

ABYLAI KHAN: A HISTORICAL FIGURE AND A FOLKLORE CHARACTER (CASE STUDY OF LEGENDS ABOUT THE ORPHANAGE OF THE RULER)

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Abstract: *The ruler of the Kazakh khanate – Khan Abylai, in the XVIII century became the core of the collapsing enterprises of the state. In the XVIII century, The Kazakh khanate was a state divided into three parts – Zbuз, which were managed simultaneously by khans from the Genghis Khan family and the Supreme Biy, representatives of the black class – Kara-suyek. The process of decentralization of The Kazakh khanate coincided with external threat-active invasions of Dзungars, which began in the XV century. Dзungar huntaidзhi managed to capture a large part of the Kazakh khanate, the Senior and Middle збузes, and displace a huge number of Kazakh tribes from their native territories. The second half of the XVIII century coincided with the expansion of the borders of the Russian Empire, whose rulers, since Peter I, sought to subdue Central Asia. From the South, the Jungar khanate was supported by another powerful neighbor – Qing China. Within The Kazakh khanate, there were several groups headed by Genghis khanates, one of which supported Russia, the other – Dзungaria, and the third group sought its own independence. Born in 1711 to 1735 Sultan Abylai wins the title of Batyr in the fight against Dзungars. Brought up during cruel wars and civil strife, the future Khan forms in himself qualities of the far-sighted politician capable of manoeuvring between two strong states – Russia and China, to unite the Kazakh khanate. In 1771. Abylai is proclaimed the Supreme Khan of The entire Kazakh khanate at the national Assembly. All political activity and biography of Abylai Khan is accompanied by legends and oral tradition. The majority of the legends are devoted to the initial period of life of Abylai Khan. The authors consider the initial period of the life of Abylai Khan through the lens of oral legends and stories that managed to record Kazakh scientists and educators of the XIX-XX centuries. The authors thoroughly examine the issue of Abylai Khan’s orphanhood, which is described in the Kazakh epic and folklore.*

Keywords: Abylai-Khan, the Kazakh khanate, Tole-Biy, Abulmambet-Khan, Tore, oral tradition.

Abylai Khan is a historical figure born and forged by the people in the most dangerous period in the history of the Kazakh Khanate. Real name of

Khan Abylai was Abilmansur. He received the name Abylai in honour of his “cruel” grandfather during the war with the Dzungars, when he defeated the Dzungarian batyr Sharysh. The period of the fragmentation of the Kazakh state into three zhuzes, the constant campaigns of the Dzungarian state and the expanding ambitions and interests of the Russian Empire and Qing China. Abylai Khan was born in approximately 1711, when representatives of three Kazakh zhuzes decided to repulse the military campaigns of the Dzungarian state on the all-Kazakh Kurultai. According to some reports, the military campaigns of the Dzungars led to the death of his father, the ruler of the city, the Sultan of Uali. Abylai himself was able to escape from the city besieged by the Dzungars together with his slave-mentor, according to another legend – with uncle Uraz. According to legends, he hides in the steppe under the name Sabalak, keeping his noble origin secret. At this time, in the Kazakh steppe, along with an external threat, a political crisis was growing. By 1729-1730, Khan of the Younger Zhuz, Abulkhair, is negotiating the adoption of Russian allegiance. He was opposed by Sultan Barak, who believes that the Kazakhs should be in alliance with the Dzungars. The Kazakhs of the Middle Zhuz seek to conquer their own territories. Abylai himself, under the auspices of his closest relative, the Khan of the Middle Zhuz, Abulmambet, is fighting the Dzungars. By 1735, the name of Sultan Abylai became famous in the Kazakh steppe. The Russian authorities started taking a closer look at him, considering him as a protégé in the Kazakh state. It is this period of Abylai’s life that is richest in various legends and traditions associated with his name.¹

Mention of Abylai Khan is found in the works of Russian scientists, travellers, researchers, Russian officers of the XVIII-XIX centuries – I. Rychkov, I. Georgi, I. Andreyev, F. Miller, I. Bardanes, A. Levshin, M. Krasovskiy. Each of the authors considered the figure of the Kazakh khan from their own standpoint, worldview, ideology and moral principles. Being a subject of two states – the Russian Empire and Qing China, Abylai Khan is found in various documents of both states. In Russian sources, the first mention of Abylai Khan dates back to 1739, in Chinese annals the name Abylai Khan dates back to 1755. They refer to the diplomatic relations of neighbouring states with the Kazakh Khanate. The biography of the Kazakh khan is not described in detail in any of the documents found. If the later years of the life of Khan Abylai are known thanks to Russian sources, the questions of his origin remain unanswered – the son of the ruler of which city was Abylai, what was he doing in the 20-30s. XVIII century, who protected the young Sultan. The later works of Kazakh scientists on the life of Abylai Khan reveal the facts of the biography of the famous Khan, but at the same time

¹ O.I. Isenov, *The traditional Kazakh society: the pedestal*, Shapak LLP Publishing house, Kostanai, 2016; O.I. Isenov, *History of the Institute of Tarkhans in the Kazakh Society (XVIII-XIX centuries)*, Kostanai, Publishing house, Shapak LLP, 2017.

contradict each other.

By the nineteenth century, the great-grandson of Khan Abylai – Shokan Valikhanov, the first of the Kazakhs begins to compose a biography of his great-grandfather. Later, Kazakh scholars-educators – Mashkhar Zhusup Kopeiuly, Shakarim Kudaiberdiuly, Alikhan Bukeikhanuly, Kurbangali Khalid will be engaged in the biography of Abylai Khan. All previous biographical works about Abylai Khan did not possess modern scientific criticism and were not subjected to complex processing due to reasons of insufficient knowledge of the Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the 20th century, then the approval of the class ideology of the Soviet period. The biography of the Kazakh khan was compiled by the Kazakh intelligentsia on the basis of the richest source of Kazakhs – the oral legend about Abylai Khan. These are legends, dastans (poems), songs – praises, “tolgau” of Kazakh akyns and zhyrau-storytellers who surrounded the Kazakh khan during his reign (1771-1781). The most famous historical figures such as Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Ivan the Terrible, Peter I acquired a romantic character through folklore and folk art. Folklore images often distorted the real characteristics of historical figures, creating gaps for historians in describing biographies, but reflected in more detail the personality through the lens of people's perception, their aspirations and hopes, whom the people wanted to consider their rulers. Abylai Khan, the last ruler of all three Kazakh zhuzes, became a mythologized person through folk traditions.

Folklore sources about the childhood of Abylai Khan

In Russian works, Abylai Khan is interesting as a politician. For example, the book of I.G. Andreev “Description of the Middle Horde of the Kirghiz-Kaisak” summarizes the political activities of Abylai Khan. The author describes the policy of the Kazakh Khan, caught between two large states and forced to manoeuvre, while trying to unite the Kazakh Khanate. Andreev ironically describes the fact of the election of Sultan Abylai to the Khan's koshma: “Although Ablai Sultan was selected by the Russian court for this khan's title, he didn't accept it; and the Kirghis themselves elected him because of their frivolity and light-mindedness; thus he was no longer titled a sultan, but a khan. But as far as is known, Ablai's title of a khan was approved by the Chinese court, through the aforementioned envoy to him; this is why, apparently, he also refused the title from the other party, which, of course, would have been contrary to the Chinese. Why did this people decide he was worthy of such a high degree, I deem it not to be excessive to elaborate”.²

For Andreev, brought up on the idea of autocracy and succession to the throne, the fact of the election on the kurultai of their own ruler by the

² I.G. Andreev, *Description of the Middle Horde of the Kirghiz Kaisaks*, Gylym, Almaty, 1998.

Kazakhs did not fall within the ideological and cultural framework of the Russian subject. The figure of Abylai Khan is objectively considered by Russian historian-researcher A. Levshin: “Confident of his dignity, he skilfully attracted adherents by his importance and cautious behaviour, threatened his enemies with his strength and admitted himself, depending on the current needs, to be a Russian subject one second, and the Chinese subject the next, but in fact the ruler was completely independent”.³ But Levshin also sought to describe Abylai’s political activity, setting only one goal – to study the history of the Kazakh people in general terms, and paying more attention to rites and traditions.

S. Valikhanov describes the biography of his formidable great-grandfather under the influence of oral traditions and legends, which he includes in a collection entitled “Historical Traditions about the Batyrs of the 18th Century”. 12 of the 14 legends cited in this collection are directly related to Abylai. The scientist used oral folklore and some information from Russian written sources to write an article called “Ablai”, and documents a historical epic about Abylai Khan in writing. The role in S. Valikhanov’s coverage of Abylai’s biography is played by the oral traditions of the Kazakhs: “In the tradition of the Kyrgyz, Ablai has some kind of poetic halo; the age of Ablai among them is deemed the age of Kyrgyz knighthood. His campaigns, the heroic deeds of his bogatyrs serve as plotlines for epic stories, most of the musical plays played on the pipe and honba date back to his time and different eras of his life”.⁴

Oral traditions led to Kazakh writers and poets, such as M.Zh. Kopeiuly, S. Kudaiberdiuly becoming engaged in the description of the biography of Abylai Khan. S. Kudaiberdiuly studied the life history of all Kazakh khans based on a synthesis of folk legends and historical sources of the East and Russia.⁵ The author of the book “Tauarikh hamsa” Kurbangali Khalid, who made a significant contribution to covering the history of the Kazakh people based on folklore, wrote: “The history of this people is contained in oral traditions. The practical absence of integral written sources and memoirs led to the fact that each gave his own interpretation and assessment, while some, upon pursuing selfish goals, gave negative information, others sought to downplay their significance”.⁶ Different positions on the origin of Khan Abylai, the first years of his life, posed a problem for modern historical science. Was Khan Abylai a Genghiside? Did he have the right to be elected to the

³ A.I. Levshin, *Description of the Kyrgyz-Cossack, or Kyrgyz-Kaisat hordes and steppes*, Sanat, Almaty, 1996.

⁴ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Ablay*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1985.

⁵ Sh. Kudaiberdiyuly, *Family tree of Turks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Khan dynasties*, Kazakhstan-Sana, Almaty, 1991.

⁶ H. Kurbangali, *History*, Kazakhstan, Almaty, 1992.

khan's throne? How did a Genghiside Orphan become the supreme ruler of the entire Kazakh Khanate?

From oral historical traditions it is known that Abylai was the son of the ruler of the city in the territory of South Kazakhstan. According to different points of view, such a city could be Turkestan, Urgench, Bukhara, Tashkent. Sh. Valikhanov, relying on legends, writes that during the period of turmoil and fragmentation of the Kazakhs, the city of his father was captured by a neighbouring ruler, the father of Khan Vali was killed, and Abylai himself was able to escape from the city. The legends songs of Dauletkeldy, Tole-bi, Abulmambet-khan, Bukhar-zhyrau, Umbetey-zhyrau tell of "orphanhood" and the period when Abylai was a hired worker. Sh. Valikhanov believes that his father was the ruler of the city of Turkestan and came to the Kazakh steppe from the outside: "According to legend, Ablai, who traveled from Turkestan to the steppe to Abulmamet Khan, as to his closest relative, came with his uncle Uraz on his horse, and circumstances forced him to live incognito for some time with a rich Kirghiz of the Karaul clan, a department of the Yakshilyk Dauletbay, where, as some say, he was with a herd of horses. Not without surprise, Dauletbay's wife noticed that a young foreigner never asks for food until they give it, and that he takes it very reluctantly, and doesn't drink from unclean cups. This is not Kyrgyz behaviour at all: the eccentricity drew the attention of the owner, who then, through inquiries from Uraz, found out about his origin, immediately took him to Khan Abulmamet, gifting him with the best horse from the herd. This chosen horse was that famous Chalkuyruk (flame-tail), the first associate of the campaign of the young sultan, the Chalkuyruk, riding which Ablai earned himself the name of a batyr and respect of the Kyrgyz".⁷

The exact same information is contained in the article Ablai by Sh. Valikhanov. The scientist describes how "his grandfather, also named Ablai, was the owner of the city of Turkestan" and "one of the neighbouring owners, upon overtaking Turkestan, killed him," and young Abylai "entered into service with the rich Kyrgyz of the Yakshilyk clan".⁸ A close examination reveals that Sh. Valikhanov never found out the name of the murderer of Abylai's father. The oral traditions of the Kazakhs gave rise to many options for Abylai's childhood. For example, Sh. Kudaiberdiuly writes: "... After Yessim, his son, Jahanger, became a khan, the Kazakhs called him Salkam Zhangir (Salkam in translation means "impressive". He waged constant wars with the Dzungars). After him, his son, Az-Tauke, inherited the reign. It was him, Khan Tauke, who continued the "Ancient road of Yoshim" (i.e. the code

⁷ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Historical Traditions about Batyrs of XVIII century*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1984.

⁸ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Ablay*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1985.

of laws) ... Az-Tauke was born from the marriage of Salk Zhangir and the daughter of the Kalmyk khan. His brother Walibek (Valibek) was born from the daughter of the Urgench Gaip Khan. When Az-Tauke sat in place of Zhangir khan, Ualibek, with bitter insult, went to Gaip Khan.

The son of Walibek, bey Abylai became famous in the (батыр) fights for his ruthlessness, for which he received the nickname The Bloodthirster. His son is Korkem Wali (Handsome Vali), whose son Abilmansur is the Abylai, known among Kazakhs by this name. All three of his mentioned tribes died at the court of Khan Gaip, without becoming khans. In his time, the descendants of Gaip lost power, and an orphan boy Abilmansur, in search of Kazakh relatives and his fatherland of Sary-Arka, finds himself with the Uysyn Tole-biy. At first, he first grazes Tole-biy's camels, then horses, and finally Tole-biy started appreciating him so much that he decided to adopt him. When asked where he came from, he said he did not know; when asked what his name was, he answered – whatever you call me. Then, Tole-biy called him Sabalak for his overgrown appearance and his ragged clothes”.⁹

In the book of another Kazakh writer, S. Mukanov, published in 1942, another version of the traditions is recorded. It says that Abylai's father was a khan of the city of Bukhara and Abylai's real name is Abilmansur. When the Persians conquered Bukhara, the thirteen-year-old Abilmansur escaped with the help of a faithful slave. He takes him to the city of Turkestan to Abulmambet, which, despite family ties, forces the boy to perform various tasks. Unable to withstand humiliation, Abilmansur leaves for the Kazakh steppe, where he calls himself the son of a slave. Then he kills his faithful slave and takes the name of Sabalak.¹⁰ The message of Sh. Valikhanov that the ancestors of Abylai were from Turkestan or Bukhara does not quite correspond to reality. M. Mamedov, who was the clerk of Khan Abylai, very well knew the biography and origin of the Kazakh khan. In a message to the Russian government in 1768, M. Mamedov writes: “Ablai Sultan's father and grandfather were khans of Tashkent, but, after attack, the Zengor Kalmyks conquered that city, and Ablai Sultan, after ten years, went to Turkestan under the possession of Abulmambet Khan”.¹¹ This message is closer to the truth, for, starting from the first quarter of the XVII century. Tashkent city was in the hands of Kazakh khans. This was a time of strengthening statehood under Az-Tauk Khan. Kazakh khans, in addition to Tashkent, controlled 32 cities in the middle reaches of the Syr-Darya.¹² This situation persisted until 1723, when Tashkent came under the rule of the Dzungar Khan. It is logical that

⁹ Sh. Kudaiberdyuly, *Family tree of Turks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Khan dynasties*, Kazakhstan-Sana, Almaty, 1991.

¹⁰ S. Mukanov, *Essays from the history of Kazakh literature of the XVIII-XIX centuries*, KBMB, Almaty, 1942.

¹¹ I. Dyusenbaev, *History of Kazakh literature. Vol. 2*, Nauka, Almaty, 1976.

¹² V.A. Moiseev, *Dzungarian Khanate and Kazakhs (XVII-XVIII centuries)*, Gylym, Almaty, 1991.

supporters of Az-Tauke could transfer power in Tashkent to the “bloodthirsty” Abylai, his cousin. And Turkestan was the direct centre of the horde of Az-Tauke Khan.¹³

The assumption that Az-Tauke could transfer power in Tashkent to the ancestors of Abylai is reinforced by another additional fact – the actions of the Sultan Abylai himself. During the life of Abulmamet, his close relative, Sultan Abylai, despite his higher authority gained in the fight against the Dzungars, has no aspirations to ascend the khan’s throne. Only after the death of his uncle, Abulmambet Khan, did Abylai accept the title of Khan. Even the Russian government wanted to see Abulay instead of Abulmambet on the throne: “... he (Abylai) was told and persuaded about the khanate in person by this side, but he responded that this was too great of an offer and he could not do anything without advice from his uncle Abulmambetkhan, whom he respected so much as if he was his father. ... but (Abulmambet) lives more in the city of Turkestan, he is quite strong and Ablai Sultan himself respects him and follows his advice.

Thus, under such circumstances, there would be no benefit from this side trying to establish another khan in this horde until this Khan Abulmambet is alive”¹⁴. In 1771 after the death of Abulmamet, he was popularly elected with the participation of all representatives of the three zhuzes (the administrative-territorial units of the Kazakh Khanate) to the khan’s throne. Returning to the murder of Abylai’s father, we should note that Sh. Valikhanov writes about the neighboring ruler who captured Turkestan. But a contemporary of Khan, M. Mamedov, reports that the city was captured by the Dzungarian Kalmyks, and has no information on the death of Abylai’s father. Nor are there any reports on orphanage and service work. The scribe Mamedov also records another fact – the arrival of Abylai to Abulmamet. The credibility of the information of Khan Abylai's scribe can also be doubted. M. Mamedov could consciously distort the biography of his khan, dignifying him the best possible way.

Motive parallel of folklore stories about Abylai

The perception of Abylai’s personality in Kazakh legends described by Kazakh writers and poets is interesting. In the legend of Abylai’s escape, there is a mention that a young Genghiside killed his mentor, a slave, where the main leitmotif is the fact that the Tore, a descendant of Genghis Khan, cannot owe his salvation to the slave. Here appears the image of Abylai, who already at a young age shows cruelty, ambition and a visionary mind. Considering the oral

¹³ D.F. Snegin, *History of the Kazakh SSR*, Bilim, Almaty, 1983.

¹⁴ F.N. Kireev, V. Ya. Basin, T. Zh. Shoinbaev, *Kazakh-Russian relations of the XVIII-XIX centuries*, Nauka, Almaty, 1964.

traditions of the Kazakhs, Mongols and other nomadic peoples, one can note the fact of the presence of orphanhood among various mythologized historical figures. The description of orphans in childhood of famous historical figures and their work in serving ordinary people as a shepherd or hunter, as well as their subsequent rise to the khan's throne, is a plot characteristic not only of Kazakh folklore, but also of folklore of Turkic peoples. For example, the Nogai ruler Edige, remaining an orphan, spends his childhood with strangers as a sheep shepherd,¹⁵ and the “orphan” Genghis Khan expelled by his relatives begins to hunt.¹⁶ Alasha-khan is exposed to the same fate in his childhood. The famous Abulkhair Khan, who left a deep mark in the Kazakh political history of the first half of the 18th century, was also an orphan and herded his future father-in-law's sheep. The same can be said about the fate of a contemporary and political associate of Khan Abylai Barak-Sultan. Such a feature as the “hard working childhood” of future rulers is also found in the folklore of the peoples of Western Europe.

The moments noted by us in the contents of the legends about the observance of Dauletbay's wife and the choice of the faithful companion – a horse, can be found in other works, such as “Edige batyr”, “Koblandy batyr” and “Alpamys batyr”. In other words, the facts and information in the works of Sh. Valikhanov are a folkloric version of the transformation of the image of Abylai into a historical hero of Kazakh legends. In the same way, the legendary talk about Abylai's work in the service of Tole-biy (the supreme judge) has a folklore trace of origin.

For the first time the information about the work of young Abylai in the service of Tole-biy was recorded in writing by such researchers as M.Zh. Kopey, K. Khalid and S. Kudaiberdiuly. According to the content of these legends, Tole-biy takes custody of an orphan Abylai who came from outside (Urgench, Bukhara), gives him a “bata” (Kazakh blessing) and sends him on a campaign against the Dzungars.¹⁷ This version is doubtful for several reasons. Firstly, the population of the Elder Zhuz ruled by Tolebiy falls under the reign of the Dzungarian rulers. After Galdan's campaign, his quarters pass from the Irtysh to the tributary of the Ili River and the Tekes River.¹⁸ Famous historian V.V. Bartold describes the situation in Semirechye in this historical era: “The power of the Kalmyks in Semirechye, as far as is known, was not disputed by anyone and their numerous wars with Kazakhs, Mongols and Chinese were not related to this area”.¹⁹

The second reason was the change in the right to appoint town

¹⁵ A.Z. Baysenov, V. G. Loman, *Idebe Batyr*, Gylym, Almaty, 1996.

¹⁶ N.S. Smirnova, *Kazakh folklore in the collection of G.N. Potanin*, Nauka, Almaty, 1972.

¹⁷ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Genealogical tables of Kazakh khans and sultans*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1985.

¹⁸ V.A. Moiseev, *Dzungarian Khanate and Kazakhs (XVII-XVIII centuries)*, Gylym, Almaty, 1991.

¹⁹ V.V. Bartold, *Essay on the history of the Semirechye. Vol. 2*, Nauka, Moscow, 1961.

governors in South Kazakhstan. Dzungarian huntaji, having seized the South Kazakhstan cities independently appointed city governors and exercised this right in the periods of 1723-1729 and 1735-1750.²⁰ Tole-biy had possibly received the right to control Tashkent from the Dzungars. “Until 1739,” writes A.I. Levshin, “Tashkent was governed by that aforementioned khan, who shared his power with one strong Kyrgyz elder by the name of Tyulyaby and they collected an annual tax from the city. Then Yulbars was killed, but even without him, Tulia-biy continued to dominate and collect revenues for some time. His power was terminated by some Kusek-bek, a tributary, or perhaps the governor of Galdan Tsyren”.²¹ In this case, Abylai’s departure to Turkestan, associated with the transfer of Tashkent to the hands of the Dzungar Khanate and his subsequent arrival to Tole-biy to work in his service, raises doubt.

Abylai’s parish to the Uysun Tolebiy with ragged appearance is very similar to the plot from the legend of Alasha Khan, according to which one of the twelve biys who saw the radiant Shyngys, and who brought Shyngys to the Khan’s throne, Maiky-bi²² had a son Uysun. Uysun, on a hunt, saw Alash being unjustly expelled, and told his father Mike-biy about this strange, silent boy. Then Mikey-bi went to meet Alash. Prior to this, the boy who had never talked to anyone showed respect and said hello first and said: “You, born of a support for the khans and hope for ordinary people”. Mikey-bi brings Alash to himself, adopts him, brings him up and later, puts him at the head of his son Uysun, allocating him 100 soldiers and sending them to become the head of a new yurt. Upon hearing of this, the father of Alash Arystan-khan asks Mike-biy to return his son. Mikey-bi sends 100 warriors led by Bolat Kozhauili to Alash, so that he returns. But they stay with Alash. After that, with the same mission, Mike-bi sends another 100 soldiers, led by Kogamuly Alshin. And they also do not return. 300 dzhigits elected Alash to be Khan. Thus the three zhuzes originated.

The motivational parallel of plots is clearly traced. On the one hand, the trusteeship provided by Uysun Tolebiy to Abylai in the latter's childhood and the care given to the future unifier of the three zhuzes in the 18th century, and on the other hand, the role of the guardian Maiky-bi in relation to Alash, the future khan of the three zhuzes. Thus, like Maiky-biy, who was the guardian of Shyngys and Alash, Uysun Tolebiy, whose genealogy goes back to Maiky-biy, becomes the guardian of Abylai and the relationship between them is purely folkloric. But it is possible that precisely on Tole-biy's initiative that young Abylai begins the struggle with the Dzungars and turns into a batyr. From the

²⁰ V.A. Moiseev, *Dzungarian Khanate and Kazakhs (XVII-XVIII centuries)*, Gylym, Almaty, 1991.

²¹ A.I. Levshin, *Description of the Kyrgyz-Cossack, or Kyrgyz-Kaisat hordes and steppes*, Sanat, Almaty, 1996.

²² N.S. Smirnova, *Kazakh folklore in the collection of G.N. Potanin*, Nauka, Almaty, 1972.

position of an ordinary Kazakh community member, the new ruler of the Kazakhs should have a strong relationship with the representative of the clan aristocracy of Kara-suyek, thereby indicating the unity of actions of the supreme khan and the common people. The legend about the participation of Tole-biy in the formation of young Abylai is more of a fiction than a historical fact. We shall set forth the logical chain of traditions of Alash and Sabalak-Abylai:

a) Maiky-bi himself seeks and finds the great Alash in order to make him the ruler of the three zhuzes. And the young Abylai comes to Tole-biy because, firstly, his main goal was not education, but the unification of the three zhuzes into a single state. Secondly, the people dreamed of a single strong ruler capable of repelling an external threat, relying on the clan aristocracy. The powerful material support of the patriarchal clan society, based on the ideology of a powerful clan, according to popular logic, suggested that the future khan for all zhuzes should be brought up by Maiky-biy and his descendants. The upbringing of the future ruler of Abylai in the hands of such a famous person as Tole-biy idealizes the image of the future khan. The great-grandfather of Abylai, Uzun Okty Ondan-Sultan, having killed a man, avoiding justice, was under the auspices of Alibek, the father of Tole-biy.²³ Of course, the period of life of the father of Tole-biy and grandfather Abylai does not coincide. Therefore, this fact can be considered fiction – a product of the folk art of the Kazakh people.

b) When Maiky-biy came in search of Alash, the youth greeted: “The Assalaumagaleikum, the support of the khans and the protector of the common people”.²⁴ And the young Abylai addressed Tolebia with the words: “Kazakhs are my people, Saryarka is my native land”.

c) Maiky-biy said about Alash: “Someday he will become a khan”. And with regard to Sabalak-Abylai, Tole-biy referred as of the future ruler: “He will rule all clans and tribes”.²⁵ Representatives of the Middle Zhuz, honouring Tole-biy, asked the Abylai to accept the title of Khan: “In memory of the duel with the Dzungarian batyr Sharysh, the people named him “Abylai”. After that, the noble people of the Middle Zhuz turned to Tole-biy with the words: “before, the senior khans came from the senior zhuz, and this one they kept home. If anyone fought the Kalmyks the most, it was us, the Middle Zhuz. They gifted him with gifts and, having received the blessing of the biy, took Abilmansur, Khan Abylai to them”.²⁶

Tradition seeks to show the education of the future ruler of Abylai in the

²³ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Genealogical tables of Kazakh khans and sultans*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1985.

²⁴ Zh.K. Mashkhar, *Works. Vol. 8*, EKO, Pavlodar, 2006.

²⁵ J. Aymautov, *Kazakh folk literature*, Bilim, Almaty, 1995.

²⁶ Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, *Genealogical tables of Kazakh khans and sultans*, Chief Editorial Board of the Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia, Almaty, 1985.

hands of such a well-known person as Tole-biy and idealizes the image of the future khan in accordance with the mass consciousness. The same moments are characteristic of other epic songs of a global scale, such as *Manas*, *Korogly*, *Edige*, *Dzhangar*. The basis of all this is the adaptation of the image of the future ruler to the perception of the masses who want to see in the personality of the ruler such traits as kindness, generosity and high authority. In addition, the people want to see their own kind in the ruler, whose fate is inextricably linked with the fate of this people, and this future ruler should become a khan thanks to his special personality traits.²⁷ Therefore, all known historical figures, in childhood, lose their family, parents and support of the clan. This fact in the minds of the people gives an aura of inflexibility, of iron will. Therefore, sometimes popular consciousness itself creates certain stages in the life of historical figures, embellishing them with the help of traditions and legends. According to the famous scientist of Kazakh folklore science, academician S. Kaskabasov, “the orphanhood of the batyrs and their very childhood is connected with the folklore aesthetics, which undoubtedly is based on the people's desire to idealize the hero defending their homeland”.²⁸

Conclusions

By the 1740s, Abylai turns into a mature politician and leader of the war with the Dzungars, capable of conducting diplomatic negotiations. In 1740, Abylai was able to enlist the support of the Orenburg authorities by resolving issues on the border areas, the relationship between Kalmyks, Bashkirs and Kazakhs. Manoeuvring between strong neighbouring powers, the future khan should also consider the Kazakh groups themselves. On the one part, Khan Abulkhair, gravitating towards Russia, on the other – Barak-Sultan, who advocated cooperation with the formidable Dzungaria. And on the third part stood Abylai himself, who, together with Abulmambet Khan, sought the independent Kazakh Khanate. Abylai Khan established diplomatic relations with the Dzungarian rulers. He did this when he was captured by the Dzungars in 1741, where he was able to enlist the support of the Huntaiji Galdan-Tseren. The Russian authorities sent Muller to achieve the liberation of the khan in 1743. And here, the Kazakh people also did not neglect this event and created the legend that by defeating Sharysh, the son of Galdan-Tseren, he was able to gain freedom.

Until the end of the life of Khan Abylai, the Kazakh people created oral traditions and stories, creating the ideal image of a wise, strong, warlike ruler, diplomat. Sh. Valikhanov once wrote an answer to the assertion of his

²⁷ V.M. Zhirmunskiy, *The Legend of Alпамыsh and the heroic tale*, Edition of Oriental Literature, Moscow, 1960.

²⁸ S. Kaskabasov, “Cyclization in Kazakh folklore”, in *Zhbuldyz*, 1992, no. 11, p. 1-29.

formidable great-grandfather: “I will rule as a lion, my children – as tigers, my grandchildren will become wolves, and great-grandchildren will be dogs”. “Yes, I am a dog, but I am a dog of my people”, Sh. Valikhanov retorted. Sh. Valikhanov himself uses a folk-art technique to romanticize his great-grandfather. Proceeding from the analysis of oral legends and a comparison of historical documentary sources, it can be argued that Abylai Khan, a Genghiside born in the city of Tashkent and brought up under the auspices of his uncle Abulmambet Khan, was able to use his virtues and become the supreme khan of the Kazakh Khanate, uniting the temporarily separated Kazakh kin. The reason for this was the increased influence of the clan aristocracy from the Kara-Suyek estate, which became the main pillar of the struggle against the Dzungars. Representatives of the “Tore” stratum – the Genghisides only fought for power within the state, and only Abylai was able to embody the interests of the Kazakh people and become the head of state. Abylai Khan is the only one of the “tore”-Genghisides to be honoured with legends and oral traditions. Neither Khan Abulkhair, the ruler of the Younger Zhuz, who was able to defeat the Dzungars in Anirakai, neither Khan Abulmambet, nor Sultan Bolat, could maintain the independence of the Kazakh Khanate.