorities on the Kazakh–Qing border that they regarded as unlawful.

A substantial body of archival materials on this subject is preserved in the State Archive of the Orenburg Region of the Russian Federation. Thus, a letter dated 18 June 1744 from Abilmambet Khan to the Orenburg Governor, Privy Councillor I. I. Neplyuev, contains information regarding trade relations with Russia and Dzungaria, as well as a request for the return of one of his subjects, Tanatar, to the Kazakh side:

«On our side all remain at peace with the Russian Empire; therefore, envoys have been sent both to the Great Horde and to Galdan Tseren for purposes of trade, and for this reason Kulebai Bai has been dispatched. Although we are located at a considerable distance, God willing, we shall meet with you next year, and whatever is commanded by Her Most Gracious Majesty shall be fulfilled by us. In the meantime, even through envoys, let Her Imperial Majesty's orders be conveyed to us, and we shall faithfully carry them out. If Russian merchants wish to come here for trade, they may travel with these envoys. I have sent Kulebai, Almysarei, and Kulchuk Batyr, and whatever they say, please accept their words. As we have previously sworn allegiance to Her Imperial Majesty, so we remain faithful now and shall not alter our commitment. Kurman Batyr and Shauduk Batyr have also departed... In a Russian settlement, in the village of Saby, there is one of my subjects. We most humbly request Her Imperial Majesty to order that this man, whose name is Tanatar, be sent back with Kulchuk. As for the Russian captives currently among us, we shall release them all» (USAOR. F. 3. Inv. 1. C. 3. P. 70–70 rev.).

A considerable number of documents are also preserved in the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia. Among them is a document dated 18 January 1743 containing a letter from Abilmambet Khan to Donduk-Dashi, regent of the Kalmyk Khanate, and to Khansha Darma-Bala, conveying congratulations and expressing wishes for friendship and peace:

«I, Abilmambet Khan, ruler of the Kirghiz-Kaisaks, extend my congratulations to Donduk-Dashi Khan and hereby inform you that I have learned that the sovereign has entrusted you with your father's khanly authority. I rejoice greatly at this and pray to God for your long and prosperous reign. By the supreme decree of Her Imperial Majesty Elizabeth Petrovna, Autocrat of All Russia, our Kirghiz-Kaisak people enjoy free and unrestricted trade within the Orenburg Expedition. I also extend my sincere congratulations to Khansha Darma-Bala and Taiji Abuygai. Furthermore, I wish to note that Your Highness has witnessed many former khans and rulers, and at present it is incumbent upon you to guide the younger rulers and the khan of both sides toward good relations and friendship, as was the case during the time of Ayuka Khan. At present, peace prevails between us, for which we sincerely rejoice and pray to God, and it is fitting that you likewise offer prayers for its preservation» (NARK. F. 56. Inv. 1. C. 165. P. 125–125 rev.).

Of particular interest are documents reflecting the relations between Abilmambet Khan and the clans under his authority and the Russian frontier administration along the Irtysh Line. These materials make it possible to trace the features of Russian policy toward the Kazakh population of the frontier regions and contain valuable information on the regulation of seasonal migrations in the vicinity of the Siberian frontier line.

In this regard, special attention should be paid to the order issued by Orenburg Governor I. I. Neplyuev to Colonel Ya. S. Pavlutsky on 6 September 1742 (HAOR. F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 5. P. 263–265

rev.). The document contained instructions prohibiting Kazakhs from crossing the Tobol, Ui, and Irtysh rivers and from remaining near Russian fortresses. At the same time, it addressed issues related to protecting the Kazakh population from Dzungar raids and regulating relations with Abilmambet Khan. This source demonstrates the introduction of restrictions on Kazakh migrations by the Russian administration in the frontier zone and constitutes an important document for the study of land relations in the Irtysh region in the mid-18th century (HAOR. F. 1. Inv. 1. C. 5. P. 263–265 rev.).

Materials from the early 1760s are of particular importance for studying the situation of Kazakh nomadic communities after the collapse of the Dzungar Khanate. Thus, the testimony of the Bashkir Sh. Abzanov, recorded on 10 November 1761, reported that Kazakhs had been displaced from their former pastures in the territory of the former Dzungar Khanate by Manchu troops. This document reflects changes in the military and political situation in the region and provides valuable information on the condition of the Kazakh population following the establishment of Qing control over neighboring territories (AFPRE. F. 113. Inv. 1761. No. 2. P. 13–15).

Thus, documents dating from the period of Abilmambet Khan's rule are valuable not only for the study of his political activities but also for research into land tenure and frontier issues in Eastern Kazakhstan and the Irtysh region during the second half of the 18th century. These materials record restrictions imposed on Kazakh seasonal migrations in the area of the Irtysh Line and reflect transformations in traditional patterns of land use brought about by the major political developments of the mid-18th century.

Alongside Russian archival materials, sources of Qing origin are of particular importance for the study of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan. Their significance is largely determined by the active involvement of the Kazakh Khanate in the political processes of Central Asia following the fall of the Dzungar Khanate and the establishment of direct contacts between Kazakh rulers and the Qing Empire. Chinese documents contain information on diplomatic missions, political relations, questions of allegiance, territorial disputes, and trade connections, thereby substantially complementing the evidence preserved in Russian archival materials.

Documents relating to Abulfayiz were extracted by the compilers of the relevant documentary collections (K. Sh. Khafizova and others) from two principal sources: the imperial chronicle of the Qing Empire, «Da Qing lichao shilu» («Veritable Records of the Great Qing Dynasty»), including «Da Qing Gaozong Chunhuangdi shilu» («Veritable Records of the Qianlong Reign of the Great Qing Dynasty», Tokyo, 1936), and the collection of imperial decrees «Qinding pingding Zhunge'er fanglüe» (1771; translated into Russian as «Imperially Approved Plans for the Pacification of the Dzungars»), compiled in chronological order from the late 17th century to 1765. The complete version of this source is preserved in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (Khafizova, 1989).

An important component of the source base is represented by Kazakh narrative sources, including historical legends, genealogical traditions (shezhire), epic works, and folk poetry. Their significance lies in preserving information on the perception of historical events within Kazakh society, genealogical traditions, concepts of political authority, and various aspects of the domestic and foreign policy of the Kazakh Khanate. The particular value of Kazakh sources stems from the fact that they are uniquely capable of conveying the spirit of the age and the sentiments of the people who participated in the complex and often contradictory events described. It is evident that no external source can fully reflect the internal condition of an ethnic community, especially when its existential interests did not coincide with those of the opposing side. This distinction constitutes one of the principal differences between indigenous and external sources. The former provide a clearer reflection of the specific features and nuances of the domestic and foreign policy of the Kazakh Khanate during the period of Abilmambet Khan. Kazakh sources preserve unique information concerning the challenges faced by steppe leaders, including Abilmambet, as nomadic civilization adapted to new socio-economic and geopolitical realities.

An important milestone in Kazakh historical scholarship at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s was the publication of the three-volume collection of Kazakh folk poetry «Bes gasyr zhyrlyaydy» («Five Centuries Sing») (Bes gasyr zhyrlyaydy, 1985). Later, within the framework of the state program

«Madeni mura» («Cultural Heritage»), a one-hundred-volume collection of works by Kazakh folk storytellers entitled «Babalar sozi» («The Word of the Ancestors») was published (Babalar sozi, 2006; Babalar sozi, 2007). During the first decades of Kazakhstan's independence, numerous folk narratives, songs, and epics collected and systematized by the prominent Kazakh historian and thinker M. Zh. Kopeyev were also published, including the multi-volume edition of his works (Kopeyuly, 2003).

The work of identifying, publishing, and introducing into scholarly circulation sources relating to the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan began during the Soviet period. In this regard, the documentary collections «Kazakh–Russian Relations in the 16th–18th Centuries» (Shakhmatov, 1961) and «Kazakh–Russian Relations in the 18th–19th Centuries» (Kireev, 1964), prepared in the 1960s by the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR and the Central Archive of the Kazakh SSR, gained wide recognition among historians. Drawn from the holdings of the Foreign Policy Archive of Russia, the Central State Military Historical Archive, the Central State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg, and archives in Almaty, Omsk, and other cities, these materials were intended to reflect important socio-economic and socio-political processes. The collections included numerous documents originating directly from khans and sultans.

For example, these publications contain valuable information concerning the election of Abilmambet as khan in 1739, reported by the batyr and future tarkhan Zhanibek and recorded in the «Journal Notes» of Prince V. Urusov: «Abilmambet, the son of the former Khan Pulat (Bolat), while in Turkestan in the previous year, was elevated to the khanly dignity by the most distinguished Kirghiz-Kaisak clans, including the Argyn, Aktai, Uvak-Kerei, and others; and upon his arrival in the Horde he was raised upon a felt cloak by the best men of many clans» (Shakhmatov, 1961: 148).

In 1948, Soviet historians under the leadership of M. P. Vyatkin prepared the documentary collection *Materials on the History of the Kazakh SSR (1741–1751)*, which included several documents relating to Abilmambet Khan and Sultan Ablai dating from 1743–1745. These included a report by Orenburg Governor I. I. Neplyuev to the College of Foreign Affairs concerning the declaration of loyalty to Russia by Abilmambet Khan of the Middle Zhuz and Ablai, who had returned from Dzungar captivity, as well as two personal letters from Sultan Ablai addressed to representatives of the Siberian administration – Colonel Ya. S. Pavlutsky of the Siberian Dragoon Regiment and Tobolsk Governor A. M. Sukharev. The first letter contains a complaint by the Kazakh rulers regarding restrictions imposed on Kazakh migrations along the Irtysh River and attacks carried out by Russian detachments against Kazakh auls, while the second concerns the intention of 300 kibitkas of the Uysun tribal group to accept Russian allegiance (Vyatkin, 1948: 67).

In 1960, the collection *Materials on the History of the Political System of Kazakhstan*, edited by S. Z. Zimanov, was published. Since the dominant concept in Soviet historiography at that time emphasized the voluntary incorporation of the Kazakh zhuzes into the Russian Empire, the volume primarily included documents relating to the acceptance of Russian allegiance by Abilmambet Khan of the Middle Zhuz and Sultan Ablai in 1740, as well as the text of their oath of allegiance (Masevich, 1960: 36–37).

During the 1970s and 1980s, G. P. Suprunenko, an orientalist at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Kirghiz SSR, translated and analyzed the Chinese sources on the history of Central Asia that were known at the time. These materials were preserved in the scholar's manuscript archive (Suprunenko, 1979) and were later partially published in contemporary Kyrgyzstan (Materials, 2003).

In the late 1980s, the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR published documentary collections on the history of Kazakh–Chinese relations during the second half of the 18th century and the first third of the XIX century. The first volume covered documents from May 1754 to 31 December 1758, while the second included materials from 17 March 1769 to 23 May 1830. Compiled by K. Sh. Khafizova and V. A. Moiseev under the editorship of Academician R. B. Suleimenov, these collections presented for the first time translations of documents from Chinese and Turkic languages into Russian (Khafizova,

1989). Several years ago, this collection was republished by scholars of the Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology with revisions and additions reflecting the current state of scholarship (Khafizova, 2020).

In 1989, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR published a collection of Russian, Chinese, and Mongolian sources on the history of international relations in Central Asia during the 17th–18th centuries. This publication included several documents containing information on Abilmambet (International Relations, 1989).

During the period of Kazakhstan's independence, efforts aimed at identifying, preparing, annotating, and publishing written sources intensified considerably. Of particular interest for the study of Kazakhstan's history during the period under consideration is the 1998 collection Kyrgyzstan–Russia: A History of Relations, which contains several texts mentioning Abilmambet Khan and his son, Sultan Abulfayiz (Kyrgyzstan, 1998). In the same year, a collection of one hundred documents concerning relations between the Kazakh khans and the Qing Empire was published in both Kazakh and the original Chinese language (100 Documents, 1998).

In the mid-2000s, within the framework of the «History and Ethnography» section of the State Program Cultural Heritage, the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology prepared the multi-volume series The History of Kazakhstan in Russian Sources of the XVI–XX Centuries. The sixth volume of the series (compiled by I. V. Erofeeva and B. T. Zhanayev) includes materials from a special investigation conducted by the Orenburg Provincial Chancellery into the circumstances surrounding the death of Khan Ablai, in which both Abulfayiz and his father Abilmambet are mentioned (History of Kazakhstan, 2007: 136–152).

In 2005, the well-known philologist Z. S. Taishybay prepared for publication a collection of Russian and Chinese documents and materials devoted to the life and activities of Khan Ablai, translated into the Kazakh language (republished in 2011) (Ablai Khan, 2005; Taishybay, 2021). A number of the sources included in this collection contain information concerning Abilmambet Khan and his descendants.

Numerous documents on this subject have also been published in Russia. In particular, scholars from Barnaul carried out substantial work resulting in the publication of the volume Russian–Dzungar Relations (Late XVII Century – 1760s): Documents and Extracts in 2006. Of particular interest is a document concerning the acceptance of Russian allegiance by the Kazakhs of the Middle Zhuz. This is evidenced by a report of the head of the Orenburg Expedition, V. A. Urusov, to the College of Foreign Affairs in response to a memorandum from the Siberian Governor P. I. Buturlin concerning the Russian allegiance of the Kazakhs, dated 13 May 1741:

«To this memorandum I resolved to reply through the Siberian Provincial Chancellery, reporting that among the subjects of His Imperial Majesty are... the Middle Kirghiz-Kaisak Horde under the authority of Abilmambet Khan and Ablai Sultan, who in the year 1740 swore an oath of loyalty to His Imperial Majesty...» (Russian–Dzungar Relations, 2006).

In the mid-2010s, new documentary collections appeared that reflected both the Russian and Chinese dimensions of the foreign policy pursued by the rulers of the Kazakh Khanate. Under the leadership of I. V. Erofeeva, the scholarly publishing project The Epistolary Heritage of the Kazakh Ruling Elite, 1675–1821 was implemented. The project included more than 800 translations and 250 facsimiles of original letters written by Kazakh khans and sultans to rulers and officials of the Russian Empire and neighboring Eastern states, as well as historical and biographical essays on the authors of these documents (Erofeeva, 2014). A number of these documents are directly related to Abilmambet Khan and his descendants.

Beginning in 2004, a considerable number of unique sources were identified within the framework of the state programs Madeni Mura («Cultural Heritage»), Khalyk Tarikh Tolkynynda («The People in the Stream of History»), Rukhani Zhangyru («Spiritual Revival»), and «Archive–2025». These programs were of «exceptional significance for rethinking the key methodological concepts of historical scholarship and for developing an objective approach to national history as an organic and inseparable part of the broader world historical process» (Abuseitova, 2022).

The International Turkic Academy published a collection of documents on the history of diplomacy in Central and East Asia and on international relations in these regions, prepared by leading scholars from Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Japan (Eastern Diplomacy, 2015). On the Kazakh side, the principal editors of the collection were K. Sh. Khafizova and D. K. Kydyrali. Khafizova was responsible for the translation of Chinese documents, the preparation of indexes, and scholarly commentaries. A substantial number of documents included in the collection provide valuable information on the political activities of Abilmambet and other rulers of the steppe.

Of particular value for the study of this historical figure and his era is the collection of archival documents prepared by a group of scholars including B. Ezhenkhanuly, Zh. Oshan, and S. Sungatai (Ezhenkhanuly, 2005). The materials published in this volume significantly expanded the documentary base available for the study of the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century and the activities of its leading representatives.

In recent years, the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology has carried out extensive work on the publication of both previously published materials and sources newly identified through research conducted in major central and regional archives, primarily in the Russian Federation.

Within the framework of the research program History and Culture of the Great Steppe, the Institute published in 2018 the documentary collection Sultans and Batyrs of the Middle Zhuz (Second Half of the XVIII Century) (Sultans and Batyrs, 2018). The volume contains documents relating to the most influential Kazakh rulers of the 1750s–1780s, identified in the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region and the State Archive of the Orenburg Region. Among these materials are documents referring to the family of Abilmambet Khan.

An important result of the cooperation between the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology and the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region within this program was the publication in 2019 of the thematic collection From the History of Kazakh–Russian Relations. The XVIII Century (From the History, 2019). This volume presents archival documents covering the history of Kazakh–Russian relations from 1745 to 1778, including materials on the diplomatic relations of the Kazakh Khanate with neighboring states and peoples, as well as various aspects of the political and socio-economic life of the Kazakh steppe.

In 2020, the implementation of this program continued with the publication of the collection From the History of the Great Steppe (Last Quarter of the XVIII Century) (From the History, 2020). The documents included in this volume illuminate the political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of relations between the neighboring regions of Kazakhstan and Russia. The correspondence of Kazakh rulers with regional Russian authorities primarily concerns the resolution of pressing social and economic issues affecting the Kazakh population. The name of Abilmambet, one of the influential political actors of the Great Steppe, appears in many of the events reflected in this collection.

As part of the fundamental research project Historical Traditions of Kazakh Statehood and the Problems of Preserving National Identity, the Ch. Ch. Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology prepared in 2023 the unique documentary collection The Kazakh Steppe in Archival Documents (Third Quarter of the XVIII Century) (The Kazakh Steppe, 2023). This volume contains correspondence between Kazakh khans, sultans, and batyrs and regional Russian authorities concerning a wide range of political and economic issues. References to Abilmambet Khan are also found throughout these materials.

Thus, within the extensive corpus of available sources, a significant place belongs to documents directly or indirectly related to Abilmambet Khan. Taken together, these materials make it possible to reconstruct with a high degree of reliability the principal stages and events of his life and military-political activities as both a sultan and a khan of the Kazakh Khanate.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted has demonstrated that the source base for the study of the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan is characterized by considerable diversity in terms of origin, content,

and informational value. Information concerning the Kazakh ruler is preserved in Russian, Chinese, and Kazakh sources, each of which reflects different aspects of his political, diplomatic, and public activities.

The most extensive body of materials is concentrated in Russian archival repositories, particularly the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire, the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region, the State Archive of the Orenburg Region, and the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia. The documents preserved in these repositories make it possible to trace Abilmambet Khan's diplomatic activities, his relations with the Russian administration, the development of trade connections, and various aspects of the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century.

Sources of Qing origin are of particular importance for the study of Abilmambet's foreign policy activities, as they reflect the contacts between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire following the collapse of the Dzungar Khanate. Kazakh narrative sources, in turn, complement official documentation with information preserved in the historical memory of steppe society and make it possible to examine particular events of the period through the prism of traditional historical consciousness.

An important role in expanding the source base has been played by the long-term efforts of domestic and foreign scholars aimed at identifying, translating, publishing, and introducing archival documents into scholarly circulation. As a result, the possibilities for studying the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan, as well as the political history of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century as a whole, have been substantially broadened.

Thus, the corpus of identified and published sources constitutes a representative documentary foundation for further research into the life and state activity of Abilmambet Khan, his place within the political system of the Kazakh Khanate, and his role in the international relations of Central Asia during the 18th century.

Sources

- AFPRE — Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (Historical and Documentary Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow)
 RSAAA — Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Moscow)
 HAOR — Historical Archive of the Omsk Region (Omsk)
 USAOR — United State Archive of the Orenburg Region (Orenburg)
 NARK — National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia (Elista)

Источники

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 РГАДА — Российский государственный архив древних актов
 ИАОО — Исторический архив Омской области
 ОГАОО — Объединенный государственный архив Оренбургской области
 НА РК — Национальный архив Республики Калмыкия

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