

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Kazakh Tribal Formation along the Lower Syrdarya Region and Historical Migration-Settlement Processes *

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Abstract

The “Syrdarya Region” or “Syr Region’s” geographical definition denotes the Syr Darya River’s lower reaches and the Aral Sea’s eastern shores. The Kazakh tribe’s regional ethnic formation is complex and formed in several historical phases. Its history dates back to ancient ages. It was the Saka-Massagetae’s political-administration center, and Kangui clans’ land during the Early Iron Age. Turkish-origin clans/tribes migrated to the Syrdarya Region and Oghuz and Kipchak states settled there during the Early Medieval Age. The Mongol-Tatar invasion was the next regional migrative movement. The regional Turkic clans/tribes joined the subsequent ethnic formation of the “Kazakh” people. The Syrdarya Region, under the Dzungar invasion, became a large migration center and the home for a complex clan/tribe union with the Greater, Middle, and Lesser tribe Kazakhs. This study covers the history of complex relations between the clan/tribe in the Syrdarya region, which has been a center of commerce since the ancient ages.

Keywords

Syrdarya, Saka, Kangui, Kipchak, Oghuz, Greater tribe, Middle tribe, Lesser tribe.

* This research was conducted within the framework of the scientific project “AP23488984-Medieval toponymy from the aspect of the formation of the ethnic territory of the Kazakh people”.

Date of Arrival: 08 August 2023 – Date of Acceptance: 22 August 2024

You can refer to this article as follows:

Çınar, Serhan, and Tattigul Kartaeva. “Kazakh Tribal Formation along the Lower Syrdarya Region and Historical Migration-Settlement Processes.” *bilig*, Advance online publication, <https://doi.org/10.12995/bilig.7580>.

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Aşağı Sirderya Bölgesinde Kazak Boy Yapılanmasının Oluşumu ve Tarihî Devirlerdeki Göç-Yerleşim Süreçleri*

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Öz

“Sirderya bölgesi” veya “Sir bölgesi” coğrafi tanımlaması, Sirderya Nehri’nin alt kısımları ile Aral Denizi’nin doğu kısmı için kullanılmaktadır. Sirderya bölgesindeki Kazak boylarının etnik oluşumu oldukça karmaşık olup, etnik terkihi bakımından birkaç tarihî aşamadan meydana gelmiştir. Sirderya bölgesinin tarihi antik çağlara kadar uzanmaktadır. Erken Demir Çağı’nda bölgenin Saka-Massaget etnik gruplarının siyasi-idari merkezi ve Kangüy boylarının yurdu olduğu bilinmektedir. Erken Orta Çağ döneminde Sirderya bölgesine Türk kökenli boyların göç etmesiyle bölgeye Oğuz, Kıpçak devletleri yerleşmiştir. Bölgedeki bir sonraki göç hareketi Moğol-Tatar istilasıyla ilişkilidir. Sir bölgesindeki Türk boyları daha sonraki dönemlerde “Kazak” halkının etnik oluşumuna katılmıştır. Cungan istilasının etkisi altında Sir bölgesi büyük bir göç merkezi hâline dönüşmüştür. Bölge Ulu Cüz, Orta Cüz, Küçük Cüz Kazaklarından oluşan karmaşık bir boy bileşimine ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Bu araştırma, antik çağlardan bu yana ticaretin merkezi olan Sirderya bölgesindeki kabileve boylar arasındaki karmaşık ilişkilerin tarihini kapsamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sirderya, Saka, Kangüy, Kıpçak, Oğuz, Ulu Cüz, Orta Cüz, Küçük Cüz.

* Bu araştırma, “AP23488984-Kazak halkının etnik coğrafyasının oluşumu açısından Ortaçağ yer adlarının tanınması” adlı bilimsel proje kapsamında gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Geliş Tarihi: 08 Ağustos 2023 – Kabul Tarihi: 22 Ağustos 2024

Bu makaleyi şu şekilde kaynak gösterebilirsiniz:

Çınar, Serhan, ve Tattigül Kartaeva. “Kazakh Tribal Formation along the Lower Syrdarya Region and Historical Migration-Settlement Processes.” *bilig*, Advance online publication, <https://doi.org/10.12995/bilig.7580>.

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Introduction

The lower reaches of the Syr Darya River (also known as Jaxartes) and the eastern coast of the Aral Sea are referred to as the “Syr Region”¹ in Kazakh literature. It is also known as the “Syr-Aral Region” among the locals. This area, through which one of the most significant rivers of Central Asia flows into the Aral Sea, is recognized as the Syrdarya Region in historical sources. The regional geographical features where Kazakh people lived, and the Kazakh society’s deep-rooted historical past, settlement history, and ethnic formation, developed through a complex process.

The archaeological heritage of the Syr Region, which is located among the regions where the Kazakh tribes emerged, is divided into several periods. The earliest tribal union in the Syrdarya and Aral Regions was formed by the societies belonging to the Andronovo culture². The Saka³, Sarmat and Kangui⁴ tribes, as well as the Alan societies,⁵ which were an extension of the Andronovons, lived in the region in the Early Iron Age. The tribes inhabiting the Kazakh lands and the Syrdarya-Aral Region during the Early Iron Age are generally referred to as the “Early Nomadic Tribes” or the Scythian Era Tribes (Sizdikov 2; Durmuş 5-40; Gündoğdu 366-367). The Syrdarya-Aral “early nomadic tribes” are part of the first nomads among the Turkic migrants from the Eurasian Steppes (Golden 19-33).

The migration period of the On-Oq tribes, which made up the Western Göktürk Khanate, would begin during the Early Medieval Period. Pecheneg, Karluk, and Oghuz tribal unions took the stage in history in the eighth to ninth century CE as a result of the migrative movement of the Nui-She-pi tribes, which formed the western portion of the On-Oq union from the Dzungarian gate and the Tien Shan Range to the Syrdarya Region. Following the Seljukid State establishing a large political union in Western Asia in 1040, some of the Oghuz clans and tribes moving westward settled in the Syr Region and mixed with the Kipchak tribes in time and played a pivotal role in the formation of the Kazakh tribal organization.

The Golden Horde State emerged as a result of the westward migration of Mongol tribes in 1220 during the final phase of the formation of Kazakh tribal organization in the Syrdarya Region. After the death of Jochi, Genghiz Khan granted his eldest son Batu Khan the western portion of the

fief known as the Desht-i Kipchak. Batu's older brother, Orda Ichen was given the eastern Desht-i Kipchak, which also encompassed the Syrdarya Region (Kafalı, Cuci Ulusu 60). From the thirteenth century onward, the Syrdarya Region frequently changed hands between the Golden Horde and the Chagatai Khanates. When the Golden Horde State disintegrated and gave way to smaller khanates, Kerei and Janibek, leaders under the Uzbek Khanate, retreated to the Ili Valley in the north and began paying tribute to the Chagatai Khanate. This marked the first steps in the formation of the Kazakh Khanate. Gradually, the Kazakh Khanate was firmly established with the incorporation of other Turkic tribes from the Yedisu and Syrdarya Regions. The Syrdarya Region became a major migration center for Turkic tribes from the Desht-i Kipchak during the reign of Kasym Khan. So much so that one of the central headquarters of the Kazakh Khans was the historical city of Syghanak, located in the mid-Syrdarya Region (Joldasbaev 41-49).

There were some interrelations in the ancient period of the Syr Region among the Kangui tribes, and the sedentary and nomadic cultures, the cultural groupings of Alan-Oghuz tribes in the Syrdarya oasis, Kushans in Khwarazm and Sogdiana, and the Turko-Sogdians in the Yedisu Region. The Perso-Turan tribal union left its place to the Oghuz-Kipchak tribal union in the Early Medieval Period. All these elements of the ancient and medieval period of the Syr Region have been influential in the ethnic formation of the Kazakh people.

At the beginning of the Early Medieval Period, the migration of the Turkic tribes from the Altai Region to the Syr Region via Yedisu changed the ethnic structure of the Aral Region. The traces of this transformation can still be seen today among the Lesser *Juz*⁶ (tribes) of the Kazakhs. All seven tribes Aday, Altyn, Jappas, Alasha, Esentemir, Taz, Sherkeshter, and the Elimoglu group from the Bayuly tribal union of the Lesser Tribe, as well as certain clans of the Middle *Juz*⁷ and Greater *Juz*⁸ tribes that have lived in the Syr Region since the Oghuz Yabgu State era. Additionally, some Greater *Juz*, such as Jalair, Oshakty, Kangui, Sirgeli, and Dughlat also settled in the area.

Among the tribes of the Middle *Juz*, there were Tarakty, Argyn, Naiman, Kipchak, Konyrat, and a few numbers of Kerek in the region. In addition, there were also members of the Töre, Khoja, and Sunak groups, which do not belong to any of the three tribes. The ethnic composition of the tribes in the

region is based on statistical, cartographical, and historical documents. The regional clans and its locative geography were preserved in the nineteenth century. They have passed several waves of migration in ethnic histories.

The Traces of Ancient Period Tribal Unions in the Syrdarya Region

It is known that the ethnic groups that belong to the Saka period had settled on the eastern shores of the Aral Sea. The lower flow of the Syr Darya is the political center of the Saka. Sergey Tolstov, in his research along the lower flow of the Syr Darya, divides the Sakas, who settled in the region for tribal unions: the First, *Apasiyak Sakas* were found around Janaderya. The monuments of *Apasiyaks* were represented within the cultural sphere named Yediasar (Tolstov, *Drevniy Harezmi* 39). The second were the *Tochar* tribes, which settled around Kuvan Derya. Tochar monuments were also found within the Yediasar cultural sphere (Tolstov, *Po Sledam Drevne Harezmi* 32-60). The third group occupied the *Augasi* tribes above Kuvan Derya. The works by these groups were the towns and settlements that belonged to the “Swamp culture”. The Fourth group was that of *Sakaravaks* on the Inkar Derya. The monuments from this group were represented in the shrines of Uygarak and Tagisken (Tolstov, *Po Drevnim Deltam* 136-204). This classification by Tolstov was shaped according to the archaeological inventory obtained in the region by the Khwarazmian Research Team,⁹ who were appointed to study the Khwarazm and Syr Regions during the Soviet Period. Among the largest and most prominent Saka settlements around the Syr are the Shirik-Rabat remnants on Janaderya, Babish-Mola settlement, and the Balandy settlement that draws attention at Inkar Derya with its small city walls, and the Uygarak and Tagisken graves (Tolstov, *Po Sledam Drevne Harezmi* 99-102). Among these settlements, the Tagisken graves contain works from two separate periods. The Uygarak graves consist of 80 mounds, classified as Western, Central, and Eastern (Levina, *Keramika Nijney* 85).

Remains were uncovered in 70 burial sites in the region during the archaeological excavations conducted by the Khwarazmian Research Team. These graves offer valuable insights into the ethnic history of the Saka tribes who inhabited the area surrounding the Aral Sea. The Uygarak burials, in particular, exhibit traces of a distinct lifestyle, featuring social characteristics that differ from those typically associated with the Saka communities (Vishnevskaya 128-129).

Some similarities that are unique to findings from the Eastern Eurasian regions, Siberia and Altai, were detected in the inventories at the Saka settlement areas in the eastern section of the Aral Sea. The three-cornered, holed arrowheads, that start to appear as of the second half of the sixth century BCE, also considering the geographical proximity, show the cultural connections with the Sarmat (Sauromat) tribes around the Aral Sea. The Uygarak graves contain the earliest samples of the Scythian animal style in Eurasia, and the eastern Aral section was located within the Scythian-Siberian cultural sphere. The Aral Region Sakas became the cultural heirs of Europe and Siberia. Shirik-Rabat,¹⁰ which is known as the administrative unit of the Saka, and the cities such as Babish-Mulla¹¹ prove that the development of the region through its city establishments and the cultural heritage was connected with the culture of the settled tribes of Western Turkestan. In the second century BCE, with the formation of small size streams like Kuvan Derya, Janaderya, and Inkar Derya on the left coast of Syr Darya, the migrative movements around the Syr Region were intensified, and some of the Sakas who were settled in the cities such as Shirik-Rabad, and Babish-Mulla migrated to several regions along the Syr Darya (Vainberg 99; Levina, *Etnokul'turnaja istoriya* 55).

The anthropological research conducted on the chronological findings of the Early Ancient Period that belong to the Saka tribes, which were found in the Inkar Derya and Janaderya basins of the Syr Region, show that they are closer to the Andronovo typologies, and were the autochthonous residents of Kazakhstan (Tolstov, *Po Drevnim Deltam* 201).

Chronological analyses of findings from Saka kurgans in the Aral Region, as well as data obtained from the Tagisken and Uygarak graves, indicate that the Sakas of the Aral Region like those in other parts of Kazakhstan, exhibited primarily Europoid physical characteristics. However, skeletal remains, particularly skulls recovered from Eastern, Central, and Northern Kazakhstan, along with those from the Tagisken and Uygarak burial sites, also reveal emerging features associated with the Mongoloid type. In more than half of the female skulls examined, a combination of both Europoid and Mongoloid traits is observable (Ismagulov, *Naseleniya* 33). According to the research, this hybrid typology resulted not from large scale east-

west migrations, but rather intermarriages among populations of differing anthropological types.

The Kangui tribal union settled along the lower course of the Syr Darya River during the Late Iron Age. Although written sources on the Kangui's settlement in the Syrdarya Region are limited, the travel accounts of the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian, dated to the mid-second century BCE, provide valuable information about this region. Following the annexation of the "Three Northern States" by Xiongnu Yabghu Zhizhi, the Wusun tribes began to exert pressure on the Kangui, who at the time maintained a nomadic lifestyle across from Talas town and Syrdarya Region. Under growing threat, the Kangui entered into an alliance with the Northern Xiongnu faction led by Zhizhi Yabghu, establishing dynastic ties between the ruling families of the two powers. Despite these familial ties, military tensions persisted between the Kangui and the Xiongnu. Eventually, the Kangui succeeded in expelling the Xiongnu forces from the capital. In the early years of the common era, the Kanguis extended their influence over territories to the north and northeast of the Aral Sea. At their height, the Kangui emerged as one of the dominant powers in Turkestan, bringing several principalities – namely Sushe (Suse, Fumo {Fumu}, Yüeni, Chi {Gi}, and Yuegan – under their suzerainty (Bichurin I, 146-149).

Barthold describes the Kangui as a nomadic tribe. According to him, their center was in the middle Syr Darya basin. The Tashkent basin was to the south of the Kangui and to the east of the Talas and Chui basins and to the north of the lower section of Syrdarya.

The principality of Sushe was related to Shahri-Sabz; the principality of Fumu with Zarafshan; Yüeni with Tashkent; Chi with Bukhara; and Yuegan with the northern Khwarazm and Urgench (Uzbekistan side) Regions (Barthold 5-7).

Tolstov records that the Kangui were settled between the Oxus and Syr Darya Rivers, with Khwarazm as their political and geographical center. He localizes Sushe with Kash in Kashgar, Fumo with Kushania in Zarafshan, Yuni with Chach, Chi with Bukhara, and Yuegan with Khwarazm (Tolstov, *Po Sledam Drevne Harezmi* 444). Bernshtam was of the opinion that Sushe was in the mid-flow of the Syr Darya and Arys Rivers, and the northern hills

of Karatau, Fumu in the region between the northwest of Janakorgan and the present day Kazaly, Yüeni in the Tashkent oasis, Chi in the lower flow of Syr Darya River, and Yuegan in Khwarazm (Bernshtam, *Istoriko-Arheologicheskie* 212, 216). Bernshtam further argues that the Kangui, whom he identifies as Turkic-speaking tribes, developed a unique civilization shaped by the fusion of nomadic and sedentary elements, influenced through prolonged interaction with the Persian-speaking Massagetae and Alans (Bernshtam, *Arheologicheskie raboty* 132).

Czegledy opines that the tribes of Alans and As, which appear in the sources of Strabo and Pompey, are the same as the Kangui mentioned in Chinese records (Czegledy 38). Rostovtzeff supports this view and states that the eastern branch of the Sarmatians was located between the Aral and the Caspian Seas, and the Alan tribes referred to as Kangju in Chinese records correspond to this group (Rostovtzeff 121).

Although there are differing views regarding the settlement areas of the Kangui, these perspectives are largely complementary. The Yediasar culture, associated with the Kangui who settled along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River, shows strong similarities with the Kaunchin and Otrar-Karatau cultures. The most significant archaeological remains attributed to the Kangui in the Syrdarya Region have been discovered in present-day Altynasar, located in the Karmakchy Valley of the Kyzylorda Region. It is now widely accepted that the historical settlement of Sushe corresponds to the site of the medieval city of Syghanak (Joldasbaev 42).

The main Silk Route that passed through Syghanak extended westward to Yengikend and Mankyshlak. Another route continued through the southern part of the Aral Sea to Mughaljar, then reached Saray-Juk in the Lower Ural basin, Saray-Berke in the Volga region, and finally the Crimean ports, connecting to Byzantium. The cities of Altynasar, Kara-asar, Tompakasar, and Bidakasar associated with the Yediasar Culture were established along this trade network. There are artifacts from Byzantium, Persia, China, and cultural interactions with states to the south and east. Tolstov categorized the archaeological remains from the Kangui Period under the term “Swamp Culture” (Tolstov, Goroda Guзов 63-64). Yengikend, believed to have been part of the Yueban polity, was later made the capital of the Oghuz Yabgu State along with settlements, such as Kesken-Kuyuk-kala, are associated

with this culture and represent its latest phase. By the sixth century BCE, through contacts with the nomadic Sarmatian tribes, a commercial trade route was established between Turkestan, Orenburg, and the present-day Bashkir Regions (Sizdikov 4-13). These routes, established during the Kangui era, were later used by nomadic Kazakh groups as migration paths and military campaign routes.

The Early Medieval Ethnic Processes in the Syrdarya Region

The ethnic amalgamation of the nomadic Turkic tribes of Central Asia and the sedentary Proto-Kazakh tribes persisted from the second to seventh centuries BCE. Following the dissolution of the Western Göktürk Khaganate, certain groups among the Oghuz established a polity along the lower basin of Syr Darya (Samoylovich 100). The passage of the Silk Road through the Syr Region significantly fostered development of economic and ethnocultural relations among the urban centers in the area and their neighboring communities throughout the medieval period.

Ethnographer Serik Ajighali states that, as a result of this mutual influence, the Oghuz tribes in Kazakhstan played a pivotal role in the formation of Turkic speaking tribes. According to Ajighali, *“The Oghuz, served as a cultural bridge between the autochthonous element of the Aral-Caspian region (The Massagetae) and the newcomers (the Turks)”*. With these words, he emphasizes the significant influence of the Oghuz tribes on the ethnogenesis of Turkic-origin communities in the Syr Region (Ajighali 23). Recently, the remnants of Oghuz tribes in Kazakhstan can be found among the Lesser Tribe Kazakhs. Gumilev mentions that the Aday tribe was the extension of the tribe known as Daha-Dia in the Ancient Greek sources, and that this tribe was descended from the Hephthalites and Pecheneg-Kengeres (Gumilev 235). As is known, the settlement areas of the Aday tribes coincide with the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and the southeastern portions of the Caspian Basin, similar to those of the Dai and the Oghuz.

Archaeological findings show that Dai settled around Yeniderya, Kuvan Derya of Syrdarya in the fifth to second centuries BCE, and beginning with the first half of the third century BCE, started to migrate towards the south of the Caspian and Parthia (Vainberg 231). The remnants of the Dai, who remained in the region until the Early Medieval Period, were incorporated in

the Western Göktürk Khaganate in the seventh, and Oghuz tribal union in the eighth to ninth centuries (Agadzhanov, *Ocherki Istorii* 59) Agadzhanov notes that in the formation of the Oghuz tribal union, the indigenous tribes of the Syr Region were as influential as the eastern elements (Agadzhanov, “K Etnicheskoi” 25). Ismagulov is of the opinion that the migration of the Adai from the Syrdarya Region to Mankyshlak occurred in the Oghuz age and not in the ancient period. According to him, the naming Ada-(i) was used to mean the dwellers of Aral in the Oghuz dialect. (Ismagulov, *Etnicheskaya genogeografiya* 23). In this context, Ibn Fadlan, who traveled through the Ustyurt area in 922 also reports that the Oghuz were between the Jam and Yaiq Rivers in this period (Togan, *Ibn Fadlan's* 30).

Konyratbaev argues that the location of Jand city was a significant trade center as Jankend (Yengikend, 23 km from Kazaly), the capital of the Oghuz State, in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya to the left of the region, demonstrates that the political center of the Oghuz was the Syr Region (Konyratbaev 55). Zhirmunsky highlights that the cities of Syghanak and Savran were important Oghuz centers. Yengikend, the capital of the Oghuz Yabgu State, is referred to as *Dah-ü Nev* in the Persian sources and as *Al Qayrat-al Hadisa* in the Arabic sources (Zhirmunsky 523-524).

In the work by Rashîd al-Din Fadullâh Hamadânî titled “Oghuznâma”, the city “Kuyuk Hisar” was possibly the “Kesken-Kuyuk-kala” of the Oghuz, which was in the lower section of the Syr Darya, some 20 km from Kazaly (Hamadânî 42-44).

According to the *Hudud'ul Alam and Marvazî*, the Oghuz tribes were shown to have lived in the neighborhood of Kimek (Minorsky 308-312). Al Balâdhuri and Marvazî report that the Oghuz tribes lived to the north of Khwarazm, neighboring the Pechenegs (Al Balâdhuri 37; Marvazî, 32). Al Balâdhuri names the north from Sogdiana and Khwarazm as the Oghuz land (Al Balâdhuri 205). The most detailed information on the Oghuz tribes and cities were given in the map prepared by Al Idrisi (Idrîsî 400).

Peacock states that the formation of the Oghuz Yabgu State in the Syrdarya Region was in connection with the migrative movements that changed the political structure of Western Asia. He further contends that the roots of this political hierarchy can be traced to the Khazar Empire (Peacock 4) Togan

mentioned that the Oghuz political union was located between the Volga (Idil) River and the Aral Sea, based on the information in the Legend of Oghuz Khagan from the *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (Togan, *Oğuz Kağan Destanı* 25).

Some segments of the Oghuz tribes, together with the Seljukids, reached Anatolia via Iran and Southern Caucasia during the first half of the eleventh century (Banguoğlu 24). However, certain clans within the Oghuz tribal union did not participate in the Greater Oghuz migration and instead joined with the Kipchaks in the Syr Region. Sighnaq, the capital of the Kipchak State, was mentioned by Mahmud al-Kashgari as an Oghuz city. Among the later Kazakh tribal symbols in the Syr Region, traces of the symbols mentioned by Mahmud al-Kashgari that originally belonged to the Oghuz can still be found (al-Kashgari 438). The Kipchaks were also among the Turkic tribes that ruled the Syr Region. The Kipchak tribal union, after the fall of the Göktürks, went under the sovereignty of the Kimek Khaganate. In the eleventh century, the Cuman-Kipchak groups that left the Kimek tribes gained power and spread to Western Turkestan and Eastern Europe. In the narration of Abu-l-Fazl Beyhaki about the campaign of Mas'ud I, the Oghuz tribes were mentioned as “ghuz” (Beyhaki 147, 181, 851-852). It is known that the Syrdarya Oghuz played an important role in the ethnogenesis of other Turkic tribes throughout history. They participated in the establishment of both the Seljukid and Ottoman Empires and thus played a significant role in world history (Sümer 26-138; Peacock 5-54).

During the period of the Ulus of Jochi, also known as the Golden Horde, the Kazakh steppes were named Eastern Desht-i Kipchak. The medieval cities of the Syr Region served as important economic centers within the Desht-i Kipchak (Kafalı, *Altın Orda* 30). Especially during the eleventh to twelfth centuries, Syghanak city was the center of the Kipchak State. Thanks to the Kipchaks who moved to Syghanak city, it reached a prominent position (Bernshtam, *Arheologicheskie raboty* 132; Joldasbaev 42). Following the dissolution of the Golden Horde Khaganate, Kipchaks were also separated into many groups. The complexity of the medieval tribal composition in the Syrdarya Region is proven by the tribal symbols on the coins minted in that era (Yeleuov and Egamberdiyev 216-217). Moreover, the latter Kazakh tribal symbols in the Syr Region preserved the traces of the local Oghuz tribes (al-Kashgari 438).

It is evident that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the ethnonyms Kipchak and Turk began to be used together. By the fifteenth century, the Turkic groups in the Syr Region played a prominent role in the formation of the Kazakh ethnic identity and subsequently became part of the Kazakh Khaganate. Tatishev describes the Kipchak and the Tabyn as distinct tribes (Tatishev 232). Aristov notes that when the Kazakh Khaganate was established, various Kipchak tribes, such as Köldegen, Uzyn, Tabugha, and Karabalyk were among those that joined the new state (Aristov 119). Radlov reports that in that period, Kipchak tribes in the region included Toraighyr, Tüykishe, Qitaiqipshaq, Bultyn, Karabalyk, Kölden, Tanabugha, Uzyn, and Kökmuryn (Radlov 24). The Syrdarya Kipchaks were thus subdivided into these constituent tribes. It is noteworthy that the Kipchaks who currently reside in Shiyeli, and Toraighyr settlements in Kyzylorda Province have maintained their historical ties to their ancestral lands in the Syr Region.

The former Turkic tribes in the Syr Region constituted the main elements in the ethnogenesis of the Kazakh people. To understand the distribution of these tribes across the region, it is first necessary to examine their sources of livelihood and the geographical context in which they lived. The primary means of subsistence for the Kazakh people was animal husbandry. The division of the Kazakhs into three tribes was fundamentally based on political and economic factors. In the Kazakh steppe that was partitioned among the three tribes, the tribes traditionally practiced seasonal migration: they moved from winter camps (*kystau*) to spring and summer pastures (*zhailau*) and then returned to their winter camps. During this period, the Lesser Tribe Kazakhs typically settled along the Syr Darya during the winter months and migrated in the summer to northern Kostanay, the Irgiz River basin, the Tobyl River Region, and the Ustyurt Plateau.

There is a clan named Alshyn among the Lesser Tribe. Among the people, there are two distinct narratives regarding the term “Alshyn”. According to the first, it says the Lesser Tribe comprises the Alshyns and the Alimuly, while the second view maintains that Baiuly, Alimuly, and Jetiru represent the overarching divisions of the Lesser Tribe. Togan locates the Alshyn tribe in the Syr Region (Togan, *The Origins* 74, 85). Tynyshbayev notes that “two-fifths of the present-day Kazakhs belong to the Alshyn group of

the Lesser Tribe”, emphasizing that the history of the Alshyn, like other Kazakh tribes, dates back to very early times. He connects the remnants of the Alshyn with geographic names encountered in the Northern Altai Region and the southwestern parts of Russia. There are numerous examples of onomastic names evolving into tribal names over time. For instance, the Teleu clan of the Jetiruv, from the Lesser Tribe, derives its name from Lake Tele in the Altai Region. The ethnonym Tabyn is related with the toponyms Tabyn Bogdo Olo, and Üch Tabyn in the Altai Region. Regarding the Alim settlements, Tynyshbaev states, “According to the Chinese sources, in the seventh century, the lineages of Chumyn and Chumugun inhabited the region west of the Chui River. In 654, the Chinese attacked and destroyed the Chumugun capital. Between 742-744, the Chumugun were defeated by the Uyghur and Karluk warriors, and they had to flee to the west. Consequently, the battle cry of the Karakesek (Alimuly, Shömekey, Kete) was “Döyt”. One of the ancestors of the Alim was the Shekti. In the present day, there exist tribes named Karakesek and Döyt, which are historically related to one another, among the Kyrgyz living southwest of Kashgar and east of the Altai. In other words, the Karakesek and Döyt tribes in the Lesser Tribe among the Kazakhs share a common lineage with the Kyrgyz tribes bearing the same names. The Turkic tribes that migrated from the Altai to the Chui region in the sixth century included the Shümen and Shömeke. It is plausible that the name of the Chui River itself derived from these tribes. Between 550-570, these tribes spearheaded the Western Göktürk along the Chui River. However, between 742 and 744, due to the pressure from the Karluks, the tribes split: the larger group moved westward, while a smaller group crossed the mountains and reached Kashgar. According to Tynyshbayev, *“The Kazakh people likely inhabited the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and the lands east of the Aral”* indicating that this region should be regarded as the ancestral homeland of the Alimuly (Tynyshbaev 24).

Historical sources demonstrate that the Jetiruv migrated to the Syr Region from Eastern Turkestan and Altai, passing through Yedisu. Considering that the Kerderi lived under the Yüeh-chi, it is understood that they resided in Eastern Turkestan during the second century BCE, they moved westward, settling between the southern regions of the Aral and Sogdiana, where they laid the foundations of the Kushan State. In the following years, the Kerderi completely separated from the Yüeh-chi and migrated further towards

Afghanistan and India, although some groups remained in the southern areas of the Aral. The settlement of the Yüeh-chi, which included the Kerderi in the Aral-Caspian Region marked the beginning of early Turkic migration into the Kazakh steppes. The Yüeh-chi were left in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya and Aral Regions. They initially came under the sovereignty of the Göktürk State, and later the Western Göktürk State. The Kerderi, who lived in the vicinity of the Aral Sea around 1000, named the “Kerderi Sea” after themselves. Researchers point to the first century CE as the time when the Kerderi started to settle around the Aral (Omarbekov et al. 329-331).

The name where the Kerderi lived was also “Kerderi”. In the present-day, the Kerderi live around the Aral. According to some researchers, even though the period when the Kerderi migrated from around the Aral, they left the region because of the pressure from Jamanak-Shekti. In the present-day, we encounter Kerderi tribes in the Aral basin and the lower section of Syr Darya, though in lesser numbers among the Jetiruv.

Rychkov explains the boundaries of the General Governorate of Orenburg as,

“From the city Guryev (Atyrau) to the river Yayiq, the river Jem (Emba), on both sides of which the Kazakh make winter settlements, the upper part of the Aral Sea, between the rivers Syr Darya and Kuvan Derya, the vicinity of Telegöl that flows to the Sarysu River, the Sarysu River, and the Dzungar Pass.”

Rychkov divided the people living in the Orenburg region into several different groups, such as Turkmens, Havalys, Arallyks, Upper Karakalpaks, Ulug Juz Kazakhs, Turkestanians, and Tashkendians (Rychkov 7-8).

Rychkov mentions that the Lesser Juz and the Middle Juz in Orenburg Province moved to the Torghai, Ülkayak, and Yrghyz Rivers, and Teleköl Lake, and around Shalkar Lake at the foot of Mount Karashatav (Rychkov 151-152). He refers to the groups settled along the lower course of the Syr Darya River and around the Aral Sea as the “Aralians” (Rychkov 59). Rychkov designates the peoples residing between Orenburg and Yayiq River as “Kyrgyz-Kaysaks”. According to him, *“The nomadic Kyrgyz-Kaysaks of Orenburg, and Yayiq regions call themselves Sary (Yellow)-Kaysaks. That means the Steppe Kaysak in Arabic”* (Rychkov 101). Regarding the Kazakhs living in the lower Syrdarya Region, he gives the following information:

“The Aralians live on the islands on the eastern section of the Aral Sea. They live under the rule of the Khiva Khanate, Ebul-Khayr Khan and Nurali Khan. Even though this region is rich in copper mines, the folk are not interested in that work. The folk migrate to plateaus in the summer and cultivate the field. In the winter, they come to the winter camps and stay in their felt accommodations” (Rychkov 16).

The Syr Region Kazakhs are described as “Turkestanians” in the “Aziatskaya Rossia” publication. The source of the name Aralians comes from the Aral Sea, where the people gathered around the water, the source of living of Syr Darya (*Aziatskaya Rossia* 56, 76). The Tsarist Russia invasion finally secured the Syrdarya Region and appointed the region under the General Governorate of Orenburg in the nineteenth century. The Kazakh steppe of the Orenburg Region was given to the Governorate of Orenburg from the north, the Uralian Kazakhs in the west with their military lands and the Caspian, the Siberian Kazakhs to the east with their province and adding the Aral Sea to the south, and then Syr Darya was drawn as the borderline, and was connected with the Prefecture of Turkestan. The section of Syr Darya closer to the Aral Sea is the mid-section of the Orenburg Region, and the lower section of Syr Darya forms the eastern part of the Orenburg Region.

Rychkov mentioned that the Lesser Juz dwellers carried on their nomadic living along the Börli, Yayiq, Elek, Kobda, Ebeyti, Or, Menlibay, Kamysty, Myrzabulak, Jarlyk, Kumak, and Sandyk Rivers in the summers; and at Kamysty-Yrghyz, Tay-Yrghyz, Uly-Yrghyz, Aksakal Sea, Syr Darya, Karakum Desert, the Tyrnak Region of Syr Darya, shores of the Caspian Sea, Jem River, Lesser and Larger Borsyk Desert, Karaköl Lake, the shores of Oyyl, Kyyly, Kaldyghayty, and Buldyrty, Utba rivers and the Aral Sea in the winters. They divided the summer locations of the Kazakh clans into eight regions and the winter locations into nine regions. Rychkov divides the Lesser Juz Kazakhs into Alshyn and Jetiruv (lit. the “seven clans”). Showing the clans of Alshyn, Aday, Maskar, Tama, Tabyn, Kete, Karakete, Shömekey, Shekti, and Jaghalbayly as the clans of the Lesser Juz, determined them as 20,000 tents (=a complete family unit) (Rychkov 97-100).

The Migration Processes of the Kazakh Tribes

The rebellions against Tsarist Russia and the battles that ensued are important factors in the decrease of the Kazakh population in the nineteenth century. In 1820, the Khan of Khiva Muhammed Rahim raided the Kazakh villages in the Syr Region with his ten thousand strong army. As a result of this raid, 350 Kazakhs died, and 1,935 enslaved (Meyer 37). In 1847, Hoca Niyaz, the Beg (Lord) of Khiva, attacked approximately 1,000 Kazakh families who settled near the Rahim Fortress, and many Kazakh individuals were captured (Maksheev 19).

Horoshin in his paper *“The History and Ethnography of Kyzyl-Kum”*, gives information about the Lesser Juz Kazakh clans that carry on their nomadic living in the Kyzyl-Kum Desert:

“The Alshyns settled in the Kyzyl Kum Desert some 40 years before our day (he means 1830). To avoid the confusion that arose in their former land, they left and settled at the foot of Bukan Mountain to the left of the Syr Region. The Alshyn tribe from the Lesser Juz carry on their nomadic living in the Balhy, Karatamyr, Keldibay, and Aspan regions and Arystandy Mountain, Tamdy Mountain, Aktav and to the south in a region up to Bukhara. The Kereyit, Jappas, Altyn, Alasha, and Taz tribes settled in sections to the right of Tohta Mountain; and the Tama, Tabyn, Jaghalbayly, and Kerderi tribes settled in sections to the right of the regions we mentioned above.”

Thus, here he counts the Argyn, Kanguï, Jalair, and Konyrat tribes, who settled in the Kyzyl-Kum, between the Middle Juz and the Greater Juz. Mentioning that the nomads who dwelled in the Kyzyl-Kum Region were settled there with a governorate decree, Horoshkin informs that the Lesser Juz Kazakhs left the Syr Region since they were looking for a more suitable place for animal husbandry. Mentioning that the population of the tribes dwelling in the Kyzyl-Kum cannot be detected for they were nomadic, he says, *“they have probably 3 thousand families, with a 15 thousand population”* (Horoshkin 70, 71).

Hanykov states on the Bukhara Khanate that the names of some Lesser Juz tribes, who were seen in the lower flow of the Syr Darya were recorded among the Kazakhs and Karakalpaks who lived in the northern regions

of the Khanate. These tribes had settled on the lands of the Bukhara Khanate (Hanykov 62). Levshin mentions that at the time of the “Aktaban Shubyryndy,” event,¹³ some of the Greater and Middle Juz Kazakhs settled in Hojand, some families from the Middle Juz settled in Samarkand, and some of the Lesser Juz Kazakhs settled in the Khiva and Bukhara Khanates. The Kazakhs that moved to Bukhara suffered some oppression from the locals (Levshin 69-72). As a result of the Kalmuk invasive movements, some of the Lesser Juz Kazakhs migrated to Savran, and settled among the Uzbeks. Consequently, the route used is named the “Savran Aynalghan”¹⁴ (the “Savran Turn”).

Levshin states that a significant number of the tribes under the Alimuly settled in winter in the valleys of the Syr Darya, Kuvan Derya, and Janaderya in the Karakum, and the estuary of the Jem River, and the rest around the Elek, Or, and Yayiq Rivers, and between the Krasnogorsky and Upper-Ozerniy fortresses, and spent their summers along the Temir, Jem, Saghyz, Oyyl, Elek, Hobda, Or, and Yrghyz Rivers, and the region between the Mugoljar Mountains and Karakum (Levshin 292). Levshin points that a larger number of the Middle Juz Kazakhs, and their Khans migrated together with the Abil-Mambet Khan to the area between the Or and Hobda Rivers in 1740, but Abu'l Khayr Khan was near the Kuvan Derya River, in the Syr Region. Levshin quotes that Abu'l Khayr Khan, in his letter to the Russian diplomat in Orenburg in 1742, *“I am in the Syr Region with the Lesser Juz Kazakhs, but the Middle Juz are closer to you”*. There is a big conflict here. In that period, no tribes of the Middle Juz were in Orenburg, yet many Alimuly clans, who used to spend each winter in the Syr Region, had migrated to the shores of Elek River in the winter of 1821, as a result of the interclan struggles. Nonetheless, the information provided by Levshin is quite important for our subject matter (Levshin 300).

Tatishev says,

The Lesser Juz dwell in the Aral Region from Yayiq to Jem River; and the Middle Juz in Siberia and Irtish, from the Ytyk Mountains. Their capital is the city of Turkistan. The Greater Juz have settled in the region between the Aral Sea and Dzungaria. Tashkent is their capital.

This information from Tatishev confirms that the Greater Juz and the Middle Juz Kazakhs arrived in the Syr Region after the Kalmuk-Dzungar invasion. He adds the information, “The Syr Region is considered as the winter settlement of the Lesser Juz Kazakhs” (Tatishev 154).

In the report written on May 31, 1858, by the commander of the Syrdarya Region, it says that the administrator of Tashkent is disturbed by the settlement of 140 Kipchak, Naiman, and Konyrat families from the Kazakh tribes. In par with the information provided on June 10, 1858, by the General Danzas of the Syrdarya Region, 470 families migrated to Syrdarya (*Kazahsko-russkie* 439, 442). It is understood that the families that migrated from around Turkestan were the Middle Juz Kazakhs. The Tama, Naiman, Bahtiyar, Bestamghaly, Arghyn, and Kipchak tribes who migrated to the Syrdarya Region were settled in villages from Jölek to Birkazak, where agriculture was developed. Most of them spanned from Perovsk to the second fortress. And the rest settled at the winter place named Han in the Kyzylorda. Konyrats settled in Kumsuvat on the left of the Syr Darya, and the rest in Janakorgan. According to the information dated September 7, 1858, due to the conflict between the Kazakhs and the Kokandians, 12 thousand families from Konyrat, Bestamghaly, Tamak, Kipchak, Tarakty, Argyn and Naiman, settled from the Karatav Mountain valley to the Sarysu River. Some of them returned to their former lands in the Kokand Khanate. Three thousand Konyrat, 2 thousand Bestamghaly, 2 thousand Kipchak, Argyn, Naiman, and Tama families settled around the Perovsk Fortress. Due to the pasture need for the animals in the region, some of the Konyrats and Bestamghalys returned to their former places in the Kokand Khanate due to the need for animal pastures. These families did not want to let their animals graze in the Sarysu River valley. The begs Berdibek Karakoyunlu, Kulshybai Iran, Baighozi Aituvay, and Esbolat Ponov from Bestamghaly, and Dosbol Kurlybai, and Balabi Eskali from the Kipchaks remained in the Syr Region with their villagers (*Kazahsko-russkie* 448-449).

The Kazakh Tribes That Do Not Participate in the Three Juz Tribal Union

Khojas, Töres, Tölengits, Sunaks, Sultans, and Nogays, which remained outside of the three Juz Kazakhs are known as the sub-ethnic structures of this region. The Khoja is the most numerous among them. The next is that of the Sunak. Individuals from the Genghis Khan's lineage are called the

“Töre” in Kazakh society. The Töre are named “Aksüyekler” (privileged) and make up the nobility. The Töre¹⁵ that enjoyed respect among the people had some privileges in traditional law, and had influence in the administration of the Kazakh tribes.

The people who came to Turkestan to spread the Islamic religion, who were from the lineages of the Caliphs following the Prophet Mohammad are called the “Khoja”s. They had names, such as Kazakh Khojas, Turkmen Khojas, Uzbek Khojas, and Tatar Khojas, based on where they lived. The majority of places within Kazakhstan’s borders, where the Khojas live, are the prefectures of Southern Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda. The Khojas spread to the other parts of Kazakhstan, to Southern Kazakhstan, and the mid-and lower flow of Syr Darya River, to narrate the religion, to engage in good deeds, and to build mosques.

According to Radlov, there were 525 families in Kazaly, and 700 in Perovsk¹⁷ from the Khojas between 1861-1862 (Radlov 113). The Khojas in Perovsk, different from the Khojas in the mid-flow of the Syr Darya, used the (p) marker. The settlement areas of the Khojas in Perovsk are interesting. They used to make their winter camps in places, such as Sofukhoja, Davletjarma, Hakim Meshit, Hakim Balkoja Meshit, Yakup Ata, Azadshantai, Kojankhoja, Kumköl, Shengeldi Üy, Bileksay, Jetiköl, Akköl, Iyirköl, Bestöbe, Bosaryk, Jamantam, Tölegenaryk, Jomart, Munara, Aktas Munara, Bekishtam, and Musakhjoja, under the administration of Perovsk (*Materialy po kirgizskomu zemlepol’zovaniyu. Sir-Dar’inskaya oblast’* 50-62). Rychkov says “*The Khoja live densely around the Karakalpak and Aral*” (Rychkov 17, 125). It is understood that Rychkov is mentioning the Khojas in Aral and Kazaly. The Kereyit Khoja in Kazaly County is a clan of the Karakhan Khojas.

Subsequently, some of the Kereyit Khojas in Kazaly migrated to the vicinity of the Amu Derya River (Oxus). There are also traces of onomastic data regarding their migration. Other than the names of land and water bodies, in the winter and summer locations mentioned in our paper, there is an area called “Shaiyrkhoja” to the right of the Syr Darya River. The Kojaryk water channel, dug on the right side of the Syr Darya, beginning from Berliköl Lake, provides water to the Charskaya settlement. According to the population documents, digging of this water channel dates back to the nineteenth century. The Jankhoja dam on the Syr Darya feeds the Akaryk

and Shiyeli water channels. The Karakhoja water channel, beginning from Karaözek and providing water to Karaözek is 10 km, and 300 sazhen (former Russian unit of length. One sazhen is approximately 2.13 m in length). The Khojabelgi village on the left side of the Syr Darya is located along the Tarsha aryk and Esenbek water channels (*Materialı po kirgizskomu zemlepol'zovaniyu. Sir-Dar'inskaya oblast'* 20-29).

The Sunaks settled in the Syr Region almost during the same period as the Khojas. According to the information gathered from the autochthons of the region, the Muslim Arabs who came to spread Islam were not separated from the Khojas and the Sunaks. In time, the Khojas that dwelled in Sunakkorghan were called the “Sunaks” (Erjanov 122-128).

Some information about the settlement of the Tölengit in the Syr Region can be found in the surveys conducted in the Semey Region by Sherbina. Relevant data is included in the section titled, “An Evaluation on the Tribal Chart” in the resulting publication of this fieldwork. According to this source, “Jamanke, the brother of Sultan Shalghymbai, grandson of Abylai Khan, settled in the region (referring to Semey, Shaghan Region) in 1813, together with the Tölengits.” It is also stated that “After the death of Shalghymbai Bralin, 60 Tölengit families settled among the Tabyn tribe in Perovsk County” (*Materialı po kirgizskomu zemlepol'zovaniyu. Semipalatinskiy oblast'* 39). This information indicates that a number of the Tölengit migrated from the east and settled in the Syr Region.

Conclusion

It is understood that during the Bronze Age, the Andronovo tribes inhabited the Syr Region; the Saka-Massagetae and Kangui tribes during the Iron Age; and Turkic tribes lived there in the Early Medieval period. The Turkic tribes in the region were often assimilated by migrating groups from the east due to tribal conflicts and drought. It is understood that the ethnic composition of the tribes in the Syr Region was highly diverse. The Turkic clans that migrated from Altai between the fifth to seventh centuries passed through the Yedisu Region and settled in the Syr Region. Some of these nomadic tribes remained there, while others moved westward and settled elsewhere. Arab missionaries, known as the Khojas and the Sunaks, arrived in the region during the eighth to tenth centuries to spread Islam, moved

westward, and settled elsewhere. The Jochi Ulus, also known as the Golden Horde and the Chagatai tribes were prominent during the Mongol Period. These two states played a significant role in the ethnogenetic formation of present-day Kazakh society, an influence clearly reflected in Kazakh social life. The lineage of Genghis Khan from the Kazakh nobility, was known as the “Töre”. The tribes of the region also played an important role in the political and social movements that took place in Turkestan and the Desht-i Kipchak Region between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Kalmuk-Dzungar invasions of the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries ushered in a new phase of population movements. The Lesser Juz Kazakhs, who were the dwellers of the region, migrated towards the Yayiq River. The densest population in the region is that of the Lesser Juz Kazakhs, and the region is a settlement area even for the tribes that do not belong to any Juz. The ethnic history of the Kazakhs in this region appears to be an important and complex matter. The sources of the related period show that the region is a prominent migration center.

Contribution Rate Statement

The authors' contribution rates in this study are equal.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

Notes

- ¹ The Syr Region is located in the lower section of the Syr Darya (Seyhun, Syrdarya) River.
- ² The Andronovo tribes are the groups that are classified under the Andronovo culture, who lived during the Bronze Age in Turkestan and Southern Siberia, that also includes Kazakhstan.
- ³ The Saka tribes are members of a tribal union that lived during the Early Iron Age in Turkestan (Central Asia, Kazakhstan), and Eastern Turkestan.
- ⁴ The Kangui(s) are among the tribes of Turkic origin, who lived during the Iron Age in the Syr Darya. The members of this group, who were mentioned as K'ang-chü in the Chinese sources, lived among the Greater Juz Kazakh Tribes.
- ⁵ The Alan(s) (Yantsay) was a tribal union of Eastern Iranian origin, who lived during the Iron Age in the region between the Aral and Caspian Seas. In the

present-day, there are settlements and traces of fortresses in Mankyshlak and Ustyurt regions, of Kazakhstan that belong to the Alan tribes.

- ⁶ The Lesser Juz is the last of the three big Kazakh unions. The Lesser Juz tribes have lived through the historical process in the Mankyshlak and Ustyurt plateaus, between the Aral and Caspian Seas, in the lower sections of Syr Darya, and along the Aral Sea. There are Baiyuly, Alimuly, and Jetiruv clans in this tribal union.
- ⁷ The Middle Juz is the medium of the three large Kazakh unions. Their settlement areas cover the Sevir range beginning with the Kazakh Altai, Irtish River, and Zaisan Lake to the east, the southern slopes of the Tarbagatai Mountains, and the Balkash Lake valley; the upper basin of the Sarysu River to the south; the Mountainous Karatav in Central Kazakhstan; the Southern Siberian Grassland to the north; areas from the upper basin of the Turgay River to the Obaghan River to the west.
- ⁸ The Greater Juz is the largest Kazakh tribal union. Their settlement areas cover two sections of the Chui River, the middle basin of Syr Darya, Eastern Kazakhstan, and the Tarbagatai Mountains to the north.
- ⁹ The “Khwarazmian Survey Team” (“Khwarazmian Expedition”): The most inclusive scientific survey team, that conducted archaeological and ethnographical studies by the Academy of Sciences during the Soviet Era between 1937 and 1992.
- ¹⁰ Shirik-Rabad: A settlement established by the Saka tribes in the fourth to second centuries BCE on the right-hand side of Janaderya, which was the former bed of Syr Darya. The settlement status of Shirik-Rabad continued until the thirteenth century CE.
- ¹¹ Babish-Mulla: Another settlement of the Saka tribes on the Janaderya, between the fourth and second centuries BCE.
- ¹² The former name of the Caspian Sea was Khazar.
- ¹³ “Aktaban Shubyryndy”. Dzungar and Kalmuks, who made use of this crisis period, declared war on the Kazakhs. As a result of the war, more than 100 thousand Kazakh soldiers lost their lives. It is observed as an unforgettable calamity in Kazakh society.
- ¹⁴ “Savran aynalghan”, during the Dzungar and Kalmuk invasion, the Lesser Juz Kazakhs passed through the city of Sauran, some took refuge in the present-day Uzbekistan, and some in Turkmenistan.
- ¹⁵ Töre: In the Kazakh society, the Töre are described as the individuals from Genghis Khan’s lineage and hold a prestigious position in society, similar to the Khojas, who arrived in the region to spread Islam.

- ¹⁶ Sunakkorghan is matched in the present-day with the Syghanak ruins, located 200 km west of Turkestan Province, in the Southern Kazakhstan Region.
- ¹⁷ Perovsk was the name of the city of Kyzylorda during the Russian colonial period. Its former name was Akmeshit.

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