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**ДЕРЕКТАНУ ЖӘНЕ
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**SOURCE STUDIES AND
HISTORIOGRAPHY**

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LETTERS IN CHAGATAI SCRIPT WRITTEN BETWEEN THE KAZAKH KHANATE AND THE QING (CHINESE) EMPIRE

Abstract: After the fall of the Dzungarian Khanate, a new period of military, political, and economic relations began between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire. In addition to sending ambassadors, there were exchanges of letters between the two countries. Depending on the circumstances of that period, these letters were written in Chagatai, Tot-Mongol, Manchu, and Chinese. The letters written by the Kazakh khans-sultans to the Qing Emperor in Chagatai and Tot-Mongol are now stored in the Historical Archive No. 1 in Beijing, China. This article provides information about those letters in Chagatai, the number of these letters and the khans-sultans who sent them, the state of relations between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire, and historical data about the ambassadors.

Keywords: Chagatai script, Kazakh khanate, Qing empire, Dzungar khanate

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Қазақ хандығы мен Цинь (Қытай) империясы арасында жазысқан Шағатай жазуындағы хаттар

Аңдатпа: Жоңғар хандығы құлағаннан кейінгі мезгілде Қазақ хандығы мен Цинь империясы арасында әскери, саяси, экономикалық қарым-қатынастардың жаңа кезеңі басталды. Екі ел арасында елшілер жіберумен қоса, хат алмасулар болды. Сол кезеңнің жағдайына қарай бұл хаттар шағатай, тот-моңғол, манчжур және қытай тілдерінде жазылды. Қазақ хан-сұлтандарының Цинь императорына шағатай, тот-моңғол тілінде жазған хаттары қазір ҚХР, Бейжің қаласындағы №1 тарих мұрағатта сақтаулы. Бұл мақалада сол шағатай тіліндегі хаттар туралы деректер, бұл хаттардың саны мен жіберген хан-сұлтандар туралы айтылады, Қазақ хандығы мен Цинь империясы арасындағы қарым-қатынастардың жағдайы, елшілер туралы тарихи деректер келтірілген.

Түйін сөздер: Шағатай жазуы, Қазақ хандығы, Цинь империясы, Жоңғар хандығы

Сілтеме үшін: Сыламхан Еркінжан Қазақ хандығы мен Цинь (Қытай) империясы арасында жазысқан Шағатай жазуындағы хаттар // Қазақ тарих электронды ғылыми журналы. 2026. Т. 189. No 1. 30-34 бб. (Ағылшын тілінде). DOI: 10.62183/2026-1-1.

Introduction

The Dzungar khanate, which lived between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire for more than three centuries, was an influential and powerful state in its time. The Oirats were the main ethnic group that formed this state. Oirat is an ancient people. The places where they have settled since ancient times are the west of Baikal, the Sayan wall. Since ancient times, they have lived in the upstream of the

Selenga, Angara and Koskol rivers, and are located between the Yenisei Kyrgyz and the Merkit Ulus [page 1, 5]. During the Mongol Empire, they did their best for the empire. In the conquest of Central Asia, Iran, the Middle East, the Caucasus and China, Oirat cavalry units were found in the front-line. After the fall of Mongol rule in China in 1368, Oirat Ulus also sought to become an independent state. They were an independent country that freely moved west of Baikal before they were surrendered

to Genghis Khan. In 1397, Oirat ambassadors came to Aksak Temir and asked for land in the east of the empire. After the death of Aksak Temir, Oirat military aristocracy began to gradually migrate to Besbalik, Barkol, Bogda, Erenkabyr, Altai-Sauyr, and Tarbagatai regions, which are adjacent to Mongolia. The Kazakh tribes, the original inhabitants of this place, could not resist the armed enemy, and as a result, they were forced to leave their ancestral homelands and move to the western side. In 1465, when Zhanibek and Kerey established the Kazakh khanate along the Shu, the Moghulistan khan Esen-Buga was worried about the threat of destruction from the east [page 1, 6]. From this time, three centuries of wars between the Kazakhs and the Oirats, as well as peaceful relations between them began. This is known in history as “Kuba Kalmak era”.

Peculiarities of Kazakh-Qing relations. Letters

In the middle of the 18th century, the Dzungars completely collapsed and lost their status as an independent country due to internal divisions and continuous attacks by the Kazakh Khanate in the West and the Qing Empire in the East. The destruction of the Dzungar Khanate – the buffer zone between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire was lost, brought the two countries to face each other and caused several serious problems. The Qing Empire considered the conquered Dzungar estates as its valuable property, while the Kazakh Khanate wanted to recover the ancient Kazakh estates captured by the Dzungars. It was clear that coming into direct confrontation with the Qing Empire, which was approaching with a large army, would be too difficult for the Kazakh Khanate, which had been at war with the Dzungars for 200 years. Realizing this, the Kazakh khan-sultans preferred to use diplomatic methods. On the one hand, the fact that the Russian Empire, which is growing stronger every day, began to encroach on the Kazakh land also influenced this. Thus, the two countries sent ambassadors to each other and exchanged letters. The letters of the Kazakh khan-sultans were written in the Toty-Mongolian (Oirat) script and in the Chagatai language. Thus, the two countries sent ambassadors to each other and exchanged letters. The letters of the Kazakh khan-sultans were written in the Toty-Mongolian (Oirat) script and in the Chagatai language. Governors-general appointed by the direct order of the King of the Qing Empire, who arrived

in the new region, sent information about the conditions there to the king. As much as possible, he paid more attention to the internal situation and location of the Kazakh people, studied them, and drew a map according to the ambassadors who visited him.

In the studies of the Doctor of History Duysinali Abilyashimuly about the Chagatai letters written between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire, the number of letters in the Chagatai language known so far is 156 pieces [7.7 pages], of which 5 letters were written by the Qing emperor and translated into Chagatai. The remaining 151 pieces of letters were written by the Kazakh sultans. Among them, there is a letter written by Kushikkhozha, Karakalpak Bii, in 1758. Two people’s seals were stamped on the letter, one by Kushikkhozha, and the other by the Kazakh hero Kabanbai [page 7, 8]. This fact probably means that the people of Karakalpak are at the level of the Kazakh Khanate.

The Mongolian and Manchurian peoples had a slightly different concept of direction. They called the sunrise side the south, the sunset side the north, the right-hand side the west, and the left-hand side the east. (传统的八方观念:面对南方,左手为东、右手为西、背后为北,这是‘四正’之方位。/The traditional concept of the eight directions: facing south, the left hand is east, the right hand is west, and the back is north. These are the ‘four directions’.). At the beginning, he did not know that the Kazakh country that faced him consisted of three Jüz (жүз), and according to their concept, the Kazakhs in the east were Right-wing Kazakhs, compared to the Eastern Kazakhs in the west, in fact, the Kazakhs who occupied the middle and northern regions of Kazakhstan were Left-wing Kazakhs, the Kazakhs who lived in the south, including the Kazakhs who lived in the west of the Kazakh country, were called the the Western-wing Kazakhs. Correspondingly, they used this name in letters in Chagatai and Toti-Mongolian, as well as in their statements. The word *kanat* here means separate, group. B. Yezhenkhan used the word *separate* instead of the word *wing* in his work [3, page 28].

Out of the above-mentioned 151 letters written by the Kazakh khan-sultans known to this day, 25 are documents of the left wing. These are all letters written by Abylai Khan and his descendants. The first letter was written in 1768. One thing to remember is the year indicator, the time when the letter written in the Chagatai language known to us was written. And the letter of Kenzhekara, the chief ambassador of Abylai Khan, written in Toto-Mongo-

lian script and handed over to Bohda Yezhenkhan on October 17, 1757, was written much earlier. Right-wing documents, i.e., letters sent by the East Kazakhs, are known so far in 109 copies. It was written by Abilpeyiz and his descendants, who was the son of Kazakh Abilmenbet Khan, the sultan of the Naiman, Wak-Kerei tribes in the east. The first letter was written in 1765, and the last one was written in 1823. Western wing Kazakhs – 17 copies of letters of Kazakh khan-sultans who lived in the south and west of the Kazakh land are known so far. Among them are specially mentioned letters, one letter of Karakalpak Kushikkozha bi written in 1758, two letters of Abylay Sultan, son of Nurali Khan, and one letter of Batyr Khan. Most of these 17 letters were written by Tursyn Khan's grandson Shahniyaz and his descendants. Among these letters, the most recent in terms of time is the letter of Bolat's grandson Altynsari in 1828 [page 7, 41].

Correspondence between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire began in the middle of the 18th century. China's No. 1 Historical Archive holds more than 10 million archival documents related to the Qing Dynasty. More than 8 million of them are in Chinese, and more than 2 million are in Manchu script, the state language of that time. Apart from that, letters written in dozens of languages such as Chagatai, Persian, Toti-Mongolian script have been preserved. It is invaluable in studying and understanding the history of the Qing Dynasty and its political, military, and economic relations with other neighbors. Among them are statements and letters written in Chinese and Manchu about the historical and political situation of the Kazakh Khanate and the governors-general appointed by the king himself at that time, which provide information on the relationship between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire, as well as the khan-sultan of the Kazakh Khanate. In addition, there are letters written by the khan-sultan and rulers of the Kazakh khanate in Chagatai script and Toti-Mongolian script. Translation of these valuable historical letters, historical analysis of their text is very important.

Some of the documents in the historical archives of China No. 1, which are given individual titles, are actually not a single document, but a collection of several documents or a list of letters related to the same case. The letters in the Chagatai language that we are talking about are stored together as an appendix to the main letter in such documents, and are not shown separately. Therefore, if we take into account that there are millions of letters in the archive, let-

ters in Chagatai language that have not been noticed by scientists, have not been paid attention to by researchers or have been left out of consideration, may be saved as an appendix. Among the documents collected in this individual group in the historical archives of China No. 1, especially in the "Copy of the Declarations of the Nobles Preserved in the Military Administration" fund, the declarations written by the Qing dignitaries or relevant Qing institutions to their kings are often shown as the main documents. In a number of cases, more or less additional documents were preserved along with those statements. The historical value of these documents is often equal to, if not less than, the historical value of the statement of the nobles, which is considered to be the main document. For example, all the letters of the Kazakh rulers of that time, written to the Qing kingdom for various reasons (these protocols were mostly written in the Chagatai-Kazakh written language or the Toti-Mongolian language used by the Kalmaks) were preserved as appendices to the declarations sent by the Qing nobles or institutions to their kings (two letters written by Abilpeyiz Khan in Chagatai language can be cited as a concrete example). And it is clear that these protocols, which have been kept as an appendix, are very important for the history of Kazakhstan [pages 3, 21-22].

The study of the documents in the historical archive of China No. 1, including the letters in Chinese, Manchu, Chagatai and Toto-Mongolian scripts, which are of great value and reveal the political and economic relations between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire, generally began late. However, until now, excellent results have been seen in the study of this letter. Japanese scientists paid attention to Kazakh history from the very beginning. Saguchi Toru can be mentioned first among these scientists. Uyama Tomohiko, Noda Jin, Takahiro Onuma, and Akasaka Tsuneaki are among those currently studying Kazakh history. There is an article (1999) by Tomohiko Uyama entitled "Kazakh History: Based on Existing Issues in Historical Perspective". This article is an excellently written piece of work from a neutral point of view. And the last two scientists are directly engaged in research related to the relationship between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Dynasty. In 2010, the work "Letters of Kazakh Sultans to the Qing Dynasty" written jointly in English was published. It includes 13 Kazakh documents. In 2011, Noda Jin's personal monographic work entitled "The Kazakhs khanates between the Russian and Qing Empires" was published. An English ver-

sion of this book has also been published. Onuma Takahiro wrote a monographic work entitled “Qin Kingdom and the Sahara of Central Asia: From the World of Nomads to the Foundation of the Empire” (2014). The article entitled “On the political relations between the Qing dynasty and the Kazakh rulers – the development of the Central Asian Eugene-Albatu relationship” published in 2006 deserves special mention. In this article, documents in Chagatai (old Kazakh), Toty-Mongolian languages are based, and new scientific views on the relationship between the Kazakh and Qing kingdoms are presented. When it comes to Abylai, Abilpeyiz’s first letter to Bogda Ezhken Khan, researchers often turn to its Chinese translation. They later found out that there is a version written in Toty-Mongolian equivalent to the original. It was the Japanese scientist Onuma Takahiro who published this version for the first time in 2006. In this article, the scientist for the first time studied the document, providing facsimiles, transcriptions and Japanese translations. Akasaka Tsuneaki’s work entitled “History of political power of Joshi descendants” was published in 2005.

Conclusion

The works of Chinese scientists in this field are significant. It has the advantage of having access to archives and documents compared to the scientists of other countries, the advantage of knowing the Chinese language, and the group of research scientists who know the Manchurian language has the distinction...

Of course, among the Kazakh scientists, two scientists who are engaged in this field can be singled out. One of them, Doctor of Historical Sciences Duysinali Abdilyashimuly. In 2010, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation from the Kyoto University of Japan under the scientific supervision of the famous Japanese historian, Chagatai scholar Mr. Hamada Masami, entitled “Historical documentary research on Kazakh archival documents of the 18th-19th centuries”. In 2015, China published a monographic work entitled “Old Kazakh written language” in the Chinese Kazakh

script, and in 2016, the same publishing house published a monographic work entitled “Kazakh documents stored in the historical archives of China No. 1”. In addition, he wrote and published many scientific articles in Kazakh, Japanese, and Chinese. Bakyt Ezhkenkhanuly, doctor of historical sciences, made new researches in this field, published many new data unknown to Kazakh history and published scientific articles. The third volume of the 5-volume “Chinese Documents on the History of Kazakhstan” published by the Institute of Oriental Studies named after R.B. Suleimenov under the title “Archive Documents of the Qing Dynasty” under the title “Archive Documents of the Qing Dynasty” and the political and economic relations between the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Empire, published within the framework of the “Cultural Heritage” state program. Although 26 documents are presented in this book, there are translations and facsimiles of a total of 34 letters with letters added to the main letter. Among them, 23 letters in Manchurian language, 6 letters in Parsha Chinese, 3 letters in Chagatai language, and 2 letters in Toty-Mongolian language are presented as historical data. In 2009, the book “Chinese archive documents on the political and diplomatic relations of the Kazakh Khanate and the Qing Dynasty” (the first volume) was published, compiled by Bakhyt Yezhenkhanuly. A total of 80 letters were included in the volume. Among them, 56 pieces were letters in Manchurian language, 24 pieces were in Chinese language. On September 22, 2005, in Beijing, the agreement on the international joint project “Collection of archive documents related to Kazakhstan-China relations during the Qing Dynasty” was signed between the R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the the Historical Archives of China No. 1., in accordance with the terms, in November 2006, as the first result of the mentioned joint project, the publishing house “Muragat” of the People’s Republic of China was published under the name “Collection of archival documents of the Qing era (1) related to Kazakhstan-China relations” [3, 1 page].

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