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**SEVERAL ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY  
OF NOMADIC STATEHOOD**

This is a brief historiographical overview on the literature regarding the Kazakh Khanate against the backdrop of nomadism. This study is relevant due to the need of an objective and complex analysis of issues surrounding the history of the Kazakh Khanate, especially with regards to statehood within the context of a nomadic society. That is why this article examines several works on the issues of statehood in nomadic societies. While interest in nomadic societies has not diminished, the question remains on how to present the issues in a deep and objective manner. In this regard, this article analyzes the works of scholars who have studied the fundamental questions of this topic, including those who have looked into the definition of statehood, its etymology, signs, elements; the various forms of states, the origins of states and their functions, political regimes, authority and social norms, as well as other aspects.

**Key words:** Kazakh Khanate, nomadic society, feudalism, military democracy, tribe, authority, commune, khan.

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**Көшпелі мемлекеттілікті зерттеудің  
кейбір мәселелері мен бағыттары**

Автор көшпелілік аясындағы Қазақ хандығына қатысты сауалдар көтерген ғылыми әдебиеттерге қысқаша тарихнамалық шолу жүргізген. Себебі зерттеу өзектілігі Қазақ хандығы тарихының мәселелерін шынайы, кешенді талдаумен қатар мемлекеттілік пен көшпелі қоғам контексіндегі факторларды үнемі ескеріп отырудан туындайды. Сол себепті мақалада көшпелі қоғамда орын алған мемлекеттілік мәселесіне қатысты кейбір еңбектерге баса назар аударылған. Көшпелі қоғамға деген қызығушылық ешқашан толастаған емес. Бұл жердегі мәселе қаншалықты терең әрі шынайы бағасын алғандығында болып отыр. Осыған байланысты автор тарапынан бұл бағытта зерттеу жүргізген ғалымдардың еңбектері, сондай-ақ мемлекет анықтамасы, оның этимологиясы, белгілері, бөлшектері мен мемлекет түрпаттары, мемлекеттің шығуы мен қызметі, саяси режим, билік пен әлеуметтік нормалары, т.б. аспектілері талданды.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қазақ хандығы, көшпелі қоғам, феодализм, әскери демократия, тайпа, билік, қауым, хан.

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**Некоторые проблемы и направления изучения  
кочевой государственности**

Автором проведен краткий историографический обзор научной литературы, в которой изучались вопросы Казахского ханства на фоне номадизма. Ведь актуальность исследования обусловлена необходимостью объективного, комплексного анализа проблем истории Казахского ханства, с учетом фактора государственности и в контексте кочевого общества. Поэтому в статье уделено внимание некоторым трудам по проблеме государственности в кочевом обществе. Интерес к кочевому обществу никогда не прекращался. Вопрос состоит лишь в

том, насколько глубоко и объективно была представлена проблема в целом. В связи с этим, автором анализируются труды ученых, которые занимались основными вопросами в этом направлении, а также изучали определения государства, его этимологию, признаки, элементы и формы государства, происхождение государства и его функции, политический режим, власть и социальные нормы и другие аспекты.

**Ключевые слова:** Казахское ханство, кочевое общество, феодализм, военная демократия, племя, власть, социум, хан.

## Methods

The basic theoretical and methodological tools used in this research are systematic approaches, including a historical and comparative analysis of the development of different ideological and political-organizing forms during formation of the state. The methodological base of the study are the principles of academic historicism, which includes an objective analysis of a collection of sources and all available literature. Through historicism, we can understand this examination of the processes of the development of historical knowledge on the theme of statehood, both in chronological order and in concept. This study used general scientific methods, such as analysis, synthesis, induction, modeling, etc.

## Introduction

Determining the political system of Kazakh tribes poses a significant problem when studying the history of Eurasian nomadic societies. To this day, the historiography of the Kazakh Khanate contains «blank spots», which has led to many conflicting opinions. First of all, this is connected with the complexity of the problem itself and the significant lack of informational basis. Second, it is difficult to characterize the development of nomadic cultures within the framework of socio-economic formation theory. Of course, the possibility of viewing this development through historical materialism cannot be fully denied/rejected. However, it is clear that attempts to analyze the development of nomadic societies through the dialectic framework of class struggle, that is between the forces of production and the relations of production, are undergoing crisis. Furthermore, the legacy of the Russian Empire's colonization of Kazakh lands have created significant obstacles when studying the formation of historical Kazakh states. It is because of this history that Russian literature, both before 1917 and after 1991, failed to view the Kazakh Khanate as a developed state with centralized authority. In the works of various Russian authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (A.I. Levshin, A. Meyer, and others) held views that a centralized, Kazakh state has never ex-

isted. In its place, there only existed groups of various tribes, divided primarily into three *juz* (Kazakh: «hundred»). These views carried on during the Soviet period, with several scholars arguing that, from a historical perspective, nomadism and statehood are two polar opposites. These conditions show the real need of examining the question of the statehood of nomadic societies, especially with regards to the history of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate.

## Main Problems

In Kazakhstani academic literature, these aforementioned questions have not been brought up once. However, it is difficult to state if the results of academic surveys in this direction have found the correct method. For example, consider the historiographical review «The Problems of Nomadic Society and Statehood (*Problemy kochevogo obshchestva i gosudarstvennosti*) in the 1998 «History of Kazakhstan». The author of the review, K.A. Pishchulina, wrote: «There emerged two primary views, and two conclusions. One of which recognizes the existence of class relations and statehood among nomadic societies. Supporters of this view hold to the principles of historical materialism.» According to the author, the second conclusion boils down to the view that nomadic societies only developed up to the point of creating class distinctions. Based on these reasons, supporters of this view deny the existence of a state within nomadic society. Here the author connects these views with historian A. Toynbee's concept of «theory of civilizations» (Pishchulina, 1998: 181-186, 291).

K. Pishchulina regards as among the supporters of the first view the scholars S.Z. Zimanov, A.E. Yerenov, L.P. Potapov, I.Ya. Zlatkin, G.A. Fedorov-Davydov, V.F. Sakhmatov, S.E. Tolybekov. As supporters of the second view, K. Pishchulina names A.I. Pershchits, A.M. Khazanov, Yu.I. Semenov, G.E. Markov.

The problem is more complicated, as the discussion around the topic of statehood in nomadic societies is not a dispute between Marxist methodologies and other academic conceptualizations. Moreover, one cannot deny that even among authors who hold

historical materialism as a theoretical and methodological direction, there exists several different historiographical movements and schools of thought. Academic surveys, particularly on the social and political qualities of a nomadic society, have for a long time been divided regarding the concept of «nomadic feudalism». According to this concept, the statehood of nomads during the new ages was considered from the portions of the emergence and development of feudal social relations. Based on this, the political organization of the Kazakh society was characterized by the concepts of «a state with a single central subordination», «state dispersion». Moreover, the peculiarities of the power structures of nomadic society were not taken into account. Most of which were explained through the model of power relations in settled agricultural states. In general, the opinion of those who deny Kazakh statehood was limited by the arguments that the rapid development of cattle breeding, the scatteredness of residents on the Eurasian steppe expanse, and the lack of residency, the non-achievement of antagonistic level by class relations did not require statehood, for nomads there was no need for such political structure. One of the major representatives of this direction, V.V. Bartold, wrote: «Even in the conditions of a nomadic life without complicating class processes, there are no grounds for the emergence of a strong government» (Bartold, 1968: 47).

These views of Barthold were taken as the guiding idea in their studies by B. Ya. Vladimirtsov, A.N. Bernshtam, A. Yu. Yakubovsky and other scientists. As a result, the concept of «nomadic feudalism» has become entrenched in historical science.

Some deviations from the statement about the backwardness of a nomadic society in political and social development were immediately condemned, and brought in accordance with the official concept. One of these phenomena took place in the «History of the Kazakh SSR», published in 1943. The book concluded that «Under Kasym, Aknazar and Tauekel, the Kazakh Khanate was a more or less centralized state, in its development it stood above even the empire of Charlemagne.» For this statement, the authors of the book were warned, and their views were condemned. As a result, in the second edition of the History of the Kazakh SSR, published in 1949 (*История Казахской ССР: 1949*), the opposite statement was proposed: it was considered erroneous to speak of the Kazakh Khanate, subordinated to a single centralized authority (*Об истории «Казахской ССР», 1949: 43-51*).

After these «dogmas» in the national historiography, monotonous from the methodological point

of view appeared works, in which the Kazakh Khanate was presented as «unstable», and «temporary and ephemeral association». Historians, continuing the views of Russian authors in the XVIII-XIX centuries, continued to propagandize and repeat that there was never a centralized state in Kazakhstan (Atygaev, 2002: 38-47). They also included in this series the state of the Huns, Turks, and the Golden Horde. It was believed that the nomads lived only as an economic community, only in certain periods, according to historical situations, they created a «military-nomadic community (empire)».

The method of studying the problems of statehood in nomad society in accordance with the development of social relations in this society has spread widely, especially in the 50-60s of the 20th century. V.F. Shakhmatov in his article «The main features of the Kazakh patriarchal-feudal statehood» wrote that due to the lack of feudal private ownership of land in Kazakh society, the state was not created, and that there were no prerequisites for this, only some of their signs were observed (Shakhmatov, 1959).

In the fifties of the twentieth century, some lawyers were involved in the study of problems of statehood in Soviet historiography. One of them, S.L. Fuks, tried to prove that before the Soviet Union, Kazakh statehood «was not created» due to the absence of attributes inherent in the state (army, police, court) in the Kazakh Khanate (Fuks, 1951: 101). According to him, the Kazakh government during the reign of the khans of Kasim, Aknazar and Tauekel was only the military community, and consisted of military alliances Kazakh clans and tribes, led by individual sultans for defense and attack purposes.

In the historiography of our time, in essence, these views are supported by the authors, like S. Pletneva, G.E. Markov. Although, they have different methods and arguments of the study, they argue that the higher social development of nomads did not grow from «economic communities» or «military-nomadic communities» (Markov, 1976: 316).

In the Soviet period, from the standpoint of methodology, it was inherent in all types of research to assume that the emergence and creation of the Kazakh Khanate was associated with the division of society into classes, the complication of the class struggle, and that this institution was an instrument of one class to subjugate another class. S. Tolybekov believed that the Kazakh economy was the first step in the development of statehood, and that this is characterized by all the signs of «military democracy» (Tolybekov, 1959: 342).

As part of the Marxist methodology, discussions about the Kazakh Khanate also took place around the

terms «state». In the article «On the issue of the nature of power and control in Kazakhstan» L.V. Dyukov and A.I. Davydovich expressed the opinion that the state is the body of class suppression, the body of oppression by one class of another class. On this basis, the authors tried to expose the «mistakes» made in the national historiography on these issues (Dyukov, Davydovich, 1967: 91). In their opinion, the researchers do not take into account the connectedness of the state with the strengthening of society, and therefore it is impossible to apply «statehood» to «state associations» where classes and class struggle have already appeared but have not yet gotten rid of the ancient tribal ties that took place before the appearance of classes. Classes of owners and class struggle are decisive factors for the destruction of the organization of society on a tribal basis, and can replace it with a state.

It is also the cornerstone of L.V. Dyukov and A.M. Davydovich regarding the emergence of the state, and from this point of view, they criticize the views of some scholars about the Kazakh statehood. According to their understanding, the «erroneous opinion» on the simultaneous course of the processes of formation of classes, people and state took place in S.V. Yushkov. In this textbook, tribal unions of Scythians, Sarmatians, Ants and other peoples are declared as states on the basis of the presence of classes in them and the inheritance of power (Yushkov, 1961: 35-99).

The authors of the «History of the Kazakh SSR» also refer to the state and state associations as tribal unions of Turks, Kypchaks, Karluks and Oguzes, although they were called «early feudal» (Stories of the Kazakh SSR, 1957: 65-66, 72, 134-137, 148).

A.M. Davydovich and L.V. Dyukov categorically object to the opinions of the authors of this book that «in the times of the uysun, kanly began class relations and the formation of statehood,» and again offer their far-fetched principles that the processes of formation of tribal unions, classes and the state cannot occur simultaneously. They are also trying to refute the findings of the Kazakh lawyers S.Z. Zimanov (Zimanov, 1960), T.M. Kultelev (Kultelev: 1955), A.E. Erenov (Erenov: 1960) and other scientists that a more or less developed feudal state existed in Kazakhstan before the adoption of Russian citizenship. The authors mainly hold the opinion of S.E. Tolybekov that the Kazakh society in the XV-XVIII centuries lived in conditions up to the state level and military democracy (Tolybekov, 1971: 221-225). They believe that even the opinion of S. Tolybekov is overestimated that «the Kazakh Khanates were unstable state associations» (Toly-

bekov, 1959: 93). The authors believe that although the formation of the Kazakh people is the primary conditions for the formation of a state, these are not signs of the emergence and existence of a state. Thus, L.V. Dyukov and A.M. Davydovich, based on the preservation in the society of the organization on a tribal basis, trying to prove the installation in the Marxist methodology, that until 1917, the Kazakhs had no statehood, and the Kazakh society in the XV-XVIII centuries lived in a community based on the orders of military democracy.

The authors who dealt with the problem of nomads lately also did not go very far from the concept of «nomadic feudalism.» And they are also looking for the emergence of a state in the development among people of class antagonism, processes of social division and division of society into classes.

To sum up, the views of representatives of the materialist trend in domestic historiography underwent an evolutionary development from denying not only the existence of the Kazakh state, but even the very possibility of this, before recognizing the existence of statehood in the form of «early feudalism.» However, until now there is no consensus in the social sciences when disclosing the meaning of the concepts of «state» and «statehood», and their precise definition. Some authors understand «statehood» as a step to the state (Pastuchov, 1994: 15-20). Recently, E.M. Abenov and E.M. Arynov expressed their views on this issue. According to their definition, the problem of statehood is as if a social space separating any civilizational region from other civilization all regions, its front border (Abenov, Arynov, Tasmagmbetov, 1996: 24). The concept of «statehood» is much broader and deeper than the concept of «state». The content of the first concept covers not only political and legal relations, but also the whole complex of social, cultural and spiritual principles. Only on the basis of these sectors does society function as a single system. On this basis, the Kazakhs had statehood since ancient times. And the authors consider the creation of the Kazakh state as a political and legal Association. If statehood appeared both in the East and in the West as a class state, then in the steppe region it was formed as a special form of ethnosocial and ethno-regional association, the authors believe. The development of statehood in the steppe region is not the development of an abstract state.

## Conclusion

In connection with the crisis of historical materialism, methodological research aimed at

considering the social image of nomadic society and the problems of the emergence of the state in it from new cognitive positions continued. This phenomenon in Russian historiography was clearly reflected in the works of Zh. Artykbayev, M. Abuseitova, A.K. Koshkimbaev, I.V. Erofeeva, N.Eh. Masanov, M.K. Khabdullina, and other authors (Erofeeva, 1996: 37-46). In the literature about these changes, in addition to the fact that along with the non-rejection of all the author's elements of the theory of socio-economic formation, it was stated that humanitarian thinking turns to the theory of civilization (Ilyushkin, 1994: 233-236).

The concept of «Asian model of production» is renewed, the idea of its distribution among the society of nomads, the existence of nomads of their own way of development, different from the settled agricultural societies, is built. According to this, new assumptions are made about the origin of classes in nomads, and about the early class relations (Perschits, 1971: 28), (Semenov, 1993: 48-51), (Khazanov, 1975). One of them is stated in the article of A.K. Koshkimbayev entitled «On the

problem of statehood in nomadic societies». The author writes that the establishment of statehood is not the result of one-time actions, it is a far-reaching and complex process that leads to a permanent and main political institution of society, performing the functions of leadership, regulation and control of public relations, as well as providing internal political security through its structural systems – the state. Such a political body is a necessity for any permanent group community of people (Koshkimbayev, 1999: 50).

The formation of the Kazakh khanate was not a one-time act, but was a complex and long – term multidimensional process. In it political events developed simultaneously with ethnic and intertwined with them. In this regard, the Kazakh khanate is the successor of the early States on the territory of Kazakhstan. The formation of the Kazakh khanate and the beginning of the formation of the Kazakh state in its importance is one of the key problems in the history of Kazakhstan. Therefore, in 2015 Kazakhstan marked the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh statehood at the state level.

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