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e-mail: ULT1@pitt.edu**THE EXEMPLARY ADAPTATION TO IMPERIAL ORDER:
THE BAITOKIN FAMILY'S SERVICE, LIFE AND NOBILITY**

The 19th-century social changes in the Kazakh steppe resulted from the emergence of new social classes within Kazakh society, including nobles, honored citizens, imperial officials, and intellectuals. Although privileged estates were traditionally associated with sultans, there were influential noble families from non-aristocratic backgrounds in the Kazakh community. These families earned their noble status through personal merit and loyalty to the imperial authority, creating a path to the upper class facilitated by the Russian administration for non-elitist groups in Kazakh society. The Baitokin family stands out as an intriguing illustration of Kazakh nobility, showcasing a distinctive combination of dedicated service as imperial officials and local innovators. This article discusses the Baitokin family, as Kazakh noble lineage, and their remarkable ability to adapt to the imperial political and social order. It also explores their influential role in propagating imperial rule throughout the Kazakh steppe and contributing to the socio-economic development of the people they governed. The main argument put forward is that the Baitokins played a significant part in the institutionalization process of the empire in the Steppe, while simultaneously promoting the adoption of a sedentary way of life among the Middle Horde Kazakh society.

Key words: social transformation of Kazakh society, imperial officials, nobility, sultans, Middle Horde Kazakhs.

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*e-mail: ULT1@pitt.edu**Империялық тәртіпке үлгілі бейімделу:
Байтокин әулетінің қызметі, өмірі, дворяндығы**

Қазақ даласындағы XIX ғасырдағы әлеуметтік өзгерістер қазақ қоғамында жаңа әлеуметтік топтардың, атап айтқанда, дворяндардың, құрметті азаматтардың, империялық шенеуніктердің, интеллектуалдардың пайда болуына үлкен ықпал етті. Империяның артықшылыққа ие әлеуметтік топтар қатарына енуі сұлтандармен байланысты болғанымен, қазақ қауымында ақсүйектерден басқа да топтар дворяндық атағын ала алды. Бұл отбасылар дворяндық мәртебесіне жеке еңбегі мен империялық билікке деген адалдығы арқылы қол жеткізді, қазақ қоғамындағы элиталық емес топтарға орыс әкімшілігі де жол ашып берді. Байтокиндер әулеті империялық шенеуніктері мен жергілікті новаторлар ретіндегі адал қызметтің ерекше үйлесімін көрсете отырып, қазақ дворяндығының ерекше мысалын көрсетіп отыр. Бұл мақалада Байтокиндер әулетінің қазақ дворяндары ретіндегі және олардың империялық саяси-әлеуметтік тәртіпке бейімделу қабілеті зерттеледі. Сондай-ақ ұсынылған мақалада Байтокиндердің бүкіл қазақ даласына империялық билікті таратудағы және өздері басқарған халықтың әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуына үлес қосудағы ықпалды рөлі айқындалады. Алға қойылған негізгі аргумент – Байтокиндер Орта жүз қазақтарының отырықшы өмір салтын қабылдауына ықпал ете отырып, қазақ даласындағы империяның институциялануына елеулі үлес қосты деп белгілеуге болады.

Түйін сөздер: қазақ қоғамының әлеуметтік өзгеруі, империялық шенеуніктер, дворяндық, сұлтандар, Орта жүз қазақтары.

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Образцовая адаптация к имперскому порядку: служба, жизнь и дворянство семьи Байтокиных

Социальные изменения XIX века в казахской степи стали результатом появления новых социальных сословий в казахском обществе, в том числе дворян, почетных граждан, имперских чиновников и интеллигенции. Хотя привилегированные сословия традиционно ассоциировались с султанами, в казахской общине были влиятельные дворянские семьи неаристократического происхождения. Эти семьи получили свой дворянский статус благодаря личным заслугам и верности имперской власти, открывая путь к высшему сословию, облегчаемый российской администрацией для не элитарных групп казахского общества. Семья Байтокиных выделяется как важная иллюстрация казахской знати, демонстрируя характерное сочетание самоотверженной службы в качестве имперских чиновников и местных новаторов. В данной статье рассматривается жизнь и служба Байтокиных в качестве казахских дворян, и их замечательная способность приспосабливаться к имперскому политическому и социальному порядку. В нем также исследуется их влиятельная роль в распространении имперского правления в Казахской степи и содействии социально-экономическому развитию народа, которыми они управляли. Основным выдвигаемым аргументом является то, что Байтокины сыграли значительную роль в процессе институционализации империи в Степи, одновременно способствуя принятию оседлого образа жизни среди казахов Среднего жуза.

Ключевые слова: социальная трансформация казахского общества, имперские чиновники, дворянство, султаны, казахи Среднего жуза.

Introduction

The 19th-century social changes in the Kazakh Steppe resulted from the emergence of new social estates within Kazakh society, as nobles, honored citizens, imperial officials, and intellectuals. Although privileged estates were usually associated with sultans, there were influential noble families from non-aristocratic backgrounds in the Kazakh society. These families earned their noble status through personal merit and loyalty to the imperial authority, creating a path to the privileged estates facilitated by the Russian administration for non-elitist groups in Kazakh society. This integration of ordinary Kazakhs into the empire's nobility marked a convergence of imperial and nomadic social characteristics, signifying an evolutionary direction.

The Baitokin family stands out as a significant illustration of Kazakh nobility, showcasing a distinctive combination of dedicated service as imperial officials and local innovators. The Baitokins remain the sole Kazakh noble family to have preserved an authentic Diploma of noble dignity to this day. In 2017, the descendants of the Baitokin family generously donated their family relic to the State Historical Museum in the city of Petropavlovsk.

The first decades of the 19th century witnessed notable political and social transformations in the

Kazakh Steppe, prominently characterized by the emergence of Zhalgary Baitokin as the patriarch of the Baitokin noble family, marking a crucial period of his entry into the imperial realm. The Statute about Siberian Kirgiz (Kazakhs) in 1822 played a crucial role during this period. According to this Statute, which governed the Middle Horde Kazakhs in the Omsk district, the contented individuals were organized into 15-20 volosts, with each volost comprising 10-12 auls, and each aul consisting of 50-70 yurts. The district order, composed of a local ruler (*aga-sultan*), two appointed Russian assessors, and two assessors from the "honorary Kirghiz" (*biis*) elected by the local elite members, assumed responsibilities for administrative, policing, financial, and judicial functions in the district. The volost was headed by the sultan, while the elder (*starshina*) governed the aul. Civil service officials were awarded titles, with the *aga-sultan* holding the rank of major and attaining hereditary nobility status after serving three terms (9 years) as official (Ustav o Sibirskih kirgizakh, 1822: 419).

The enactment of this legislation had a significant impact on the social changes within the Kazakh region, particularly by emphasizing the role of sultan dynasties and traditional aristocrats in the local governing system. The Statute of 1822 formalized the administrative management structure, which included volosts and external districts, with the aim

of incentivizing loyal Kazakhs and encouraging their participation in local governance. To achieve this, the imperial administration adopted a practice of awarding ranks, whereby even the lowest-level local officials, such as elders, could attain high ranks that granted them the opportunity to attain noble status. This imperial awarding system effectively motivated Kazakhs to serve in the local government and contributed to the establishment of a nobility status.

Zhalgary Baitokin, originally an aul elder (*starshina*) at a lower level of local rule, managed to ascend the ranks and gain a high civil service position as a 9th-class rank (RGIA." F.1343. Op.20. D. 1584. L.5.), thanks to his unwavering loyalty, respected authority among his governed people, and successful adaptation to the imperial social order. Through this remarkable achievement, he obtained a hereditary noble status, despite the imperial legislation and Russian administration's initial intention to support traditional aristocracy among Kazakhs in the local ruling system (Sultangalieva, Tuleshova, 2022).

Notably, as representatives of the "black-bone" social group,¹ the Baitokin family attained significant political and social influence among the Kazakhs of the Middle Horde. Their influence extended beyond the elite and ruling class, as they wielded real authority among ordinary people, which was a remarkable feat in the transformative period of the Kazakh steppe. During this time, many elite members and local rulers experienced a decline in their authority and impact among the population (Magauin, M., and M. Baidildaev, 1998), making the Baitokins' achievements even more noteworthy in the eyes of imperial officials within Kazakh society. This article discusses the Baitokin family, as Kazakh noble lineage, and their remarkable ability to adapt to the imperial political and social order. It also explores their influential role in expanding imperial rule throughout the Kazakh steppe and contributing to the socio-economic development of the Kazakh people they governed. The main argument put forward is that the Baitokins played a significant part in the institutionalization process of the empire in the Steppe, while simultaneously promoting the adoption of a sedentary way of life among the Middle Horde Kazakhs.

¹ In the 19th century, Kazakh society was classified into two distinct groups known as "white bone" and "black bone." The "white bone" category comprised the Kazakh nomadic traditional aristocracy, specifically the Chingizids. On the other hand, the "black bone" category encompassed all ordinary Kazakhs, including biis and elders.

Materials and methods

This article is centered around tracing the life of one particular family, which provides valuable insights into the more intimate aspects of Kazakh society under Russian imperial rule. To achieve this, the study employs an individual, biographical approach to examining the social transformations in the Kazakh steppe during the 19th century. It views social life as a series of interconnected circles or steps, with each circle's center being the periphery of another, resulting in individuals being hybrids, representing various social experiences.

The Baitokin family, in this context, is considered as hybrid individuals who underwent diverse social experiences while adapting to the new imperial order while maintaining their authoritative position among their own people. In addition to biographical research, the article embraces a novel approach in imperial history known as "intimate empire," which sheds light on the relationship between colonial administration, local rulers, and the general population within the empire.

To investigate the Baitokin noble dynasty, the study relies on unique primary sources, including official records of the Baitokins' interactions with Russian administration, letters, and a noble book. Furthermore, the research incorporates pioneering studies on the Baitokin family individually and explores the broader context of Kazakh nobility. To understand the dynamics between influential families and ordinary Kazakhs in the 19th century, significant works of Kazakh poets (*akyns*) are utilized, providing valuable insights into the attitudes of Kazakhs toward noble and official families.

Literature review

Research on Russian imperial history has expanded to encompass various areas, including the multinational nature of the empire, the "new imperial history" perspective, imperial biographies, and the intimate history approach (Von Winning, 2021). These approaches have provided valuable insights into the Russian imperial history, particularly in relation to its borderlands. Despite numerous studies focusing on the social history of the Russian empire (Boris N. Mironov, 2001; Wirtschaftler Elise, 1997; Kapeller, 2001), which shed light on the main social structure and the diverse ethnic composition of imperial society (O'Neill, Kelly, 2017; A. Ia. Il'iasova, 2010; I. R. Gabdullin, 2006; Rieber, Alfred and Kotsonis, Yanni, 2017), there

has been a relatively limited exploration of the social integration of imperial nomads, especially the Kazakhs.

Over the last two decades, Kazakh historians such as Zhanuzak Kasymbaev (Zh. Kasymbaev, 2001), Gulmira Sultangalieva (Sultangalieva, 2022), Tenlik Dalaeva (Sultangalieva and Dalaeva, 2014), and Ulzhan Tuleshova (Sultangalieva, Tuleshova, 2022) have started delving into the theme of Kazakh social history, particularly the integration of the Kazakh elite and nobility within the Russian imperial framework. However, the field of imperial history continues to progress, and in the broader context of world history, the domain of social history is unveiling new facets of social features, cultural dynamics, and network relations. Therefore, it is essential to ascertain the role of Kazakh social history within the framework of the Russian empire, specifically investigating the roles of individuals and dynasties within the colonial context.

This article is dedicated to exploring this intriguing and relatively less studied aspect of Kazakh history, focusing on the 19th century. It will shed light on the changes that occurred in Kazakh society under the colonial rule, using the noble family Baitokins as a case study. As a non-elite official dynasty, members of the Baitokin family were able to ascend to high ranks in their careers, attain a privileged estate as nobles, and garner the trust of ordinary Kazakh people. The article aims to provide a deeper understanding of the social dynamics and adaptations within Kazakh society during the imperial era on example of the Baitokins.

Results and Discussion

The patriarch of the esteemed Baitokin noble family was Zhalgary Baitokin, who held the position of an elder (*starshina*) and lieutenant colonel. He was born in 1767 and hailed from a humble Kazakh family of the Argyn clan. As per folklore, Dzhalgara's brothers were involved in livestock rearing and trade, while Zhalgary himself had a strong affinity for authority and eventually assumed the role of a *volost ruler* (Auelbekov, 2001). In 1796, he achieved his initial rank as a lieutenant, marking the beginning of his military career. Subsequently, in 1824, during the establishment of the Kokchetau district, he was assigned the role of an assessor representing the Kirghiz (*Kazakh – U.T.*) (*RGIA. F. 1343. Op.20. D. 1584. L.7.*). In the same year, he received a promotion to the 9th rank in recognition of his genuine dedication and enthusiasm. Progressing

further, he was honored with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1830 and served as the *aga sultan* from 1839 to 1842, solidifying his influential position within the imperial administration (*RGIA. F. 1343. Op.20. D.1499. L.97-99.*).

The process of Zhalgary Baitokin's elevation to noble status is particularly entrancing. In 1841, Baitokin submitted a petition, seeking recognition of his service as the *aga sultan* for a total of three years, in pursuit of obtaining hereditary nobility. The Kokchetau order played a crucial role in this matter by presenting a report to the Border Directorate. The report highlighted that Baitokin had held the position of *aga sultan* from September 1824 to June 1826, and then again from August 28, 1839, up to the present time. Additionally, it emphasized that Lieutenant Colonel Baitokin's appointment to the position of *aga sultan* was not based on people's choice but rather by the authority's decree. The report also pointed out that Baitokin's lineage originated from a simple Kyrgyz (*Kazakh – U.T.*) family and that his claim to hereditary nobility was based on Statute 1361, Volume 3, which detailed the conditions for election-based service (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op. 1.D. 234. L.11.*).

However, the report clarified that Baitokin's entitlement to hereditary nobility would only be valid if he had risen from the position of *sultan* and served as the *aga sultan* for three consecutive years. As he did not meet these specific criteria, the order did not have the legal grounds to grant him the status of a hereditary nobleman. Consequently, the request for Baitokin's welfare was forwarded to the Border Guard Department, as the order could not fulfill his aspiration for hereditary nobility under the existing law (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op. 1. D. 234. L.11-13.*).

Despite not meeting the specific criteria for hereditary nobility as outlined in the Charter on civil service by election (Statute 1361, Volume 3), the ambitious and highly respected *aga sultan*, Dzhalgar Baitokin, had another opportunity to attain noble status, as indicated in the report from the Kokchetau order. This chance arose due to Baitokin's outstanding and diligent service, along with his unwavering loyalty to Russian empire, which earned him promotions to the ranks of the venerable court, even up to the position of lieutenant colonel. According to Articles 18, 23, and 40 in Volume 9 of the Charter, his meritorious service warranted consideration for future nobility through petitions seeking an official letter of recognition (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op. 1. D. 234. L.11-13.*). The viewpoint of the Governor-General of Western Siberia, Dmitry Nikolaevich, on

this matter carries significant weight. The Governor-General stated that "Sultan Zhangary Baitokin was most graciously awarded the rank of lieutenant colonel, which automatically grants him noble rights. Consequently, irrespective of the duration of his public service through elections, he has the right to obtain a diploma for hereditary nobility" (*RGIA. F. 1343 Op.20. D. 1584. L.39.*). The Governor-General further emphasized that this entitlement is particularly valid, especially when ordinary Kyrgyz individuals, who do not hold any ranks, can receive this honor for rendering one public service over the course of three years (*RGIA. F. 1343 Op.20. D. 1584. L.39.*). The governor-general's arguments clearly reveal a more favorable and respectful attitude towards the service accomplishments of the Kazakh nobility, a sentiment that was shared by numerous members of the tsarist administration.

During these discussions, an essential point of consideration was the tax exemption rights of Kazakh noblemen. The Governor-General of Western Siberia expressed his viewpoint on this matter, addressing the herald's remark about hereditary nobles being exempt from taxes, while the children of aga sultans were not exempt. The Governor-General clarified that according to Articles 941 and 942 of the Charter on taxes (Volume 5, edition 1842), in general, aga sultans who served as chairmen of the external district orders and sultans managing the volosts were personally exempt from *yasak* (a form of taxation). This exemption applied both during their tenure in these positions and after they left them. In the latter case, they were obligated to pay *yasak* not for themselves, but from their property, similar to the Russian nobility, who paid various duties on their immovable property.

The Governor-General argued that the collection of *yasak* from the aga sultans should not prevent them from receiving hereditary nobility, as one of their rights allowed for it, and there were no prohibitions on this in the laws. This state of affairs indicated that Russian administrators had consistently recognized the rights of Kazakh nobles. However, from the very formation of the Kazakh noble estate, there had been confusion and disagreements regarding the tax exemption rights of Kazakh nobles. The nobles understood their right to nobility as "exemption from taxes," equating to non-payment of any kind of taxes. This confusion extended to other noble families, such as the Baimukhamedovs.

After extensive discussions and considering various opinions, Dzhalgara Baitokin was eventually approved for hereditary nobility and granted a letter

of nobility, along with a coat of arms, in 1853.

In addition to the officially approved emblem of the Baitokin family, Zhalgary Baitokin had a proposed design for his family coat of arms, intending to depict his identity as both a nobleman and a Kazakh, adapted to the new circumstances. In this draft, he envisioned a horse's head pierced with a sword, symbolizing his departure from the nomadic Kazakh lifestyle, his fellow tribesmen, to dedicate himself to imperial service. Three *pfennings* or *hryvnias* (Besanto) were represented on the coat of arms, signifying the ranks he achieved during his service: 9th class, major, and colonel. The horse's head was placed above the helmet, serving as the top part of the emblem, while also serving as a decoration on the main coat of arms (*RGIA. F. 1343. Op.20. D. 1584. L. 71.*). However, despite its significance, the proposed image was not approved by the Department of Arms. The reason cited for the disapproval was that the blue shield in the corner was considered too small, while the horse's head positioned above the helmet was deemed too large. Additionally, the Department of Arms recommended that the helmet should be placed straight for the design to be acceptable (*RGIA. F. 1343. Op.20. D. 1584. L.68 -70.*). Although Zhalgary Baitokin's attempt to depict a horse with a sword in his coat of arms was unsuccessful, this initiative reflects the evolving mindset of the Kazakhs regarding social relations and their way of life. Baitokin's case was unique among the Kazakh population, as he sought to transform not only his own lifestyle but also that of his descendants upon acquiring the noble title. In a sense, he achieved this transformation.

A remarkable testament to Zhalgary Baitokin's loyalty and significant service was his participation in a Kazakh deputation to the Russian royal court, led by Tursyn Chingisov. These Kazakh deputations held great importance as they provided valuable insights into the influence of Russian imperial power on regional elite members and the subsequent impact on the people, they governed upon their return to their home country (Zhanaev, 2019: 528).

Zhalgary Baitokin had several sons, including Mujal, Chukey, Musa, Alibek, Turdubek, Yesebek, Yestenbet, Ayu, Istavlet, Jetpis, and daughters Malika, Batima, and Alipa (*RGIA. F. 1343. Op.20. D.1499. L.97-99.*).

According to Kazakh legends, Zhalgary Baitokin and his ancestors were considered a prosperous and influential family, despite their humble beginnings. Upon his passing, he bequeathed all his wealth to his descendants. As early as 1845, Dzhalgara took

the initiative to draft a letter detailing the division of his property among his children. To ensure the letter's legal validity, he sought approval from the Border Department, where it was signed by the clerk Sotnikov, adviser Turdybek Kochenov, and several biis. Prior to this, Zhalgary had already distributed some of his property among the wives of Karagoz and Matiman (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op.1. D.282.*). With the intention of avoiding conflicts among his children over his estate, Zhalgary Baitokin took several measures, but unfortunately, his efforts did not yield the expected results.

Among the sons of Zhalgary Baitokin, Musa Zhalgarin gained prominence, and he was elected aga sultan in the Kokchetau district during the periods of 1858-1860 and 1866-1868. In folk tales, the Baitokin family, through their involvement in local governance, was depicted as a worthy rival to another noble family of sultanic origin, the Ualikhanovs (Auelbekov, 2001: 16). In this area, a handful of representatives from other Kazakh clans also took turns serving as the senior sultan, alongside the Baitokin family (Kadiraliuly, 2014: 127).

Now, let us revisit Musa Zhalgarin, a figure who, as described by the akyns of that era, possessed intelligence and wielded significant influence within the Kazakh Argyn clan. He demonstrated proficiency in the Russian language and had acquired literacy in writing. Notably, Musa Zhalgarin was involved in constructing wooden houses for himself and his family, and the architectural blueprint of these houses is documented and preserved in archival records (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op.1. D.1880.*). Inspired by Musa's example, 25 Kazakh families residing in the Oraz-Bayimbetov region submitted petitions to the Border Department, requesting approval for the construction of wooden houses. Additionally, they sought permission to engage in agricultural activities on lands situated across the military village of Novo-Nikolsk (*TsGA RK. F. 345. Op.1 D.1921.*).

The legends of the Kazakh people hold another intriguing piece of information about the lands of Musa Jalgarin. According to historical records, in 1879, Russian peasants were resettled to the lands belonging to Musa Zhalgarin's noble family, and they leased these lands. The newcomers referred to the area as "Musa's estate." Subsequently, the name of the place was altered to "Yavlenko." Interestingly, even to this day, the local Kazakh population continues to refer to the area as "Musin" in this region (Kadiraliuly, 2014: 130).

Alibek Zhalgarin, another son of Zhalgary Baitokin, gained renown as a renowned batyr

(warrior) and singer. Contrasting his elder brother, Alibek was known for his fiery and impulsive nature. He cherished the carefree lifestyle of the steppe and developed a close friendship with the renowned Kazakh poet of the 19th century, Akan Seri. In the writings of Kazhambet Ordabayuly, another Kazakh poet from that era, Alibek is depicted as a courageous defender of the common people and a benevolent individual who generously distributed the gifts bestowed upon him by the imperial authority to whoever he encountered first (Segiz seri, 2003: 24).

Regrettably, both archival records and folk tales do not provide further information about the other children of Zhalgary Baitokin. However, it is worth noting that the descendants of the noble Baitokin family continue to reside in the city of Petropavlovsk, actively engaging in various aspects of the city's public life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Baitokin family stands as a testament to more than just Kazakh officials and nobles; they exemplify a remarkable ability to adapt to the imperial political and social order. Across several generations, the Baitokins played a pivotal role in expanding imperial rule in the Kazakh steppe during the 19th century and served as innovators who contributed to the socio-economic development of the Kazakh people they governed. Notably, the Baitokins played a significant role in the institutionalization process of imperial rule in the Steppe, while concurrently fostering the adoption of a sedentary way of life among the Middle Horde Kazakhs. Drawing from official documents and Kazakh folklore of the 19th century, it becomes evident that the Baitokins played a crucial role in the sedentarization process of the Middle Horde Kazakhs. Moreover, the Baitokins remained active participants in the political, social, and cultural life of Kazakh society in the Kokchetau region well into the early 20th century. Their enduring influence and contributions have left a lasting legacy on the historical trajectory of the Kazakh steppe during this transformative era.

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