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THEORETICAL AND SOURCE BASE FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTANI PRISONERS OF WAR IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS ON THE TERRITORY POLAND DURING THE WORLD WAR II

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Abstract. Introduction. This article examines the theoretical and source base for the study of history of kazakhstani prisoners of war in concentration camps on the territory of Poland during the World War II. The stages of historiography on this issue are systematized and analyzed, from the Soviet period to the present day, including both kazakhstani and foreign historiography. The study presents and analyzes archival documents and materials introduced into academic circulation for the first time, enabling the reconstruction of an objective historical narrative and the identification of the methodological approaches employed. *The aim and objectives* of the research are to analyze and systematize the theoretical and source-based foundations for the study of the history of Kazakhstani prisoners of war in concentration camps on Poland territory during the World War II. Based on this goal, the study seeks to: identify the features of how this issue was studied during the Soviet period; analyze the works of Kazakhstani historians during the years of independence; and, based on the research of Russian, Poland, and German scholars, conduct a comparative analysis of the concepts developed on this issue. *Results.* The study found that the issue of Kazakhstani prisoners of war has been unevenly studied in historiography. During the Soviet period, for ideological reasons, this topic remained on the periphery of scholarly attention, and prisoners of war were not considered a distinct social group. The fates of kazakhstani soldiers who ended up in concentration camps in Poland were not the subject of specialized research. Only during the years of Kazakhstan's independence, due to expanded access to archival documents, did the issue of Kazakhstani prisoners of war gradually enter scholarly circulation. However, in most studies, Kazakhstani prisoners are still considered as part of the general mass of Soviet prisoners of war. In Poland and German historiography, individuals from Kazakhstan are generally not distinguished by nationality and are most often described simply as «Soviet military personnel». *Conclusion.* Thus, the history of studying the issue of Kazakhstani prisoners of war in concentration camps on the territory of Poland during the World War II has not yet received a complete,

systematic, and applied study. Ideological restrictions during the Soviet period significantly hindered its scholarly understanding. Only after Kazakhstan gained independence did this topic begin to be studied from a new perspective; however, a significant portion of archival materials remains inaccessible to researchers. In the future, fundamental research is needed on the fates of Kazakhstani prisoners of war and the conditions of their detention in concentration camps on Poland territory. Conducting such research will help fill the «gaps in history» in the history of Kazakhstan and contribute to preserving the historical memory of war victims.

Keywords: Concentration camp, World War II, prisoners of war, archival data, documentary database.

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ЕКІНШІ ДҮНИЕЖҮЗІЛІК СОҒЫС ЖЫЛДАРЫНДАҒЫ ПОЛЬША ТЕРРИТОРИЯСЫНДАҒЫ КОНЦЛАГЕРЬЛЕРДЕГІ ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ ӘСКЕРИ ТҮТҚЫНДАР ТАРИХЫН ЗЕРТТЕУДІҢ ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ-ДЕРЕКТІК НЕГІЗІ

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Мақалада Екінші дүниежүзілік соғыс жылдары Польша территориясындағы концлагерьлерде болған қазақстандық әскери тұтқындардың тарихын зерттеудің теориялық және деректік негіздері қарастырылған. Зерттеу барысында осы мәселені зерттеу бойынша тарихнамалық кезеңдері жүйелендіріліп, талданды: Совет кезеңінен бастап бүгінгі күнге дейінгі кезең, оның ішінде қазақстандық және шетелдік тарихнама да қамтылды. Сондай-ақ, ғылыми айналымға алғаш рет енгізіліп отырған архивтік құжаттар мен материалдар талданды. *Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері* – Екінші дүниежүзілік соғыс жылдары Польша аумағындағы концлагерьлерде болған қазақстандық әскери тұтқындардың тарихын зерттеудің теориялық және деректік негіздерін талдау және жүйелеу. Белгіленген мақсатқа сүйене отырып, мыналар қарастырылды: Советтік кезеңде мәселені зерттеудің ерекшеліктерін анықтау; тәуелсіздік жылдарында қазақстандық тарихшылардың еңбектерін талдау; ресейлік, поляк және неміс ғалымдарының зерттеулері негізінде осы мәселеге қатысты қалыптасқан концепцияны салыстырмалы талдау жүргізу. Нәтижелер. Зерттеу барысында анықталғандай, қазақстандық әскери тұтқындар мәселесі тарихнамада біркелкі зерттелмеген, өйткені Кеңес кезеңінде идеологиялық себептерге байланысты бұл тақырып ғылыми назардан шет қалған және тұтқындар дербес әлеуметтік топ ретінде қарастырылмаған. Польша территориясындағы концлагерьлерге түскен қазақстандық сарбаздардың тағдыры арнайы зерттеу нысанына айналмаған. Тек тәуелсіздік жылдарында архивтік құжаттарға қолжетімділіктің кеңеюі нәтижесінде қазақстандық әскери тұтқындардың мәселесі біртіндеп ғылыми айналымға енді. Дегенмен, зерттеулерде қазақстандық әскери тұтқындар әлі де көбінесе жалпы кеңестік әскери тұтқындардың құрамында қарастырылады. Польша және Германия тарихнамасында Қазақстаннан шыққан әскери қызметшілер әдетте ұлттық белгілері бойынша бөлінбейді және көбінесе «Кеңес Одағы әскери қызметшілері» ретінде сипатталады. *Қорытынды.* Осылайша, Польша территориясындағы концлагерьлерде болған қазақстандық әскери тұтқындардың тарихын зерттеу қазіргі уақытқа дейін толық жүйелік қолданбалы зерттеуді ала қоймаған. Тек Қазақстан тәуелсіздік алғаннан кейін ғана бұл тақырып жаңа қырынан зерттеле бастады, алайда архивтік материалдардың едәуір бөлігі әлі де зерттеушілерге

қолжетімсіз болып отыр. Болашақта қазақстандық әскери тұтқындардың тағдыры, олардың Польша территориясындағы концлагерьлерде ұстау жағдайлары жөнінде фундаменталды зерттеулер жүргізу қажет. Мұндай зерттеулер Қазақстан тарихындағы «ақтандақтарды» толтыруға және соғыс құрбандары туралы тарихи есте сақтауды сақтауға мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: концлагерь, Екінші дүниежүзілік соғыс, әскери тұтқындар, архив деректері, деректік база.

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ТЕОРЕТИКО-ИСТОЧНИКОВЕДЧЕСКАЯ БАЗА ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИСТОРИИ ВОЕННОПЛЕННЫХ-КАЗАХСТАНЦЕВ В КОНЦЕНТРАЦИОННЫХ ЛАГЕРЯХ НА ТЕРРИТОРИИ ПОЛЬШИ В ГОДЫ ВТОРОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье рассматривается теоретико-источниковедческая база изучения истории военнопленных-казахстанцев в концентрационных лагерях на территории Польши в годы Второй мировой войны. Систематизируются и анализируются этапы историографии по изучению данной проблемы, начиная с советского периода по сегодняшний день, включая казахстанскую и зарубежную историографию. Также дается описание и анализ архивных документов и материалов, которые вводятся впервые в научный оборот и что позволяет создать объективную картину исторической правды и определить методологические особенности изучения. *Цель и задачи исследования* заключаются в анализе и систематизации теоретико-источниковедческой базы изучения истории военнопленных-казахстанцев в концентрационных лагерях на территории Польши в годы Второй мировой войны. Исходя из поставленной цели, предполагается: определить особенности изучения проблемы в советский период; проанализировать труды казахстанских историков в годы независимости; на основе исследований российских, польских и немецких ученых провести сравнительный анализ выработанной концепции по данной проблеме. *Результаты.* В ходе исследования установлено, что проблема казахстанских военнопленных в историографии изучена неравномерно, так как в советский период данная тема по идеологическим причинам оставалась на периферии научного внимания и военнопленные не рассматривались как самостоятельная социальная группа. Судьбы казахстанских солдат, оказавшихся в концлагерях на территории Польши, не становились предметом специального исследования. Лишь в годы независимости в результате расширения доступа к архивным документам, проблема казахстанских военнопленных начала постепенно входить в научный оборот. Однако в большинстве своем в исследованиях казахстанские военнопленные по-прежнему рассматриваются в составе общей массы советских военнопленных. В польской и немецкой историографии выходцы из Казахстана, как правило, не выделяются по национальному признаку и чаще всего характеризуются как «военнослужащие Советского Союза». *Заключение.* Таким образом, история изучения проблемы казахстанских военнопленных, находившихся в концентрационных лагерях на территории Польши в годы Второй

мировой войны, до настоящего времени не получила полного системного прикладного исследования. Идеологические ограничения советского периода существенно препятствовали ее научному осмыслению. Лишь после обретения независимости Казахстаном данная тема стала изучаться в новом ракурсе, однако значительная часть архивных материалов по-прежнему не доступна для исследователей. В перспективе необходимы фундаментальные исследования судебных казахстанских военнопленных, условий их содержания в концлагерях на территории Польши. Реализация таких исследований позволит восполнить «белые пятна» в истории Казахстана и будет способствовать сохранению исторической памяти о жертвах войны.

Ключевые слова: концентрационный лагерь, Вторая мировая война, военнопленные, архивные данные, источниковедческая база.

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Introduction. The World War II left a profound mark on both global and national historical consciousness as one of the bloodiest and most tragic periods in human history. The severe consequences of this war affected all peoples of the Soviet Union, including the Kazakh population. Over 1.2 million Kazakhs were mobilized to the front, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers were captured by the enemy and became prisoners of war. A significant portion of them were placed in concentration and prisoner-of-war camps on the territory of Poland.

However, during the Soviet period, the topic of prisoners of war was ideologically «closed», and captured soldiers were often labeled as «traitors». As a result, the history of Kazakh prisoners of war in camps on Poland territory remained largely unstudied for a long time and was excluded from collective memory. One of the main reasons for the lack of research on this topic in the post-war Soviet era was the official position of the Soviet authorities. This perspective was codified in Order No. 270 issued by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the Red Army on 16 August 1941. The document stated: *«I ORDER:

Commanders and political officers who remove their insignia during battle and desert to the rear or surrender to the enemy are to be considered malicious deserters, and their families are to be arrested as families of deserters who violated their oath and betrayed their Motherland. All superior commanders and commissars are obligated to execute such deserters from the ranks on the spot.»* [Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the Red Army, 1941: 476]. This document was clearly significant for maintaining military discipline and ideological conformity. However, the scarcity of archival data regarding prisoners in Poland and other occupied territories resulted in a fragmentary historiographical record. The relevance of this issue lies in the necessity to restore historical justice, to reconstruct, based on archival sources, the fate of Kazakhs who suffered during the war, and to commemorate their heroism in the collective memory of future generations. Furthermore, this topic holds international significance as it contributes to a broader understanding of the humanitarian and ethical dimensions of the World War II.

The relevance of this study can be supported by several factors. First, Poland researcher Grzegorz Motyka, citing Wiesław Marchik, noted that «within the borders of modern Poland, according to Wiesław Marchik’s calculations, there were 77 such camps» [Motyka, 2021: 23]. This evidence demonstrates that Poland territory was one of the major centers of the prisoner – of – war system during the World War II. The ninth volume of Prisoners of War – Kazakhs of the World War II. Akmolinsk Region. Collection of Documents and Materials [Collection of Documents, 2022: 632] provides a list of approximately 50 concentration camps located in Poland territory [Collection of Documents, 2022: 24 – 44]. Establishing the precise conditions of Soviet prisoners, including Kazakhs, within the camp system in Poland allows for the restoration of historical justice.

Second, in Russian historiography, a special commission conducted research in Poland territory in the year following the end of the war. The study revealed memoirs and previously classified archival documents. Some of these materials, published in the first compilation of documents, pertain to the Extraordinary State Commission’s investigations into the cruelties committed by the German-Fascist invaders and their collaborators. These materials detail the history of concentration camps in the region, the capture of prisoners, their conditions, and the forensic examinations of burial sites. Among these sources, the presence

of Kazakh prisoners is specifically noted: «all other people were divided into three groups by nationality. In one were Russians, in another – Ukrainians, and in the third – Kazakhs...» [1947: 9].

The issues described above indicate that Soviet prisoners of war in camps on Poland territory, including Kazakh prisoners, were ethnically categorized and treated as a distinct group. This evidence enables researchers to determine the specific features of Kazakh prisoners' experiences during the war, clarifying their social and legal conditions under the camp regime. Additionally, the forensic examinations, burial site data, and witness testimonies documented by the Extraordinary State Commission provide a comprehensive basis for studying the operational mechanisms of the camp system in Poland, its criminal nature, and the human losses it caused.

Materials and Methods. The empirical basis of this study consists of the works of foreign and domestic historians devoted to the issue of prisoners of war during the World War II. In particular, the research draws upon historical studies published during the Soviet period, as well as publications by Russian, Poland, and German scholars, and the works of Kazakh researchers produced in the years of independence. In addition, archival document collections related to the topic of prisoners of war were analyzed, with special emphasis on the materials of the Extraordinary State Commission concerning several camps located on the territory of Poland. These include: Report of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the German-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices. On Crimes Committed by the German Government and the German High Command against Soviet Prisoners of War in the Lamsdorf Camp [1946: 34]; Report of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the German-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices. On the Murder of Soviet Prisoners of War by the Germans in the Area of the City of Ostrow Mazowiecki in Poland [1947: 37]; On the Murder of Soviet Prisoners of War by the Germans in the Demblin Fortress (Ivangorod) and in Several Other German Camps on the Territory of Poland [1948: 46]; as well as the collection of scholarly articles Soviet Prisoners of War during the World War II on Poland Lands [2021: 196].

A comprehensive set of historical and cognitive research methods was employed in this study. The historical-chronological method was used to identify the stages in the historiographical study of the issue of Kazakh prisoners of war. The historiographical analysis made it possible to examine the content and orientations of scholarly works produced in different periods. The comparative-historical method was applied to determine the level of attention given to the issue of Kazakh prisoners of war in foreign and domestic research. In addition, the methods of systematization and generalization served as the basis for synthesizing the scholarly conclusions obtained.

Discussion. In national historical studies, there are virtually no direct or dedicated studies to date on the issue of Kazakh prisoners of war in concentration camps located in the territory of Poland during the World War II. This topic has primarily been examined within the broader context of the history of Soviet prisoners of war, with Kazakh prisoners rarely treated as a distinct research subject.

In the course of studying this issue, an archival collection preserved at the World Literature Department of the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan was identified. This collection is based on materials produced by a special commission established in Poland immediately after the end of the war. During the commission's work, memoirs, eyewitness testimonies, and official documents that had previously held «classified» status were introduced into scholarly circulation. As a result, the first compilation of documentary materials dedicated to the history of Soviet prisoners of war in concentration camps on Poland territory was published.

In particular, the materials of the Extraordinary State Commission for the establishment and investigation of the crimes committed by the German-Fascist invaders and their collaborators possess significant source value. The documentary collection published in 1947, entitled Report of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the German-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices. On the Murder of Soviet Prisoners of War by the Germans in the Area of the City of Ostrow Mazowiecki in Poland [Collection, 1947], provides a comprehensive description of the functioning of concentration camps on the territory of Poland.

This collection contains detailed information on the history of the concentration camps located near the settlements of Grądy and Komarowo in the vicinity of the city of Ostrow Mazowiecki, situated approximately 100 kilometers northeast of Warsaw. It documents the transfer of Soviet prisoners of war to these camps, the internal camp regime, and the results of forensic medical examinations conducted at the burial sites of deceased prisoners. Based on the documentary evidence, it was established that more than 67,000 Soviet prisoners of war were held in these camps: «The Commission established the fact of the

deliberate extermination by the German-Fascist invaders of more than 67,000 Soviet prisoners of war in two camps in the area of the city of Ostrow Mazowiecki» [Collection, 1947: 3].

This conclusion was drawn on the basis of eyewitness testimonies obtained from 26 residents of the city of Ostrow Mazowiecki and nearby villages, as well as the results of forensic expert examinations [Collection, 1947: 3]. The facts and statistical data presented in the collection were obtained through a comprehensive investigation conducted by a special commission and are therefore considered reliable from a source-critical perspective. These materials should be introduced into scholarly circulation as an essential source for the study of the history of Kazakh prisoners of war who were held in concentration camps on the territory of Poland.

In addition, in 2022 a regional documentary collection based on the materials of the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression (covering the 1920s–1950s) was published. Volume 9 of Kazakh Prisoners of War of the World War II. Akmolinsk Region. Collection of Documents and Materials [2022: 632], entitled Kazakh Prisoners of War during the World War II. Akmolinsk Region, represents the first publication devoted to the fates of Kazakh prisoners of war who were captured during the World War II and who, after the end of the war, resided in or returned to the territory of Akmolinsk Region and the city of Akmolinsk. The biographical data presented in the volume were compiled on the basis of archival documents relating to both the wartime and post-war periods. This publication is intended for researchers, scholars, and all readers interested in the fate of Kazakh prisoners of war who were long considered «missing in action». It constitutes an important source describing the organization and functioning of the system of prisoner – of – war camps (camp infrastructure) established by the German authorities during the World War II. The documents provide a step-by-step account of the trajectory of Red Army servicemen following their capture, including their transfer, accommodation, registration, and utilization as forced labor. The publication demonstrates that the German prisoner-of-war camp system was strictly organized yet repressive in nature and characterized by gross violations of human rights. This evidence is of particular importance for the historical interpretation of the harsh conditions endured by Soviet prisoners of war, including Kazakhs, held in concentration camps on the territory of Poland. One of the key documents included in the volume is the Reference on the Dislocation of German Prisoner-of-War Camps during the Great Patriotic War of 1941 – 1945, which lists the names of prisoner-of-war camps established by Nazi Germany and identifies their geographical locations.

The reference lists a total of 546 camps, among which prisoner-of-war camps known as Stalags occupy a prominent place. These camps were primarily intended for Soviet prisoners of war from the ranks and non-commissioned officers. According to the data presented in the table, the camps were located not only within the territory of Germany but also in occupied Poland and the Baltic region.

The dislocation data contained in the document demonstrate the large-scale organization of the German prisoner-of-war system. The wide geographical distribution of the camps indicates that they formed part of a broader policy aimed at the mass control, exploitation of forced labor, and isolation of prisoners of war. Moreover, millions of Soviet servicemen, including soldiers from Kazakhstan, passed through these camps.

Results. Foreign studies, including those on the postwar period of the Soviet Union, indicate that the fate of Soviet soldiers held as prisoners in the territory of Poland began to be systematically investigated by the State Extraordinary Commission from 1945. This commission published its work as official documents, which included records on the history of concentration camps in the region, the arrival of Soviet military prisoners, the camp regime, and forensic examinations of burial sites. The commission included medical experts, physicians, and other specialists. The acts documented the existence of concentration camps managed under the Third Reich leadership, including atrocities committed against the prisoners, particularly Soviet soldiers. These were established through exhumations, examinations of human remain, and corroborated eyewitness accounts. For example: «On the murder of Soviet prisoners of war by the Germans in the fortress of Demblin (Ivangorod) and in some other German camps on the territory of Poland» [Collection, 1948: 46]. After the war, the Soviet government sent the Extraordinary State Commission. Its members included representatives of the Ministry of Justice, professors of medicine, chief forensic experts, and other officials. From the Poland side, the commission included the Deputy Minister of Justice, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Appellate Court, and the Deputy Prosecutor of the Warsaw District Court. Datner, in his work «Crimes of the German-Fascist Wehrmacht against prisoners of war during the World War II», discusses several camps located in the territory of Poland, including the camp at Demblin, also known as Frontstalag No. 307. According to Datner, this encompassed four facilities: Demblin, Zazheche, Ponyatova, and the camp infirmary «Bolonnia». Through this stalag, approximately 180,000 Soviet soldiers passed, with

around 100,000 present at the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942. Over 80,000 Soviet soldiers died in the stalag [Datner, 1961: 361]. According to the commission, between 1941 and 1942, 132,000 Soviet soldiers perished due to starvation, torture, shootings, poisoning, and the spread of infectious diseases [Collection, 1948: 4]. These figures provide insight into the daily life of Soviet prisoners and reflect one of the most tragic aspects of the World War II: the mass extermination of prisoners of war. One such site of horrific crimes was the Demblin fortress, known as Ivangorod. Here, as in other German camps in Poland, Soviet military prisoners were subjected to systematic brutality and killing. These events require careful analysis not only to understand the scale of the tragedy but also the underlying causes. Datner's accounts discuss the camps in Poland, providing commentary based on the work of the aforementioned commission.

From June 1941 until the end of the World War II, there is still no consensus among researchers regarding the total number of Soviet soldiers captured by the Germans. For instance, the Poland scholar Jakub Wojtkowiak, citing K. Streit in his article, estimates the total number of Soviet prisoners at 5.7 million, of whom 3.3 million (57.8%) died in captivity [Wojtkowiak, 2017: 18]. The question of why the number is so high is addressed in K. Streit's study, which is considered a «classic» in this field. As noted above, the figures for the total number of Soviet military prisoners and those who perished in German captivity are regarded as the most objective to date and remain evidence of the criminal actions of the fascist regime.

Since 1990, a new stage has begun in the study of this issue. During this period, reference works and encyclopedias containing information on Soviet prisoners of war began to appear, such as «Who Was Who in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945: A Concise Reference» and «Reference on the Preservation of Documents on German Fascist Camps, Ghettos, Other Places of Forced Detention, and the Forced Labor of Citizens to Germany and Other European Countries during the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945», among others. In addition, the fate of Soviet prisoners of war is analyzed in N.P. Dembitsky's research «Sudyba Plennykh» («The Fate of Prisoners»), where the historiography of the Great Patriotic War is divided into two stages. The first stage, 1941 – 1945, describes the initial period of research on the conditions of Soviet prisoners of war. A key feature of this period was the relatively closed nature of information. During the war, both Soviet and foreign press published only limited information, which included the harsh living conditions of Soviet prisoners, the cruelty of German military personnel, and the failure of the Wehrmacht to comply with international obligations. The second stage covers the years 1956 – 2003. This period is considered an active phase in the scientific study of Soviet prisoners of war in the USSR and later in the post-independence period. The starting point of research is the 29 June 1956 decree of the CPSU Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, «On the Elimination of Violations of the Rights of Former Prisoners of War and Their Families», as well as the decisions of the 20th Party Congress. It should also be noted that foreign historians studied this problem significantly earlier than Soviet researchers. Among them were E. Andreeva, N. Bettl, A. Vert, D. Gerns, A. Dallin, S. Datner, N. Tolstoy, S. Frölich, I. Hoffmann, W. Shirer, and others [Dembitsky, 2004].

The issue of prisoners of war, within the scope of this research, is examined through the example of Soviet military personnel during the World War II, who constituted the largest category of victims. In connection with this issue, research based on archival materials began to emerge in the 1990s. Scholar P. Polyan, in his work, comprehensively and systematically described the fate of Soviet prisoners of war, citizens subjected to forced labor by German occupiers in Germany during World War II, deported individuals, and those who returned to the USSR after the war [Polyan, 2002]. Kazakh historian G. Kokebayeva highlighted the significance of this study, noting that «the author considers Soviet prisoners of war as defenseless victims crushed between two dictators» [Kokebayeva, 2022: 17]. Another foundational work on this topic is P. Polyan and N. Pobl's «Nam zapretili belyi svet...», which examines diaries of captured soldiers, memoirs of military personnel, and post-war issues. The core of this collection is formed by five diaries, including the diary of G.Saenko, a resident of occupied Taganrog; the accounts of two Ostarbeiters, B.Andreev and V. Baranov; the diary of former prisoner of war Vasilii Pakhomov, deported to Germany as an Ostarbeiter; and the memoirs of military prisoner Sergey Voropaev [Polyan, 2006]. These diaries represent unique primary sources, illustrating the personal experiences of civilians during the war, forced laborers, and military prisoners. One such Kazakh soldier who was captured in a Poland concentration camp was Sergey Voropaev, taken prisoner in 1943 at a young age. Voropaev kept a diary documenting the harsh conditions and strict regime of the Nazi camp. His diary serves as both a personal chronicle and a historical source, providing crucial testimony regarding the varied experiences encountered by Kazakh soldiers in the Soviet army [Prostor, 2005: 135–149]. The reliance on primary sources is a defining feature of

this work, as personal diaries and memoirs reveal subjective aspects of wartime experience that are often absent from official documents. Such sources allow the study of World War II and its aftermath not merely as a collection of political or military events, but as a reflection of daily life under occupation, the specific features of camp regimes, and the socio – psychological consequences of forced labor and imprisonment.

Although research on the history and fate of Kazakh prisoners of war in the territory of Poland has been limited within Kazakh historiography, there are nonetheless a number of domestic studies. The study of Kazakh prisoners of war developed gradually, shaped by specific historical and political circumstances. Chronologically, research begins with works produced in the immediate post-war years and continues through the period of independence, during which legal, archival, and source-based opportunities expanded. Over time, the scope and content of these studies have broadened: initially, the focus was on determining the general contribution of Kazakh participants in the war, while later research treated the issue of prisoners of war as an independent object of study. In this regard, the works discussed below highlight, in both a chronological and source-based perspective, the evolution of the study of prisoners of war in Kazakh historiography, the expansion of the documentary base, and the transformation of research methodologies.

These works include some of the earliest studies on Kazakh citizens who participated in World War II, such as those by A. Nusupbekov [Nusupbekov, 1947: 73–84], historian K.S. Aldazhumanov, articles by T.B. Balakaev [Aldazhumanov, Balakaev, 1980: 113–124], as well as the works of Abylkhodzhin and Kozybayev [Abylkhodzhin, 1997; Kozybayev, 1970].

In Kazakhstan, the study of prisoners of war was first supported legally through the Law of April 14, 1993, «On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Mass Political Repressions». In 1995, on the 50th anniversary of Victory, R.N. Nurgaliyev published the multi-volume book series *Bozdaktar – Book of Memory* [Nurgaliyev, 1995], devoted to soldiers who went missing during the war.

Further advancement in this field was achieved in 2007 with G.K. Kokebayeva's doctoral dissertation *Official Policies of Germany and the USSR on the Problem of Prisoners of War (1918–1955)*, which laid a foundation for systematic research. In 2015, the Presidential Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan launched the project *Prisoners of War in World War II*, aimed at creating a unified national database of prisoners of war. As part of this project, the multifunctional system *tutkyn.kz* (*tutkyn.kz*) was developed, designed to support comprehensive research with information resources, study the history of Soviet prisoners of war, and document the fates of Kazakh military personnel. The website includes a list of over 30,000 individuals who were held as prisoners.

In 2016, G.M. Mendikulova and A.Zh. Gabdullina published a substantial article titled «Historiography and sources of the problem of the Soviet prisoners-of-war of Kazakh ethnicity in the Second World War» [Mendikulova, Gabdullina, 2020: 10–18]. The study examines the issue of Soviet prisoners of war during World War II within both Kazakh and foreign sources and historiography. It considers works on prisoners of war in Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus, including historiographical studies. However, documents related to Soviet prisoners of war have not been thoroughly studied. In recent years, considerable efforts have been devoted to searching for missing persons. Research teams investigate battle sites, and based on the collected data, scientific articles and books are being published.

In periodical press, a comprehensive article by K.S. Aldazhumanov titled *Kazakh Soldiers in Captivity* appeared in the «Zhas Kazakh» newspaper. The article addresses the broader issue of prisoners of war and, while referencing the *Bozdaktar* book, challenges the figure of 7,046 soldiers reported as missing. Aldazhumanov estimates that the number of missing corresponds approximately to 271,503 prisoners. The article also examines conditions in the camps located in Częstochowa, Suwałki, and Legionowo in Poland. For example, it notes: «Of the 30,000 Turkic Muslim prisoners gathered in the Częstochowa camp, only two thousand survived. All others perished from typhus and other diseases» [Aldazhumanov, 2017: 11]. The study emphasizes that the German authorities' overall goal regarding prisoners of war was to exploit them for economic purposes.

In 2017, the collection *Survivors of the Hunger* was published. The book recounts the experiences and later lives of Red Army soldiers from the then South Kazakhstan region who were captured by German forces during World War II and suffered severe hardships in concentration camps.

In 2022, scholar G.K. Kokebayeva published the monograph *Fate in the Balance: Turkestan Prisoners of War*. The monograph examines the history and fate of Turkestan prisoners of war during World War II. The book is based on previously unpublished data obtained from archives in Germany, Russia, and Poland [Kokebayeva, 2022].

In 2025, a scientific project titled *The History and Experiences of Kazakh Prisoners of War in Nazi Concentration Camps in Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States* was launched under the initiative of the Ch. Ch. Ualikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology. This project represents a significant qualitative advance in Kazakh historiography concerning the study of prisoners of war. In particular, one of the project's research directions – the theoretical and spatial focus on the territory of Poland – holds special significance. This is partly due to the fact that during World War II, Poland was one of the major nodes of the Nazi concentration camp system, and partly because the concentration of Kazakh prisoners of war in this area has been insufficiently studied in the historiography [2025: 192].

Conclusion. The fate of Kazakh military prisoners of war held in concentration camps on the territory of Poland during the World War II can be fully understood only through historical research and archival data. The results of the study show that during the Soviet period, the topic of prisoners of war was ideologically «closed», with very few concrete data available, which were largely fragmented. For this reason, the life, labor conditions, suffering, and national composition of Kazakh military prisoners in Poland camps were not specially studied in Soviet historiography.

In the period of independent Kazakhstan, increased access to archival materials and the work of researchers made it possible to introduce this topic into scientific discourse. Studies by Kazakh historians, based on archival documents, memoirs, and official publications, opened the way for a systematic examination of the fate of Soviet prisoners of war, including those from Kazakhstan. These sources provide detailed information on the location of camps in Poland, the number of prisoners, camp regimes, forced labor, burial of the deceased, and even specifics regarding the prisoners' national composition.

The study has shown that the issue of Kazakh military prisoners is also significant in an international historical context, as it sheds light on the humanitarian and ethical aspects of the World War II. Moreover, scientific projects and databases developed during the years of independence (tutkyn.kz) have allowed for the systematic study of the fate of Kazakh military prisoners and for reviving their memory in the collective consciousness.

In conclusion, research on the history of Kazakh military prisoners in Poland camps is still far from complete. Future studies should focus on individual fates, the specifics of national composition, conditions in particular camps, causes of suffering, and the use of prisoners for labor. Such research is essential for restoring historical justice and preserving the memory of war victims. It will also help uncover important «historical gap» in the history of Kazakhstan and transmit the courage and heroism of war victims to future generations.

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