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Nineteenth century Kazak correspondence with Russian authorities: Morphemic analysis and historical contextualization

Talant Mawkanuli & Virginia Martin

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This article presents a linguistic and historical analysis of a letter written by a member of the Kazak elite to a Russian imperial official in the year 1832. The letter, written in Turki and accompanied by a Russian translation, is an example of a corpus of documents, which the authors have collected from regional archives and which form the source material for a long-term collaborative project, the goal of which is to give an account of the evolution of the Kazak literary language from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, and of the historical context in which that evolution occurred. This article presents a morphemic analysis of the Turki letter, historical background of its production, and translation of the Russian version.

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Introduction

This article presents results of the first steps of a long-term collaborative project that joins linguistic and historical analysis of documents written by Kazaks to Russian imperial officials in the period from the late 18th through the early 20th century.¹ The dual purpose of our project is to give an account of the language and of the historical context in which the documents were written, as both evolved over time. Documents written by Kazaks to Russian imperial officials are valuable data for the study of the history of Kazak literary language, yet no comprehensive study of the language of these documents has yet been undertaken.

In the first stage of the project, exemplified by the analysis in this article, we focus only on documents from the early 19th century, predominantly the 1820s and 1830s, when the Russian government opened the first locally-staffed administrative

¹ This article is a slight revision of a research report previously published in *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, 8:1, pp. 21–28.

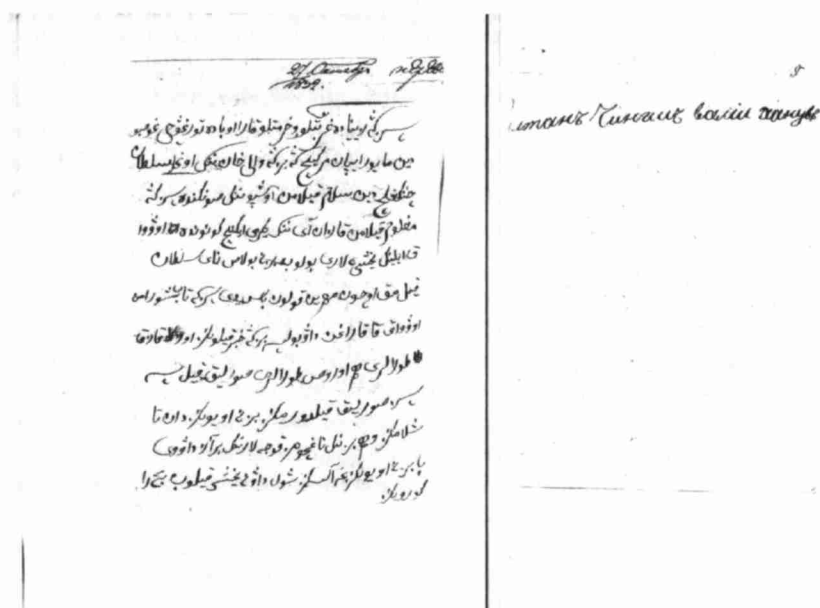
offices within the Kazak steppe territory. We investigate in detail the language of these documents and give a comprehensive account of the morphosyntactic properties of the language from a synchronic perspective. Accompanying a morphemic analysis and English translation of each document is historical information, such as information about the author and addressee and a descriptive analysis of its contents. We provide the official Russian translation as well, so as to highlight the divergences in language and meaning between the texts and therefore the challenges to historians' interpretations when working only with the Russian translations. The results of the synchronic investigation of this particular written language will lay a foundation for further diachronic and comparative study of the Turkic languages in the steppe region in order to provide an account of the development and changes to them through time.

The documents that we are analyzing in this first stage of our project come from archives in Omsk, Russia (the administrative center for Russian rule over Middle Horde Kazaks beginning in 1822) and Almaty, Kazakhstan.² They were handwritten in Turki³ and include vernacular Turkic forms as well as Russian loan words, making them linguistically rich and challenging sources of analysis. The authors of the texts were generally Kazak *töre*—"Sultans" with Chinggisid lineage—who had gained positions in the newly formed Russian imperial administration in the Kazak steppe in the 1820s and 1830s and who corresponded with officials as prompted or required by their positions. The contents of the documents are generally local-level administrative and political topics, and the language in them reflects the local origin of both the author and his/her concerns. In terms of the history of written Turki, they demonstrate an evolution beyond the "old-Tatar official written language" in earlier eras of diplomatic correspondence between Russian rulers and neighboring Turkic/Tatar leaders (Khisamova 1999), in that they now contain vernacular words and localized subject matter, and the authors and addressees are local political figures. They appear in the archival record along with Russian translations.

The present article analyzes a letter written by Chingis Sultan to Cossack Commander Shvabskii in October 1832. It consists of the following pieces: 1) a facsimile of the Turki document, 2) a morphemic analysis of the Turki document, 3) historical information about this specific document, 4) a facsimile of the Russian version, 5)

- 2 These are locations where Martin has conducted historical research. In the near future, she will return to Omsk, and over the longer term she also plans to work in archives in Orenburg (Russia), which was the administrative center of Russian rule over Little Horde Kazaks, and in Moscow. In each case, one object of her work will be to collect more samples of these Turki-language documents to supplement the approximately fifty that she has in hand.
- 3 Turki is used here to refer to a variety of Chaghatay with typical Kipchak features and reflecting the spoken varieties of the steppe region.

an English-language translation of the Russian document, and 6) brief observations on some differences between the Turki and Russian versions.



Facsimile of the original Turki document⁴

Morphemic analysis

The text of the letter from Sultan Chingis to Ivan Markovich Shvabskii is presented here in five lines. The first line presents it in the Turki orthography used by Kazaks at the time, as seen in the original, handwritten document (see facsimile). The second line is a transliteration⁵ (original spelling in the Arabic script) and the third line is a morphophonemic transcription (reconstruction of the language in the text). We used both transliteration and transcription of the text in the morphemic analysis in order to highlight the divergences between each Arabic letter (grapheme) used in the text and the various phonemes that each letter denotes. The fourth line provides a

4 Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan [TsGA RK], f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, ll. 9–9ob. The Cyrillic-script signature appears on its own page (l. 9), but it clearly belongs with the Arabic-script letter (l. 9ob).

5 When inflectional suffixes are not connected to words in the original text, morpheme boundaries are marked by underline marks in our transliteration.

morphemic analysis in the form of morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, and the fifth line offers an English-language translation that is as close as possible to the original literal meaning. The symbols and abbreviations mainly follow the conventions used in “Eighteenth Century Kazak Glossary” (Mawkanuli 1993). Morphological categories are represented in small capitals and lexical glosses are in ordinary type.

سېزگه زيياده غزتلو و خرمتلو قارا اوباده تورغۇچى غوصبودين مايور ايپان مركيچ گه
 syzkh zyyadh ğzztlw w xrmtlw qara ʔwbadh
 siz-ge ziyadā ʔzzat⁶-lu wa xurmat⁷-lu qara oba-da
 you.POL-DAT (A)superior (A)esteem-ADJ (A)and (A)honor-ADJ Qara Oba-LOC
 twrgvčy ğwšbwdyn maywr ʔypan mrkyč
 tur-ʔuwčī ʔospodin⁸ mayor Ipan markič-ge
 stay-NM (R)Mister (R)major Ivan Markič-DAT
 ‘To you, superior, esteemed and honored Mr. Major Ivan Markič, who is residing at
 Qara Oba (Lake).’

سېزگه والى خان ننگ اوغلى سلطان چنگيچ دين سالام قىلامن
 syzkh waly xan_nnk ʔwġly sltan čnkġč_dyn
 siz-ge Wali xan-niġ oyl-i sultan čiġġič-din
 you.POL-DAT Wali Xan-GEN son-3SG.POSS (A)Sultan Chingis-ABL
 slam qylamn
 salam qil-a-miġ
 (A)greetings make-PF-1SG
 ‘I, Sultan Chingis, son of Wali khan, send my greetings.’

اوشپوننك صونكنده سېزگه معلوم قىلامن
 ʔwšpwnnk šwnkndh szkħ mġlwm qylamn
 ošbu-niġ soġ-i-nda siz-ge mäylüm qil-a-miġ
 this-GEN end-3SG.POSS-LOC you-DAT (A)known make-PF-1SG
 and herewith I inform you that,

قازان اى ننگ يكرمى ايكنچ كونونده
 qazan āy_nnk ykrmy ʔyknč kwnwndh
 qazan ay-i-niġ yigirmi iki-nči kün-ü-nde
 ‘October month-3SG.POSS-GEN twenty two-NUM.ORD day-3SG.POSS-LOC
 on the 22nd day of the October month,’

اوڭواق ايلينك يخشى بى لارى بولوب
 ʔwɯwaq ʔylynk yxšy by_lary bwlwb

- 6 ʔizzat < ʔzzat عَزَتْ
 7 xurmat < ħurmat حُرْمَةٌ
 8 ʔospodin < gospodin

uwaq el-<n>iŋ yaxši biy-lar-ï bol-up
 Uwaq people-2SG.GEN good Biy-PL-3SG.POSS be-CV
 'The good *biys* of the Uwaq people gathered.'

بزنی بولاص نای سلطان قیل مق اوچون
 bzny bwlaş_nay sltan qyl_mq ʔwčwn
 biz-ni bolasnay sultan qil-maq üčün
 we-ACC (R)volost⁹ (A)Sultan do-VN for
 'in order to make us the volost' Sultan'

مهرین قولون باس دی
 mhryn qwlwn bas_dy
 möhr-i-n qol-u-n bas-ti
 (P)seal-3SG.POSS-ACC hand-3SG.POSS-ACC press-PST-3
 'placed their seals and signatures.'

سزکه تابشورامن
 syzh tabşwramn
 siz-ge tapşur-a-mın
 you.POL-DAT submit-PF-1SG
 'I will submit (it) to you.'

اوڭواق قا قاراغن داڭ بولسه بزگه خبر قیلونکز
 ʔwvwaq_qa qaraŋn dav bwlsh bzkh xbr qylwnkz
 uwaq-qa qara-yan daw¹⁰ bol-sa biz-ge xabar qil-uŋuz
 Uwaq-DAT belong.to-PSTPRT (A)claimbe-COND we-DAT (A)information do-2POL.IMP
 'Please inform us if there is a claim related to the Uwaq.'

اوزکا قازق طورالری هم اوروص طورالری
 ʔwzka qazq¹¹ ʔwra_lry hm ʔwrwş ʔwra_lry
 özge qazaq töre-ler-i häm orus töre-ler-i

9 *Volost'* means county; *volostnoy* is the adjectival form upon which the word *bolasnay* is presumably based. In the early 19th century, Russian administrators used *volost'* as the term for a group of nomads who were or would eventually be organized into administrative units at the local level. Chingis makes use of the Russian terminology to describe this grouping of nomads, even though they are not yet officially integrated into the imperial structure. In other regions of the Middle Horde steppe (and beginning in 1834 in this particular territory), *volost'* *Sultan* [county administrator] was the official title of the Kazak head of a county within an *okrug* [district].

10 *daw* < *da'waa* دعوی 'allegation, claim, pretension'.

11 In the manuscript at the beginning of the eighth line, the text in square bracket between this word and the next represents later emendation.

other Kazak *töre-PL-3POSS (P)*and Russian *töre-PL-3POSS*
 ‘If other Kazak *töres* and Russian *töres*’

صورلىق قىل سه سبز صورلىق قىلدورمنكز
 şwrlyq qyl_sh sz şwrlyq qyldwrnknz
*zor*¹²-liq qil-sa siz zor-liq qil-dur-ma-ñiz
 (P)violence-NM do-COND you.POL (P)violence-NM do-CAUS-NEG-2POL.IMP
 ‘provoke violence, please do not let them provoke violence.’

بىزنى اويونكز دان تاشلامنكز
 bzny ʔwywnkzdan tašlamnkz
biz-ni oy-uñuz-dan tašla-ma-ñiz
 we-ACC mind-2POSS-ABL throw.away-NEG-2POL.IMP
 ‘Please do not forget us’

و هم بىزنىك ناغچومز
 w hm bznknk nağčwmz
wa häm biz-niñ nayaču-muz
 (A)and (P)and we-GEN maternal.relative-1PL.POSS
 ‘And also our maternal relatives.’

قوجه لارنىك براز داۋوى با
 qwjälarnnk brāz davwy ba(r)
qoja-lar-niñ biraz dawu-ī ba<r>
 Qoja-PL-GEN some (A)claim-3POSS EXIST
 ‘*Qojas*, have some claims.’

بىزنى اويونكز غه آلسنكز
 bzny ʔwywnkzğh ālsnkz
biz-ni oy-uñuz-ğa al-sa-ñiz
 we-ACC mind-2POSS-DAT take-COND-2POL.IMP
 ‘If you think of us,’

شول داۋنى يخشى قىلوب بتى را كورونكز
 šwl davny yxšy qylwb bytra kwrwnkz
šol daw-ni yaxšī qil-up bitir-e kör-üñiz
 that (A)dispute-ACC good do-CV finish-CV see-2POL.IMP
 ‘please resolve that dispute well.’

Sultan Chingis Vali Khanuv

12 *zor* < *zor* زور “violence, force” It should be noted that in this text, voiced fricative /z/ was indicated by the grapheme ص /š/.

Historical background

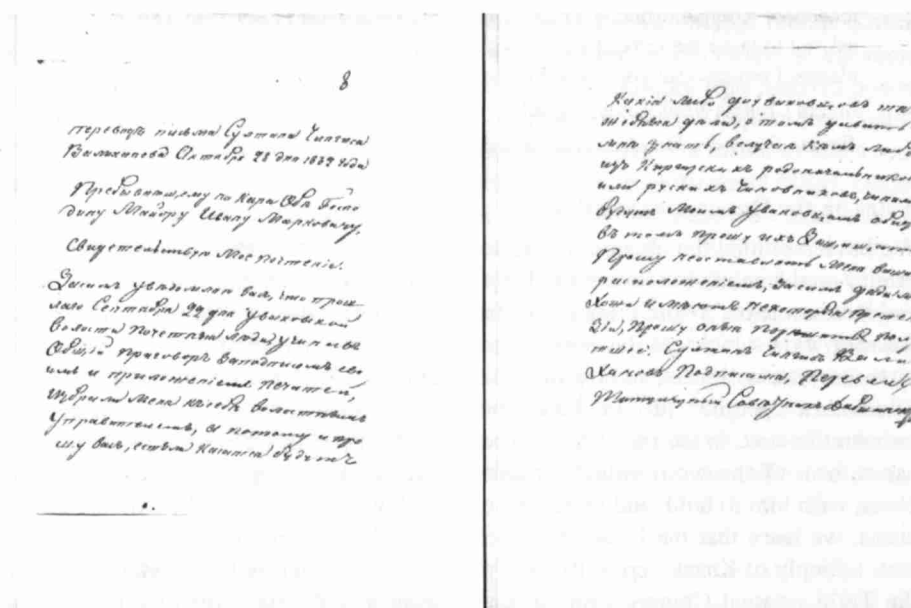
The document analyzed linguistically above was written by Chingis Walixanov (1811–ca.1896), son of Khan Wali (1781–1821) and Ayġanım (1783–1853), Wali’s second wife. In 1832, when Chingis wrote this letter, he was enrolled in the Asiatic section of the Omsk Cossack School as one of its first Kazak students. He completed three years of schooling, officially to train as a translator, and then in summer 1834, he was elected and confirmed to the post of Senior Sultan [*starshii/aġa Sultan*], the main Kazak administrator of the district office [*okruzhnyi prikaz/diwan*] of the newly-created Aman-Karagay outer district [*vneshnii okrug*] in the northwestern corner of the Middle Horde steppe region. He would continue to serve the imperial Russian government in several different capacities for 34 years, until major reforms of the steppe region in 1868 forced him to retire (Martin, forthcoming).

In 1832, the Aman-Karagay territory from which Chingis wrote his letter had not yet been structured as a separate administrative region; formal administrators were not yet in place, and Russian authority was only present in the form of a Cossack military detachment. This meant, among other things, that only some of the Kazak nomads migrating within the territory had proclaimed their allegiance to the Russian tsar and requested that administrative order be created there, while others refused to acknowledge Russian rule. Among the latter were the “Uwaq people” mentioned in Chingis’ letter.

Rather than submit to Russian rule, these Uwaq people submitted to Chingis. In some ways, this was simply Central Eurasian nomadic politics. Chingis was a Chinggisid, the nomadic political elite of the Eurasian steppe who claimed aristocratic status based on genealogical descent from the Mongol empire-builder, Chingis Khan. The wealthiest and most powerful Kazak Chinggisids controlled patrimonial lands and the people and livestock that migrated on those lands (Martin 2010). These Uwaq nomads “belonged” to Sultan Chingis: they were among the *tülingüts* [loyal servitors] of his father, and now they professed allegiance to Chingis. Probing more deeply into the archival record, we find their purpose here was to proclaim that they were a group of Uwaq distinct from other Uwaqs who had submitted to a different Sultan in neighboring Kokchetav [Kökšetaw] district in 1828, that they had never professed loyalty to the tsar, and that they therefore were not obligated to pay *yasak* [in-kind taxes]. In the early 1830s the imperial administration in Omsk was attempting to enforce for the first time since 1822 the collection of *yasak* from among the Kazaks who had become subjects of the empire.¹³

13 This topic of collection of *yasak* and the accusation that Uwaq were evading their obligations takes up the entire file in which Chingis’ 1832 letter is found (TsGA RK, f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, 139 ll.). By 1835, an investigation involving numerous Kazak and Russian officials resulted in the determination that all Uwaq owed some level of *iasak*, and at least some of it was extracted from them.

Chingis' letter is addressed to the commander of the local Cossack military detachment, Captain Ivan Markovich Shvabskiy, and it entered the archival record when Shvabskiy sent it on, with attached Russian translation, to his superior, the commander of Omsk province.¹⁴ Shvabskiy and his men were stationed as imperial border guards in a territory not yet formally incorporated into the administrative structure of the empire. Chingis apparently viewed Shvabskiy as the imperial official to whom he should turn in his attempt to protect his claim to this group of Uwaq Kazaks.



Facsimile of the Russian-language document¹⁵

The letter is very brief; its contents may seem terribly mundane and unrevealing. Yet as the above background information hopefully conveys, we can learn important details about nomadic politics and the people who practiced it; indeed, it is just these sorts of documents, used as one piece of evidence among many other types of sources, which reveal to the historian otherwise little-known features of the social, cultural, political, and linguistic history of the steppe from a distinctly Kazak nomadic point of view.

14 Omsk province (*oblast'*) was administratively part of the Governor-Generalship of Western Siberia at this time. Middle Horde nomads (called *Sibirskie kirgizy* in Russian statutes) fell within the jurisdiction of Omsk officials.

15 TsGA RK, f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, ll. 8–8ob.

The Russian-language version in English translation

Letter of Sultan Chingis Valikhanov, October 28, 1832

To Mr. Major Ivan Markovich, residing on the Kara Ob:

I hereby convey my esteem.

With this I inform you that last September 22nd, honored people of Uvak county, having made a common agreement shown by their signatures and affixing of their stamps, chose me as their county administrator, and so I ask you, if there are any disputes concerning the Uvakovtsy to let me know. In case any Kirgiz [Kazak]¹⁶ clan leaders or Russian officials inflict harm on my Uvakovtsy I request to defend them. I ask not to leave me to your resolution, [for] after this my uncles, Khozhi, have several claims. I request that you resolve them better.

Sultan Chingis Valikhanov, signed

Titular Councilor Dabshinskiy, translated

Notes on the Russian translation

We have provided the above translation of Sultan Chingis' letter in order to reflect briefly on the subtle but important differences in language and meaning in the Turki and Russian texts. While there are in fact a number of differences in the Turki and Russian texts which can be noticed in our literal English translations of the two texts, here we will pause to note just three examples. First, the Uwaq/Uvak are identified as a "people" [el] in Turki, but as a "volost" [county], a Russian administrative unit, in the translation. Second, in the Turki original Chingis chooses to use a form of the word volost' (*bolasnay*) when identifying the position that the Uwaq wish him to hold, and he retains the title Sultan, whereas in the Russian translation, we learn that the Uvak chose him as a volost' "administrator." Finally, and very tellingly of Kazak versus Russian perspectives on their political relationship, in the Turki original Chingis refers to both Kazak and Russian elites with the word "töre", thus signaling that he considers them equals, but the Russian version uses words signifying specific positions that cannot be compared directly to each other: Kazak "clan leaders" (*rodonačal'niki*) and Russian "officials" (*činovniki*). The liberties taken by the Russian translator, identified as an official with rank named Dabshinskiy,¹⁷ are very typical of 19th century imperial representations of nomads: a language of evolutionism is employed to create a hierarchical relationship in which the nomadic political elite occupy a political space lower than the Russian imperial

16 Before 1917, Russians called Kazaks "Kirgiz" and the neighboring nomadic Kyrgyz, "Kara Kirgiz".

17 The question of the role of translators/interpreters and scribes is of course germane to our analysis. Beginning in the 1820s, each district office in the Kazak steppe had one or more interpreter or scribe assigned to its salaried staff. We intend to compile profiles of these individuals and consider the extent to which their identities may have influenced the language of these documents.

powerholders on a developmental scale (see, e.g., Sneath 2007). This exercise should signal to historians that original language documents may hold keys to understanding identity issues in steppe nomadic politics, and should be used whenever possible. Comparing the original and translated versions can provide insights into the politics of the empire builders as well.

Conclusion

Our project opens a unique window onto the Kazak steppe of the past. The documents reveal striking evidence of the complex linguistic identity of literate Kazak elites, which should be of substantial value for comparative philology; at the same time, they provide historians with clear voices of those Kazaks who asserted power and authority within the imposed structures of Russian imperial rule in the steppe. This is a long-term project that will have many components. We intend to add to our collection of archival documents, so that the source base is sufficiently broad. Documents from Little and Middle Horde Kazak töre, including men who held official positions, men who were active in politics outside of imperial structures, and women who maintained positions of power and respect, as well as high-level non-Chinggisid administrators, are among representative groupings that we expect to analyze. The goals of the linguistic research for the project are twofold. First, we are planning to create a database of interlinear glossed texts from this corpus in order to represent morphosyntactic information and to enable research into the morphosyntactic and syntactic properties of the language. Second, we will investigate how Kazak has been used and how other languages have influenced it, both historically and sociolinguistically.

Acknowledgements

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Transliteration and Transcription System

Grapheme	Transliteration	Transcription
ا	a, 'a	a, ä
آ	a	a
ب	b	b, p
پ	p	p
ت	t	t
ث	j	j
ح	ḥ	ḥ
خ	č	č
د	x	x
ذ	d	d
ر	r	r
ز	z	z
س	s	s
ص	š	š
ض	z	s, z
ط	t	t
ظ	ʿ	ʿ
ع	ġ	y
ق	q	q
ك	k	k
گ	k̄	g
ل	l	l
م	m	m
ن	n	n
نگ	nk	ŋ
ه	h	h, ä, e, a
و	w	w, o, ö, u, ü
ی	y	y, ĩ, i
ف	v	w

Abbreviations

-	morpheme boundary	IMP	imperative
<	infix element	LOC	locative case
<	derived from	NEG	negative
1	first person	NM	nominalizer
2	second person	NUM.ORD	ordinal numeral
3	third person	PST	past tense
A	Arabic	PSTPRT	past participle
ABL	ablative case	PF	present/future tense
ACC	accusative case	P	Persian
ADJ	adjectival suffix	PL	plural
CAUS	causative	POL	polite
COND	conditional	POSS	possessive suffix
CV	converb marker	R	Russian
DAT	dative case	SG	singular
EXIST	existential	VN	verbal noun maker
GEN	genitive case		