

## The Role of the Batyrs in the Organization of the Kazakh Militia Against the Dzungar Aggression

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### ABSTRACT

This article attempted to analyze the role of Batyrs in the organization of the Kazakh militia against Dzungar aggression. The author substantiated the relevance of the subject by claiming that the significant role of Batyrs in the Kazakh society was dictated by both external and internal factors: the complexity of foreign policy situation in the Kazakh Khanate and the weakness of the Khan's power. The necessity to overcome the external threat of the Dzungar in the first half of the eighteenth century contributed to the rise of the authority of Batyrs. The author also pointed out that the role of Batyrs increased in the late eighteenth - mid-nineteenth centuries, which was caused by the national liberation fight of the Kazakh people against the colonial policy of tsarism. The study illustrated examples of several prominent Batyrs', who were favorite heroes of the Kazakh people, their life and work. Thus, Batyrs were the military core of the Kazakh militia. However, each Batyr could have his own army and a code of laws that was passed on in oral form. This had a significant effect on the disunity of the army and the inability to exploit military successes. Nevertheless, Batyrs remain national heroes of Kazakhstan who managed to protect the independence of the country.

### KEYWORDS

Batyr, Kazakh militia,  
the Kazakh Khanate, political history,  
steppe aristocracy

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### Introduction

In the early eighteenth century, the Kazakh Khanate was characterized by a weak power of the khan, permanent political decentralization (Apollova, 1948; Kireyev, Aleynikova, Semenyuk, & Shoinbayev, 1961), and weakened external borders. For instance, the Kalmyks, supported by Yaik Cossacks, raided the Kazakh Khanate from the southwest; Siberian Cossacks invaded from the north; the Bashkirs laid claim to the land beyond the Ural River (Tapper, 2013; *Vol. 3.*, 2000); Middle Asian khanates – Khanate of Bukhara and Khanate of Khiva – posed a threat from the south, while the main threat in the east was the

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Dzungar Khanate (Tleuova, Baltymova, Niyazova, Tektigul, & Toxanbayeva, 2016). In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Kazakh zhuzs had to fight against Dzungar Khong Tayijis – Choros Erdeniin Galdan (1676–1697) and Tsewang Rabtán (1697–1727) (Apollova, 1948; Rakishev, 2014). For the Dzungar, war was the most important aspect of their life and the determinant of their life, organization, material, and spiritual culture (Bobrov, 2010; Kushkumbayev, 2001). The Oirats had significant military advantages when compared with the Kazakhs, especially in such terms as weaponry and a unified military structure. This was somewhat predetermined by the geographic and natural location of the Dzungar Khanate and, consequently, a beneficial strategic position of the Oirats. The relatively smaller territory of Dzungaria and the population density made the Oirat society more united. Independent manufacturing of weaponry and military equipment, militarization of virtually all aspects of public life, and strict military administrative management facilitated the establishment of a strong military system in Dzungaria. By the eighteenth century, Dzungaria had its own artillery (Moiseev, 1991; Tapper, 2013).

On the other hand, Kazakhs had no firearms in the early eighteenth century apart from a limited arsenal of rifles (Tapper, 2013; Zhusupov, Baratova, Zhusupova, Zhusupov, & Shapauov, 2013). In 1731, during the times of the Kyrgyz-Kazakh Horde, translator Tevkelev noted that the Kyrgyz-Kazakhs neither manufactured nor used cannons (Kireyev et al., 1961).

The defining trend of the Kazakh-Dzungarian relationships in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries was the fight for control of fertile pastures, water resources, and crucial crossroads of transit caravan routes near the Irtysh River, in Northwestern Zhetysu, and near the Syr Darya River, which were extremely important for the socioeconomic development of both nomadic nations (Noda, 2016; Walikhanov, 1984).

Long and exhausting Kazakh-Dzungarian wars, considering the political instability of Kazakh zhuzs and the military and organizational advantages of the Dzungar, turned out to be unsuccessful for the Kazakhs and ended with their military and political defeat. Shoqan Walikhanov wrote that the first decade of the eighteenth century was a terrible time for the Kyrgyz people. The Dzungar people, Volga Kalmyks, Yaik Cossacks, and Bashkirs destroyed their uluses, took their cattle, and took entire Kyrgyz families captive (Walikhanov, 1961).

The biggest and longest wars between the Kazakhs and the Dzungar people took place in 1698 and 1708–1710. These wars necessitated a serious assessment of events and decisions regarding the “Dzungar issue”. Under such circumstance, the main goal was to preserve the independence of the Kazakh state.

I.K. Kirillov, who lived at that time, wrote the following: “All the Kyrgyz-Kazakh hordes are in an obscene war with the Dzungar Kalmyks; they could have defeated the Kalmyks had they any unity. However, one khan goes to war, while another one goes home, while the Kalmyks just keep taking more land” (Bobrov, 2010).

Thus, the region was politically unstable. Hostilities only aggravated the social and economic crisis. This applied to all nomadic and late-feudal countries, which later drew the attention of big colonial empires and ultimately led to a gradual loss of independence (Chan, 2016; Noda, 2016).

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the role of the Batyrs in the Kazakh militia.

### **Research questions**

What were the military and political consequences of the Kazakh-Dzungar wars?

### **Method**

The methodological and theoretical framework of the research included a set of historical principles, namely, historicism, objectivism, dialectic unity of the historical and the logical, as well as the comparative historical and historical-analytical methods. General scientific methods included abstraction and generalization of scientific experience on the subject at hand.

One of the key research principles is historicism, which allows investigating this period of time with regard to the sociopolitical and economic situation of that time.

The studied problem required taking an interdisciplinary approach and referring to works on philosophy, history, logic, psychology, and warfare.

### **Data, Analysis, and Results**

In 1710, an all-Kazakh meeting took place in the Karakum Desert, at which a decision was made to create a Kazakh militia. A major role in this decision was played by Kanzhygaly Bogembay, Shakshak Zhanibek, and Yeset Kokiuly (Kozybaev et al., 2000). “Weak souls,” – wrote researcher Ya. Gaverdovsky. “offered to look for safety in the mercy of the Khong Tayiji. Others wanted to leave their homes and flee... some people, like rabbits, wanted to scatter, which shook the confidence of many. However, Bogenbay, who was famous for his courage, put an end to these endeavors” (Moiseev, 1991). Famous batyr Bogenbay from the Kanzhygaly clan had significant diplomatic and oratorical skills. His call was as follows: “Let us have our revenge on our enemies, we will die with our weapons in hand, we will not feebly look on as our houses are plundered and our children are taken captive. Have the warriors of the Kipchak plains every hung back? This beard has not even been touched by a grey hair when I first bathed by hands in the blood of my enemies! How can tolerate the tyranny of these barbarians? We still have good horses aplenty! Our quivers are still full of sharp arrows” (Moiseev, 1991).

All members of the meeting swore to follow Bogenbay, who was elected leader of the Kazakh militia (Frachetti, 2015).

Gathering a militia in a zhuz, let alone a general Kazakh militia, was no simple task, since the organization of a united army required coordinating the interest of multiple smaller steppe rulers, many of whom were in complicated relationships with each other. Therefore, large militias were gathered in case the entire nation was in danger of enslavement or elimination due to an enemy invasion deep into the Kazakh nomadic land (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

At this meeting, the Batyrs played the role of military and political leaders of the militia (Apollova, 1948).

According to Kazakh legends, during the reign of Tawke Khan, the “first batyr” and the khan’s right hand was Aldiyar-batyr from the Sadyr Naiman tribe (Kushkumbayev, 2001). The role that the Batyrs played during the reign of Tawke Khan is evidenced by the fact that his domain bordered on nomad territories of famous Batyrs, which served as protection from the Dzungar threat. For instance, east of Turkistan, the location of the khan’s quarters, between Talas River and Arys River, along the Boralday River and on the slopes of the Karatau Mountains lay the nomad territories of Dzhomart – one of the prominent Batyrs of the Sadyr sub-tribe of the powerful Naiman tribe from the Middle Zhuz. South of Turkistan, along Chirchiq River, lay the nomad territory of another batyr – Borte of the Matay Naiman tribe. Kireys dwelled to the northeast of Chu River. Bogenbay, who became a prominent batyr during the fight against the Dzungar people, was related to this tribe (Apollova, 1948).

Batyr Sairyk of the Oshakty tribe, Senior Zhuz – a relative of batyr Sailak – took active part in the fight against the Dzungar (Apollova, 1948), which is indicative of political connections between the Senior and Middle Zhuzs at that time. In the early eighteenth century, the political role of batyr Yeset, who led the Zhetyru tribe of the Junior Zhuz, grew significantly (Apollova, 1948).

The fight against the Dzungar required a mobilization of all armed forces and remarkable military qualities, such as valor, courage, and bravery. Batyrs, who were glorified as brave warriors and courageous defenders of their country, had such qualities. During those hard times, the Kazakh militia was headed by Kabanbay, Bogenbay, Malaysary, Nauryzbay, Shakshak Zhanibek, and many other less famous Batyrs (Kozybaev et al., 2000).

The growing role of military potestary structures in the social organization of Kazakhs, the authority and social significance of Batyrs in the first half of the eighteenth century was related to the external threat, fight for power, and sultans’ separatism. Regions that saw the largest battles with the Dzungar in the late seventeenth – early eighteenth century had real incentives to depict Batyrs as heroes of military valor and members of military elite in vassal relationships with the khan (Apollova, 1948). Surrounding Tawke Khan with prominent members of the military elite – the Batyrs – was important for the fight of the Kazakh Khanate against Dzungaria, since many Batyrs took active part in this fight.

In the eighteenth century, the Kazakh army consisted of two main elements. The first element included feudal forces: the Kazakh feudal elite, forces of Batyrs and Telengits; the second element included tribal militia (Zhusupov et al., 2013). Such Batyrs as Bogenbay had “acolytes”, i.e. a personal suite and a large army comprising of tribal militia (Apollova, 1948).

Kazakhs had a series of military codes, laws, and rules of military tactics, which were passed on through generations of Batyrs in oral form (Kushkumbayev, 2001). This also means that each Batyr abided by his own set of rules, which aggravated the feudal disunity and unwillingness to cooperate with other Batyrs.

During the studied period, the military organization of Kazakh nomads lost its defining features of an Asian (nomadic) system. It was replaced by a military structure based on the batyr institution. This may have been affected by the geographic factor (size of the territory, location of nomadic camps, areas covered

by nomads during migration, population size and density, and other conditions) (Kushkumbayev, 2001).

The “core” (basis) of the Kazakh military organization were Batyrs, “steppe knights” of sorts, who formed a specific (nomadic) military institution – batyrysm. Lack of a strong khan power in the Kazakh zhuzs determined the major system-forming role of batyrysm is the military organization of Kazakhs. This circumstance is firstly explained by the fact that Batyrs embodied the rich experience and longstanding military traditions of nomads. Secondly, only such “military-field commanders” were capable of organizing battleworthy armed forces and operating under extreme and changing conditions on the battlefield. Thirdly, as mentioned above, batyrysm was the main military and political power of khans and sultans in the steppe (Kushkumbayev, 2001).

The establishment of the all-Kazakh militia and the expansion of the batyr institution enhanced the combat effectiveness of Kazakh armed forces and played a major role in the success of Kazakh forces in their fight against the Dzungar invasion (Bobrov, 2010).

After achieving unity and coordination of military action, the Kazakh militia managed to win several battles with the Dzungar in 1711-1712 (Moiseev, 1991). The united army not only managed to defend the independence of its country, but also seized the initiative and defeated some of the Oirat forces in 1713. The first Dzungar invasion in the eighteenth century was fended off (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

Thus, the Kazakh zhuzs were not “helpless victims of the Dzungar aggression”. Kazakh Batyrs often went on the counteroffensive and drove the dangerous enemy to the east (Zhusupov et al., 2013). For example, S. Walikhanov wrote that in during one battle with the Dzungar, Kazakh batyr Baigozy killed the enemy standard-bearer, whose death brought confusion to the ranks of the enemy. The Kyrgyz took the opportunity, struck back, and forced the Kalmyks to flee, thus wresting the victory from the enemy’s grasp (Walikhanov, 1984).

The battle on Ayagoz River in 1717 was lost by the militia due to a lack of coordination among leaders. In such conditions, the successes of the Kazakh militia headed by Batyrs were considerable. They managed to gather an army of 30 thousand men from the Ilek, Mugodzhar, and Ulutau regions (Kozybaev et al., 2000), advance into Turkestan, and force the Dzungar out of most of Southern Kazakhstan.

In February – March of 1723, the Dzungar invaded the nomad territories of the Senior and Middle zhuzs. The Dzungar army had 70 thousand men (Moiseev, 1991). One of the first to face the attack of the Dzungar were the auls of the Kazakh Sadyr tribe, which roamed the valleys of Talas River and Arys River. According to a folk legend, Dzhomart, a batyr of the Sadyr tribe, after learning about the coming invasion from his relatives, rejected all arguments in favor of fleeing and, as soon as everybody moved off, faced the Oirat forces that invaded the steppes. However, the forces were unequal and Dzhomart, all of his nine sons, and other relatives (Rakishev, 2014) were killed. Only two persons from the entire aul survived that battle (Levshin, 1996).

When the Dzungar invaded, Kazakh auls were preparing to move to the Dzhaylau. Having been caught off guard, Kazakh left their belongings and cattle behind, left their cities without offering any resistance, and moved to Middle Asia, the Aral Sea region, and further north (Moiseev, 1991). For instance,

Kazakhs from the Senior Zhuz and part of the Middle Zhuz moved to Khujand, most tribes of the Middle Zhuz – to Samarkand, while the Junior Zhuz moved to the Khanate of Bukhara or the Khanate of Khiva (Kozybaev et al., 2000).

Without any means of sustenance, the refugees died, especially children of hunger (Apollova, 1948). A.I. Levshin described the suffering of Kazakhs: “These long marches inevitably caused death and devastation. Herds shrunk by the day, barter trade ceased, poverty and suffering become commonplace; some died of hunger, others left their wives and children behind. Finally, the refugees settled down, but where? In barren land, devoid of any comfort that it could offer to the nomadic people” (Levshin, 1996).

Years 1723-1725 became known in the history of Kazakhs as the “Times of Tribulation” (Tynyshpayev, 1993). According to Shakarim Kudayberdiuli, two thirds of the nation perished during that period (Kozybaev et al., 2000). When talking about the Time of Tribulation, the expression “Alkakol-sulama” is often used, which means “exhausted from hunger and fatigue, they threw themselves to the land near Lake Alkakol” (Morrison, 2014).

By the late 1720s, the Kazakhs had lost Tashkent, Turkestan, and other cities, as well as fertile pastures near Syr Darya River. Batyrs Kabanbay and Ayshibek participated in the heroic defense of Turkestan (Tynyshpayev, 1993). *The Kazakh militia was forced to retreat to the Betpak-Dala desert. In the Tanbalytas district, they not only fended off the enemy, but also launched a counterattack near Sarysu River* (Ferret, 2016). The lament song “Elim-Ai” by poet and batyr Kozhabergen-zhirau Tolybaysynshiuli (1683–1786) is a symbol of the great sorrow of the people.

According to historian V.A. Moiseev, the fate of the Middle Asian nations could have been even more tragic, had the Kazakh steppes not given forces capable of not only stopping, but also banishing the invaders. The people themselves took it upon them to save the country – they put forward exceptional organizers and leaders – Bukenbay, Kabanbay, Taylak, Saurak, Zhanibek, Malaysary, Utegen, and many others (Moiseev, 1991).

*A major role in the organization of this resistance was played by Bogenbay, a batyr from the Middle Zhuz, who addressed the people, spoke of the heavy losses in the fight against the Oirats, and encouraged people to avenge their fallen brethren. According to a folk legend, rumors about the batyr’s call spread across the steppes and drew the djigit and other Batyrs to the fight against the enemy* (Apollova, 1948).

P.M. Vyatkin wrote the following about this period of the fight against the Dzungar: “Huge human and livestock losses forced the Kazakhs to unite. Interestingly enough, the first time that the Kazakhs defeated the Oirats, the former were led not by the sultans, but rather by Batyrs – Taylak of the Junior Zhuz, Bokebay of the Middle Zhuz, and Sanyrak of the Oshakty tribe from the Senior Zhuz. This confrontation was very important, since it started the mass organization of Kazakh forces from all three zhuzs” (Vyatkin, 1948). Young sultan Ablai became famous in this fight.

In 1726, an all-Kazakh meeting took place near Ordabasy; at this meeting, the question of a nationwide fight against the Dzungar was raised. Historian V.A. Moiseev made the assumption that the meeting was gathered at the initiative of Batyrs (Moiseev, 1991). Members of the meeting decided to organize a unified militia; Abulhair Khan, who had already become khan of the Junior Zhuz, was elected head of the militia (Moiseev, 1991). Batyr Bogenbay, one of

the prominent organizers of the nationwide militia, was elected sardarbek (war chief).

A rise in national self-identification of the Kazakh people was noted by A.I. Levshin: “Danger settled all feuds and directed everybody towards a common goal” (Levshin, 1996).

In the late 1720s, the anti-Dzungar coalition included members of the nobility, who were granted the title of batyr. These include the supreme commander of the all-Kazakh militia – Abulhair Khan (1710–1748), Middle Zhuz sultans Abilmambet (late seventeenth century – 1771) and Barak (died in 1750), and young sultan Ablai (1711–1780), who became the senior khan of Kazakhs in 1771 (Yerofeeva, 2010).

Besides the courageous and talented members of the Kazakh aristocracy, a major role in the liberation of Kazakh lands from Dzungar invaders was played by common nomad Batyrs. Their acts of heroism on the battlefield were sung of by the most famous aqyns and zhirau of that age. In time, these heroic deeds were imprinted in the historical consciousness of the Kazakh people (Yerofeeva, 2010).

The batyr generation included warriors who played a major role in the political organization of the Kazakh society in the 1720s – 1740s, including Bokenbay Karauli (died in 1741), Yeset Kokiuly (died in 1749), Tulebay Zhulbuldyuli of the Zhetury generation, Baktybay (1670–1780) and Kara Akkyishbayuli of the Alimuly generation, Serke Minlibekuli of the Zhagalbaili tirbe, Bayuli generation, Junior Zhuz, Zhanibek Koshkaruli (died in 1751), Bokenbay Beshkurtkauli (died after 1758) and Niyaz Barkyuli (died in the 1740s) of the Argyn tribe, Kabanbay Kozhaugululi (died in 1780/1781), Syrymbet Bekbashuli and Otegen Otegululi (died in 1773) of the Naiman generation, Zhandauletiz of the Kipchak tribe, Middle Zhuz, and other heads of Kazakh tribes (Yerofeeva, 2010). By acting as commanders in large campaigns against the Dzungar, Batyrs enhanced their political significance (Apollova, 1948).

In 1728, a large battle took place in the southeastern part of the Torghai steppes, on the banks of Bulanty River and Beleuty River, in the Karasiyr region, between the Kazakhs and the Dzungar, which was won by former. According to A. Divayev, “the Kyrgyz won a spectacular battle in the Karasiyr region”. This place is still called the “place of Kalmyks’ death” (Galiev, 2000).

The Bulanty River battle demonstrated the huge will of the Kazakh militia to win. Outstanding commanders of that time – Barakerey Kabanbay, Shakshak Zhanibek, and Tama Yeset, who each had his own independent army, led the militia to battle and acted in coordination under the command of Abulhair Khan and Kanzhygaly Bogembay. Shakshak Zhanibek did a huge job of arming the militia (Kozybaev et al., 2000). Batyrs of the Senior and Junior zhuzs, led by Taylak and Sanyrak, took part in a grandiose and decisive battle on the banks of Bulanty River and Beleuty River (Kabyldaeva, Sadykov, & Seytkazina, 2015).

Victory in the Bulanty-Beleuty battle raised the people’s spirit and made them believe in their strength and the possibility of defeating a formidable enemy. The Kazakh militia seized the initiative and launched a counterattack (Moiseev, 1991).

Kazakhs fought with the Dzungar across a vast geographic space of the southwestern Lake Balkhash region, including areas north of the eastern coast of the bitter Lake Itishpes-Alakol. The mass grave of Dzungar warriors was still

there in the early twentieth century, when it was clearly marked on the 1906-1911 map of the Turkestan military command region under a common name of Kalmak Grave (Noda, 2016).

The Kazakh forces advanced and launched an attack on the biggest Dzungar fortifications in the region in the Anyrakay district in 1730 (Zhusupov et al., 2013). The battle took place in spring of 1730, not far from Lake Balkhash, near Lake Alakol, which the Kazakhs call “itishpes Alakol” (lake Alakol, the water of which even a dog would not drink, i.e. the water is bad and bitter) (Frachetti, 2015). The battlefield stretched along the border of the steppe Kazakhstan and the mountainous and semi-desert regions of southern Kazakhstan. There was a folk legend that said Anyrakay was a place of moaning and crying of the defeated enemy (Kozybaev et al., 2000). Batyrs from all three zhuzs, led by Abulhair, took part in the Anyrakay battle.

True art of war consists in winning not through numbers, but through skill. According to legends, in their fight against an opponent who outnumbered them (the Dzungar), Kazakh commanders and Batyrs used flexible and maneuverable tactics that was well adapted to the harsh natural conditions of the Anyrakay Mountains and the piedmont inclined plain in a desert area; they showcased their valor and exceptional military and organizational skills (Noda, 2016). Their strategy included ruses of war, ambushes, sudden quick strikes, flanking maneuvers, cutting off of escape routes, separation of the enemy’s forces, and besiegement after the enemy was defeated (Kilian, 2013).

Batyrs and wealthy militiamen wore chainmail, plated chainmail, and quilted armor. Some of them protected their iron helmets with camail. The wealthiest warriors could afford buying horse armor. Batyrs were armed with sajdaks, pikes, axes, maces, and sabers. During a cavalry assault, matchlock guns were usually worn on the back. Helmets and pikes of Batyrs and commanders had special cloth insignias, silk or hair brushes to guide the militia in battle (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

The warlike character of the Kazakh militia was mentioned by Ya. Gaverdovsky, who wrote: “Legends have it that clad in armor, they fought desperately and often left the battlefield under their rough boots. Sometimes they were like a storm that hit the enemy and covered the path of his retreat with bodies” (Gaverdovsky, 2007).

The Time of Tribulation (1723–1725) was a time of endless victories of the Dzungar, while the while during “Kazakh Reconquista” period (1726-1730), the Dzungar forces suffered a series of heavy defeats, while of Oirat invasion itself was not only stopped, but even turned back (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

The Anyrakay battle was the decisive battle in the almost eight-year-long Oirat-Kazakh war, which brought the Kazakh people to an ultimate victory against their longstanding and powerful enemy and brought an end to a complicated saga, in which the united militia of the three zhuzs drove away the Dzungar invaders from their conquered land. These significant results of a long-term liberation struggle of Kazakh nomads against the Dzungar invasion makes for its continued importance of the military history of Kazakhstan (Noda, 2016).

S. Walikhanov wrote that the defeat of such a strong enemy awoke a feeling of national pride and the importance of unity in the Kazakh people (Walikhanov, 1961).

Memories of these events and the heroic deeds of the Kazakh Batyrs have been fixed in Kazakh folk songs and legends, as well as the historical toponymy

of the most important battlefields between the Kazakhs and the Dzungar. Such memorable geographic areas include Mount Bokenbay in Western Kazakhstan, Kalmakkurgan and Kalmaktepe in the area between Bulanty River and Beleuty River, Lake Zhasybay and Kalmakkurgan Peak in Northeastern Saryarka, Malaysara Range in Zhetysu, Abulhair and Sumkayti in the area between Chu River and Talas River, and some other historical areas (Yerofeeva, 2010).

Half a century later, Ya. Gaverdovsky wrote: “To this day, legends of the horde mention the brave heroes and unfortunate events of that time. Grey-haired elders point at big mounds that cover the ashes of the dead and say: “Here lie our Batyrs, who perished on the battlefield while defending freedom. Entire auls lie here, slaughtered by barbarians; but despite this cruelty, our fathers remained brave. Clad in armor, they fought desperately and often left the battlefield under their rough boots. Sometimes they were like a storm that hit the enemy and covered the path of his retreat with bodies” (Gaverdovsky, 2007).

### Discussion and Conclusion

The Anyrakay battle shattered the myth about the invincibility of the Dzungar forces and their significant military and technological advantage and showed all Kazakhs that they could and should drive the enemy from their territory. At the price of huge losses and extreme tension, the Kazakh people managed to defend their political independence and territorial integrity (Moiseev, 1991).

In May of 1730, the anti-Dzungar fight ended for the Kazakhs with a liberation of most of their lands and the signing of a peace treaty between the Kazakh khans and the Dzungarian ruler Galdan Tseren (Noda, 2016).

Kazakhs failed to fully capitalize on the victories of 1727-1730 due to the split among the leaders of Kazakh zhuzs. The militias of the Junior and Middle Zhuz left the theater of operations, while the forces of Senior Zhuz were not enough to continue the triumphant advance against Dzungaria (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

In 1731–1735, both Kazakhs and the Dzungar launched raids against each other. The goal of the Oirat commanders was simple – to maintain a status quo until the war against the Qing Empire in the east ended (Zhusupov et al., 2013).

In late 1740, the third Dzungarian campaign was launched, but was fended off decisively and in organized fashion by the Kazakh Batyrs. In hard-fought battles of 1741, Kazakh sultans and Batyrs were captured, including Ablai (Kushkumbayev, 2001), who was then set free in 1743. Despite this, multiple Dzungar attempts to conquer the Middle Zhuz and eliminate the main forces of the Kazakh failed (Moiseev, 1991). The events of 1739-1741 were the last big war in the endless series of Dzungar-Kazakh conflicts during the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries (Kushkumbayev, 2001).

During their campaigns against the Dzungar in the 1740s and 1750s, forces from different Kazakh Zhuzs actively cooperated. In the decisive moments of the confrontation, Kazakh corps that fought against the Dzungar had tens of thousands of horsemen (Bobrov, 2010). During military operations in the second half of the eighteenth century, Kazakh commanders used the experience of gathering an all-Kazakh militia from the first half of the century.

The names of famous Batyrs, who served as commanders in the long-term war with the Dzungar, are associated with many a heroic event during the

Kazakh-Dzungar wars, as well as huge victories in the Bulanty-Beleuty battle, including the Karasiyr region (1727), and the Anyrakay battle (1730).

Thus, Batyrs were the main driving force of the people in their fight for independence. However, the lack of a strong centralized power and feuds between Batyrs prevented Kazakhs from fully capitalizing on their military success. It is also worth noting that the wars, heavy human and economic losses, and lack of a strong power weakened the Kazakh zhuzs significantly and exacerbated the situation. As a result, Kazakh lands were the object of geopolitical confrontation, the so-called “Big Game”, between Great Britain and Russia in the nineteenth century, which made it so that Kazakh lost independence and became part of the Russian Empire.

### Implications and Recommendations

The strength of the Kazakh art of war in the eighteenth century was a strong tradition of gathering a national militia, which allowed defending independence at critical points in history. A crucial organizational element of the Kazakh society was the batyr institution, which consolidated and enhanced the national militia as a traditional military structure. The military organization of Kazakhs is characterized by an inclusion of both higher and middle ranks of military power into the batyr institution. Batyrs constituted a military hierarchy; they assumed direct command of separate units. In the Kazakh militia, Batyrs had several functions: managing military operations, developing strategies and tactics of military operations, coordinating important maneuvers. The forms and methods of military operations were predetermined by the military organization of Kazakhs.

The role, influence, and authority of Batyrs increased during the liberation fight of the Kazakh nation against the Dzungar in the eighteenth century. Batyrs, who were glorified as brave warriors and courageous defenders of their country, had such qualities. In their fight against the Dzungar, Batyrs showed such qualities as valor, courage, and bravery. They were glorified as brave warriors and courageous defenders of their country. The heroic deeds of the Batyrs and common warriors have been fixed in the heroic epos and folk memory. Batyrs from various Kazakh tribes – representatives of all the three zhuzs – fought for the independence of the Kazakh state. These included both common people and talented members of the elite. The most famous Batyrs among the Kazakh aristocracy were Abulhair Khan and Ablai Khan, whose fame came from their victories in the fight against the Dzungar invaders.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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