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**ENVIRONMENTAL, BIOLOGICAL AND GENETIC FEATURES  
OF CERTAIN POPULATIONS OF GREAT GERBIL  
(*Rhombomys opius* *Licht.*, 1823) OF KAZAKHSTAN**

**Abstract.** The main host of a number of especially dangerous zoonotic infections in the arid zones of Kazakhstan, covering an area of about 1.1 million km<sup>2</sup>, is the great gerbil (*Rhombomys opimus*). In the process of formation in natural foci of the parasitic triad (pathogen-host-vector, mutual adaptation of all its members to environmental conditions and their coevolution occurs. The article presents the results of a study of the intraspecific, population heterogeneity of ecological-biological and some genomic features of the great gerbil in three foci of zoonotic Infections: Pribalkash, Betpakdala and Predustyurt. The features of climate, soil and vegetation cover, tendencies of their perennial and seasonal changes were studied. Differences in climatic conditions and characteristics of vegetation between the 3 foci were revealed at a rather high degree of synchronization of the trend of changes in air temperature and precipitation. Analysis of the cytB gene fragment from 88 individuals from three autonomous plague foci identified 19 haplotypes that form three haplogroups, one of which is represented by individuals from the populations of two autonomous plague foci. Populations of great gerbils from Kazakhstan and China are included in the same cluster and are genetically distant from the populations of Iran. Geographic isolation, significant differences in climatic, landscape, and forage conditions, microevolutionary changes in the genomic status determined the heterogeneity of three described populations of the great gerbil. A growing negative impact on the population of the great gerbil and the epizootic status of natural foci of climate warming and an increasing anthropogenic pressure, primarily in the form of overgrazing, on natural phytocenoses was noted.

**Key words:** great gerbil (*Rhombomys opimus* *Licht.*, 1823), population genetics, microevolutionary factors, cytochrome b gene polymorphism, ecological and biological features.

**Introduction.** The relevance of this study of the great gerbil populations is due to two circumstances: the importance of this species in the functioning of arid ecosystems occupying about 44% of the territory of Kazakhstan, and the fact that this rodent is a carrier of especially dangerous zoonotic infections, in particular, plague, anthrax and other diseases that pose a danger to humans, domestic and wild animals [1,2].

Despite the keen interest from researchers, many important questions about the biology of great gerbil, including its subspecies differentiation, interpopulation relations in various parts of their range, many aspects of ethology, genetics and phenetic characteristics of populations that determine the specificity of their relationships with pathogens and carriers of infections remain low studied [3,4]. Data

on the genomic characteristics of the great gerbil populations from ecologically and biologically different natural foci are of fundamental importance [5,6].

Based on the foregoing, the purpose of our study was to analyze the polymorphism of the cytochrome b gene of mitochondrial DNA in great gerbils, to study changes in ecological conditions, in particular, the long-term, annual and monthly dynamics of air temperature and precipitation, dynamics of biomass of

herbaceous vegetation from the habitats of three populations of gerbils from the Pribalkhash, Betpakdala and Predustyurt autonomous natural foci.

**Materials and Methods.** The material for the study was DNA samples isolated from the liver of great gerbils from 3 autonomous foci of the Central Asian natural desert plague focus of Kazakhstan: Pribalkhash, Betpakdala and Ustyurt (figure 1).

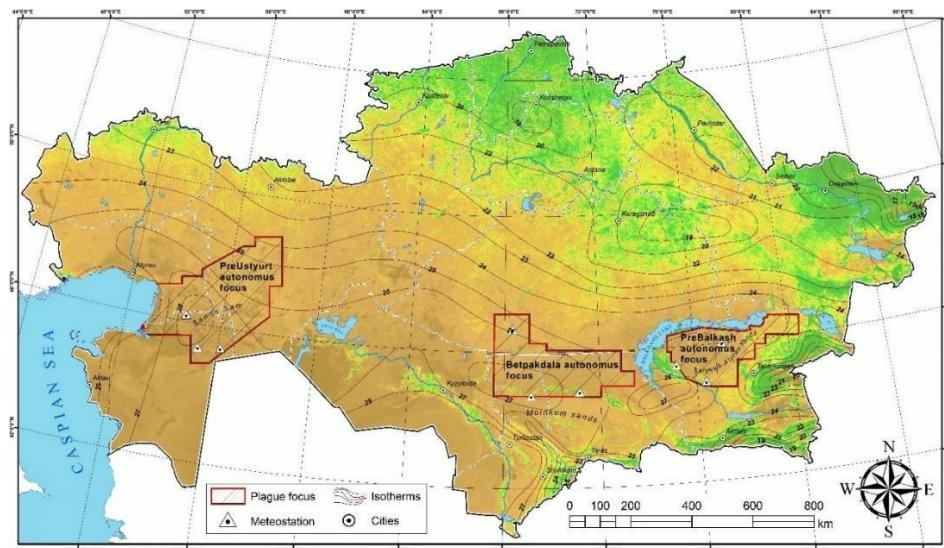


Figure 1 – Map of Kazakhstan with the contours of the Pribalkhash, Betpakdala and Predustyurt autonomous plague foci, isotherms and the location of meteorological stations in the surveyed areas.

Note that the Betpakdala (No. 42) and Predustyurt (No. 19) natural foci are not isolated by natural barriers. The space separating them, with a width of about 700 km, includes several autonomous natural foci of a sandy type, while the Pribalkhash focus is isolated by obstacles that are insurmountable for gerbils: Lake Balkash, large rivers Ile and Karatal. To analyze climatic conditions in the investigated foci, data from 9 meteorological stations (MS) located in the surveyed territory were used (figure 1).

Changes in meteorological conditions in the Preustyurt source are described using averaged data from three MS: Sam, Beineu, Borankol. In the Betpakdala focus, averaged MS data were taken: Tasty; Ulanbel; Kyzylkum, and in the Pribalkhash focus MS: Bakanas; Akzhar. Additionally, wind speed, humidity, temperature, and atmospheric pressure were measured in the territories of gerbil colonies using a portable weather station, model Kestrel 4500NV. The coordinates of the surveyed points were recorded using a Garmin 62 GPS navigator.

Due to the fact that the number of populations of the plague parasitic triad is directly influenced by the amount of precipitation, temperature and the abundance of vegetation in the surveyed area, the vegetation index, NDVI, was also determined. Considering the vast territory, 16-day averaged NDVIs with a resolution of 500 meters of the MODIS-MOD13A1v006 spacecraft were selected [7]. We used NDVI data from the official website AppEEARS (The Application for Extracting and Exploring Analysis Ready Samples) [8].

The capture of *R. opimus* specimens for genomic studies was carried out within the framework of the state program for monitoring natural focal infections, and therefore no approval of the ethical committee was required. A total of 88 great gerbils were captured from three independent population groups. South Pribalkhash region 20 individuals from 3 points: N44° 49' 460" E76° 15' 558" - 10 individuals (I-B1 – I-B12); N44° 48' 948" E76°15' 528" - 7 individuals (I-B14 – I-B22); N44° 48' 827" E76°15' 802" – 3 individuals (I-B23 - I-B25). In Western Betpakdala, 29 individuals were caught from one geographical area N45°10', E68° 00' (I-Sh1 – I-SH30). Eastern Predustyurt - 39 individuals were caught from 6 geographical points: N46°52'54", E59°32'43" - 5 individuals (I-A1 - I-A5); N46°58'31", E59°33'24" - 8 individuals (I-A6 - I-A15); N46°57'57", E60°16'53" – 3 individuals (I-A16 - I-A19); N46°59'06", E60° 24'38" – 5 individuals (I-A21 - I-A25); N47°38'19", E58° 49'43" – 4 individuals (I-A26 - I-A31); N46°48'35", E59° 17'15" – 14 individuals (I-A32 - I-A49).

DNA isolation was performed using the QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (Qiagen).

Fragment of the *cytB* gene, 578 bp in length (excluding primers) was amplified using primers UNFOR403 and UNREV1025 [9]. The reaction PCR mixture included: 75 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.8 at 25°C), 20 mM (NH4) 2SO4, 0.01% (v / v) Tween 20, 2.5 mM MgCl2, 2 units Taq DNA Polymerase (Thermo Scientific, EP0402), 0.2 mM each dNTP, 0.5 µM each primer and 3 ng. *R. opimus* DNA. The PCR amplification program included: long-term denaturation at 95°C for 5 minutes; 35 cycles 95°C - 20 seconds, 59°-30 seconds, 72°C - 1 minute; final elongation 7 minutes at 72°C.

PCR products were purified by enzymatic method using Exonuclease I (Thermo Scientific) and alkaline phosphatase (Shrimp Alkaline Phosphatase, Applide Biosystems) [10]. The sequencing reaction was performed using the BigDye® Terminator v3.1 Cycle Sequencing Kit (Applide Biosystems) and primers used for PCR amplification according to the manufacturer's instructions. Fragments were separated on an automatic genetic analyzer 3730xl DNA Analyzer (Applide Biosystems). Quality assessment and assembly into contigs was performed using SeqScape 2.6.0 (Applied Biosystems). Phylogenetic analysis was performed using the MEGA 7.0 software using the highest likelihood Tamura 3-parameter model, discrete Gamma distribution and Bootstrap 1000 [11].

**Results.** The distribution area of great gerbils covers arid and semi-arid regions of central and southern Asia: from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan to southern Mongolia and northwestern China [12<sup>i</sup>]. Based on the characteristics of the life strategy, the great gerbil should be attributed to the colonial, family-group species with limited settlement and movement, especially in the presence of pronounced geographical barriers. Natural landscapes in the form of mountain ranges and water barriers can act as barriers; in addition, large spaces act as a natural barrier between populations, since the great gerbil leads a geographically linked life cycle. According to A.F. Alekseeva, 1974 [13] according to the mobility of great gerbils in the northwestern Kyzyl Kum from August 1959 to April 1961, 723 individuals out of 846 tagged gerbils were recaptured. Of these, 425 rodents did not change their "colony", 135 large gerbils moved at a distance of 10–100 m, 102 gerbils - at 101–200 m, 36 individuals - at 301–650 m, 10 rodents - at 651–1000 m, and 1 male the great gerbil retired 7 km in 23 months.

In 2012-2014, in the spring-summer and autumn seasons in the Southern Pribalkhash, we carried out studies of the motor and migratory activity of the great gerbil by modern methods using radio technology and remote sensing, which made it possible to obtain approximately the same results. Inhabitants of open spaces of deserts and semi-deserts with their sparse vegetation, large gerbils cannot go far from colonies without the risk of becoming easy prey for land and winged predators [14]. Thus, we can say that great gerbils are usually tied to their colonies and rarely migrate from them in search of new habitats over sufficiently large (tens of kilometers) distances. However, long-term and profound climate changes, extinction of competitive species, and other large-scale events in biogeocenoses can probably cause larger-scale mass migrations of these animals. At the same time, complete or partial isolation of populations can lead to their differentiation and the formation of specific genetic characteristics, resulting in the formation of a specific metapopulation structure of their area.

**Temperature dynamics and population size of the great gerbil.** According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an increase in surface air temperature has been observed in most regions of the world since the mid-20th century. The growth of average annual air temperatures in certain regions of Kazakhstan for the period 1941 ... 2010. ranged from 0.27 °C / 10 years (Balkash-Alakol basin, on the territory of which the Pribalkhash autonomous focus is located) to 0.33 °C / 10 years (Zhaiyk-Caspian basin, on the territory of which the Predustyurt focus is located). A more significant increase in average annual air temperatures of -0.44 °C / 10 years was noted in the Shu-Talas basin, where the Betpakdala autonomous focus is located. For the period 1971 ... 2010 the highest rates of temperature increase were observed in winter and spring periods - by 0.51 and 0.47 °C / 10 years, respectively, slightly lower than the rate of warming in autumn - by 0.40 °C / 10 years. In summer, the increase in air temperature was 0.22 °C / 10 years [15].

The specificity of the climatic conditions of the territory of all three surveyed autonomous foci consists in the sharp continental and arid climate. This is expressed in significant daily and annual temperature fluctuations and in a small amount of atmospheric precipitation (100-280 mm) with high evaporation (up to 1000-1200 mm) and in a significant dryness of the air. The sum of temperatures above

10°C in the described natural foci ranges from 3100°C to 3860°C. The consequence of this is the weak development of the natural hydrographic network. The level of solar radiation and the nature of the atmospheric circulation are determined by the geographical position of the territory - a relatively low latitude and distance from water basins (the influence of the Caspian Sea and Lake Balkash affects only within a narrow coastal strip). All three natural foci lie in the zone of northern deserts, approximately at the same latitude; however, the orographic and insolation features of the territory determine a noticeable variety of local systems of atmospheric circulation and, accordingly, climatic conditions (figure 2).

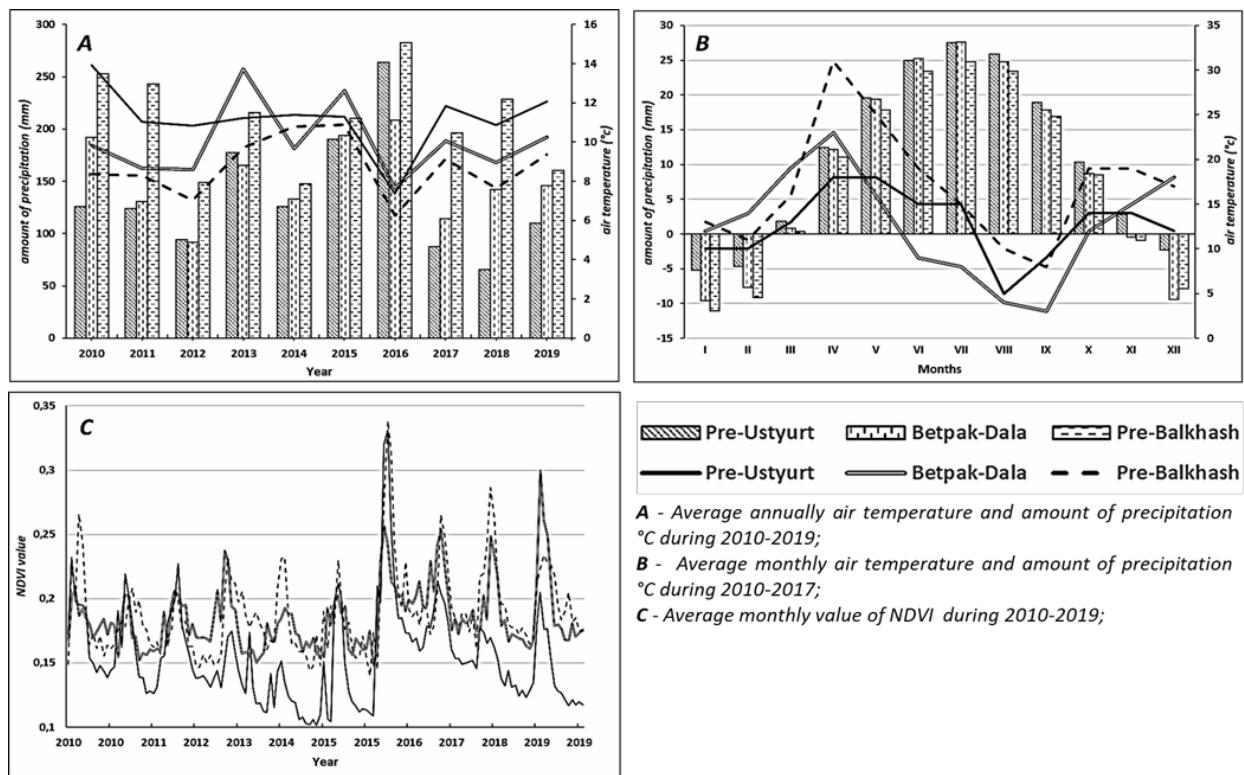


Figure 2 – Climatic conditions and NDVI values of study areas for the period 2010-2019

In January, on some days in the surveyed areas, severe frosts are possible, reaching -40-44°

C. Spring in all natural foci is short and lasts about one and a half months. Already in March, there is a sharp rise in the average temperature, by 7-8 °C compared to February, and intensive heating of the soil. In April, frost-free, mostly sunny weather prevails in the desert zone. Daily temperature amplitudes reach + 16-20 °C. Weather anomalies are of great importance for arid biocenoses. So, in the spring, along with an increase in temperature during breakthroughs of the Arctic air masses, returns of cold weather and the establishment of temporary snow cover are possible. In summer, most of the country is captured by the northern periphery of the thermal depression with a predominance of hot dry weather and weak wind. On some days, the temperature exceeds 38-44 °C, with high wind speed and 5-15% relative humidity. Higher average air temperatures during the warm period of the year are typical for the Predustyurt and Betpapkala foci in comparison with the Pribalkhash. During the cold period of the year, especially low temperatures are characteristic of the Betpapkala and Pribalkhash foci (figure 2b).

In all three foci, the frequency of hot and dry weather varies between 75-85%. When the arctic air invades the anticyclones, atmospheric drought occurs for 10-40 days. Forming soil drought and in combination with it, atmospheric drought leads to a sharp decrease in the forage capacity of natural phytocenoses, which is one of the factors in the depression of the population of the great gerbil. Summer lasts 5 months on average, from May to September. In the annual course of atmospheric precipitation, the maximum in the Predustyurt focus falls in April-July, and the second maximum precipitation is observed in autumn, in October-November, in Betpapkala, in March-May and October-December, in Balkhash, in March-July and October-December (figure 2a). That is, it coincides with the vegetation maximum of

desert vegetation. The minimum precipitation is observed in August and September. The negative consequences of excessive pasture loads on the plant communities of the studied deserts are expressed in the form of pasture digression, which is accompanied by a decrease in the projective cover of the soil with vegetation, a decrease in biological and forage productivity, as well as a decrease in biodiversity. According to our assessment, the modern economic use of natural pastures is characterized as unsystematic. The vegetation is characterized by a rather uneven state: from heavily knocked down to partially restored.

Due to overgrazing, regulation of river flow, laying of linear systems (gas and oil pipelines, roads, power lines), frequent droughts and other factors, the process of desertification is intensively developing on most natural pastures. The phytocenoses of the natural pastures of the Pribalkhash focus, to a lesser extent, the Betpakdala autonomous focus, are the most degraded due to the excessive load. On the natural pastures of the Predustyurt focus, dimutational processes of partial restoration of downed vegetation are visible, which is a consequence of a sharp decrease in the number of livestock in the region.

**Genetic diversity of *R. opimus*.** A total of 19 unique haplotypes were identified by a fragment of the nucleotide sequence of the *Cyt B* gene. Of the 578 analyzed bases, 37 accounted for transitions, and four polymorphisms for transversions, 8 of the analyzed polymorphisms lead to amino acid substitution. 19 haplotypes were clustered into 3 haplogroups (figure 3). The first haplogroup included 7 haplotypes of individuals caught in the Eastern Predustyurt region, 2 haplogroup is represented by 2 haplotypes of individuals caught in the Eastern Predustyurt region and 4 haplotypes from individuals caught in Western Betpakdala, 3 haplogroup is represented by 6 haplotypes of the individuals caught in the South Pribalkhash region.

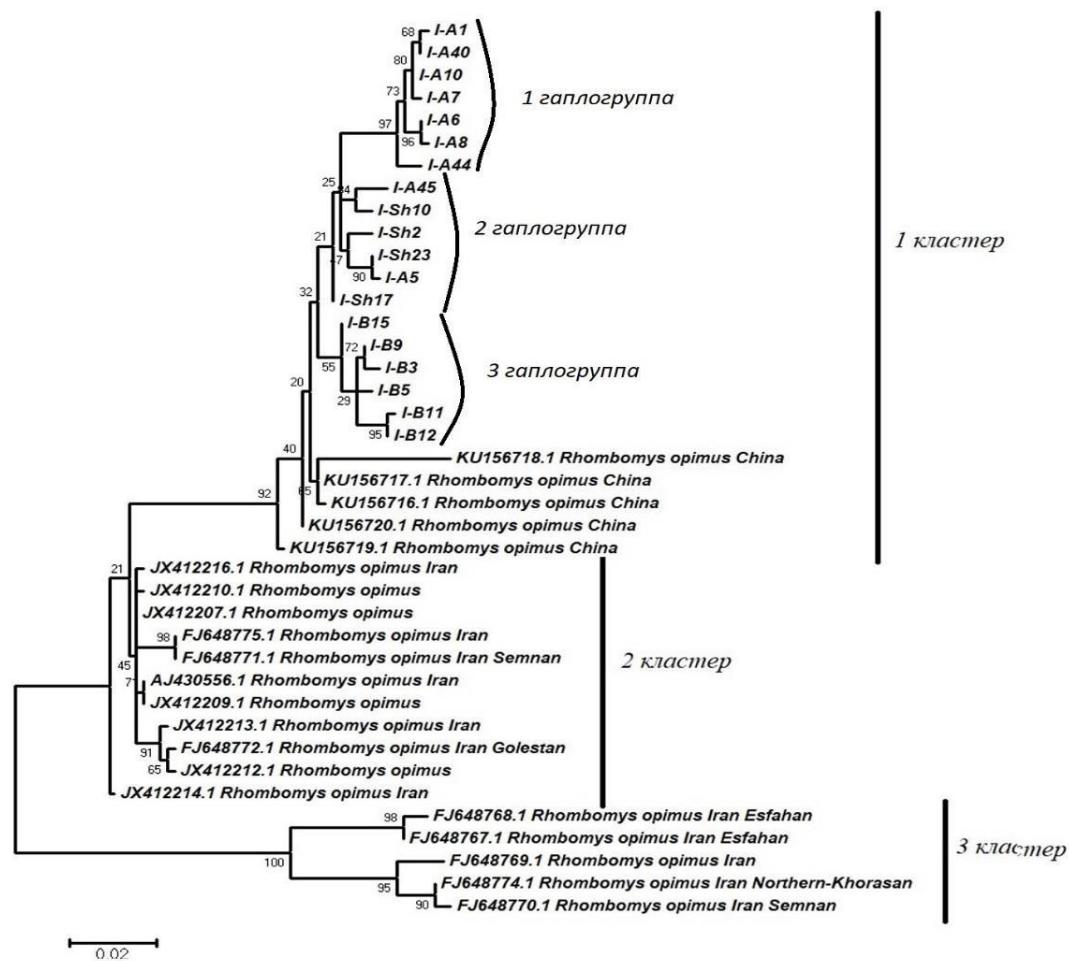


Figure 3 – The phylogenetic tree, built on the basis of nucleotide sequence analysis *Cyt B* gene of *R. opimus* captured in Kazakhstan, China and Iran [16]

Phylogenetic analysis with nucleotide sequences of 19 haplotypes established in Kazakhstan and nucleotide sequences of *Cyt B* of the *R. opimus* gene captured in Iran and China formed three large clusters (figure 3). The first cluster combined the sequences of *R. opimus* caught in Kazakhstan and China, while the great gerbil caught in Kazakhstan is located in a separate clade. The second cluster is represented by the nucleotide sequences of the subspecies *R. opimus sodalis* from the "Sistano-Baluchistan" regional complex from the territory of Iran. The third cluster includes only sequences subspecies *R. opimus sargadensis* from the "Central Iranian" regional complex located in Iran. The Elbrus mountain system is a natural barrier between the two subspecies, which are well differentiated by morphological characteristics, as well as by differences in the nucleotide sequence of the *cyt B* gene, which reaches 10% between subspecies.

**Conclusions.** Analysis of climatic features revealed pronounced differences between the three autonomous foci with a rather high degree of synchronization of the trend of changes in air temperature and precipitation. At the same time, it should be noted a significant warming of the climate by 1.890C - 3.080C from 1941 to the present. The greatest increase in air temperature was noted on the territory of the Betpakdala focus, less in the area of the Predustyurt focus and the smallest in the Pribalkhash focus. Since the examined natural foci lie in the zone of northern deserts, tendencies of changes in the amount and regime of precipitation were of particular importance for vegetation. For the period 1941 ... 2010, the amount of precipitation in the Predustyurt and Betpakdala autonomous foci slightly decreased, while in the Pribalkhash focus there was a slight increase in precipitation. On average in Kazakhstan, an increase in the amount of winter precipitation and a decrease in the amount of precipitation in other seasons were noted.

A close relationship is known between climate and the spread of infectious diseases [17]. Naturally, the periods of intensive reproduction of the great gerbil were recorded simultaneously over vast territories and correspond to the cyclicity of the maximum amount of precipitation and the optimum temperature for vegetation growth [18]. In years when during the cold months anomalously high precipitation, on average more than 100 mm, fell out, the most intensive reproduction of great gerbils was noted. Less intensive reproduction took place in years with rainfall close to the norm (63-70 mm). Low intensity of reproduction is typical for dry years with 37.5 mm of precipitation. The most favorable conditions for the spread of plague in the settlements of the great gerbil arise in years with warm and humid springs with abundant vegetation [19].

The study of the nature of the soil and vegetation cover on the territory of the three surveyed autonomous foci on multi-temporal satellite images with control showed that the vegetation index (NDVI) adequately reflects the state of food resources of phytocenoses in the habitats of the great gerbil and correlates with the temperature regime and precipitation (Figure 2c). Analysis of the average monthly fluctuations in the amount of precipitation in the territory of the three surveyed foci shows a synchronous regime and rather close values of air temperature in the warm season (IV - X) and noticeable differences in the cold season (XI - III). At the same time, pronounced differences are found in the average monthly amount and mode of precipitation (Figure 2b). Based on the analysis of high-resolution satellite images at different times and geobotanical work in the area, the processes of degradation of vegetation and desertification of ecosystems were described, expressed in the depletion of their floristic composition, the progressive loss of perennial forage plants from the grass stand with the dominance of annuals. The causes of desertification were, first of all, overgrazing of livestock, growing moisture content of the soil and air. The observed climate changes and the intensifying anthropogenic impact cause a negative transformation of desert ecosystems and entail a depression in the abundance of the great gerbil.

Thus, genomic differences were formed in the studied foci in the studied populations of great gerbils as a result of microevolutionary processes caused by genetic and ecological factors.

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## ҚАЗАҚСТАНДА МЕКЕНДЕЙТИН ҰЛКЕН ҚҰМТЫШҚАННЫҢ (*Rhombomys opimus* Licht., 1823) КЕЙБІР ПОПУЛЯЦИЯСЫНЫҢ ЭКОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ-БИОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ГЕНЕТИКАЛЫҚ ЕРЕКШЕЛЕКТЕРИ

**Аннотация.** XXI ғасырдағы жаһандану барысында қауіпті инфекциялардың табиғи ошағындағы контрагиозды инфекциядан туындағының эпидемиологиялық қауіп артты, сол себепті көптеген ғалымдардың назары әнзоотикалық аумақтардағы паразиттік жүйелер аспектісін зерттеуге бағытталып отыр. Ұлкен құмтыштан популяциясын зерттеудің өзектілігі екі бағытпен сипатталады: Қазақстанның 1,1 млн км<sup>2</sup> аумағын алғып жатқан аридті экосистемадағы аталған түрдің маңызы, екінші жағынан аталған түр аса қауіпті инфекциялардың табиғи ошағында адамға, жабайы және үй жануарына зиянды сібір жарасы мен оба таратады. Табиғи ошактарда паразитті триаданың (қоздырушы – таратушы – тасымалдаушы) қалыптасуы барысында барлық мүшелерінің орта жағдайына бейімделіп, қоеволюция жүреді.

Ұлкен құмтыштан колониясында әрдайым аса қауіпті инфекциялар тіршілік етеді, олар кейде бүкіл құмтыштан колониясының қырылуына себеп болады. Ғалымдар қызыгуышылық тудырса да, ұлкен құмтышқан биологиясының көптеген маңызды мәселелері, әсіресе, түршілік диференциациясы, мекен ету ареалындағы популяциялардың қарым-қатынасы, популяцияның генетикалық және фенетикалық ерекшеліктері әлсіз зерттелген.

Казіргі уақытта ұлкен құмтышқанның түрлі экологиялық-биологиялық аумақтарда орналасқан ошағында қалыптасқан түрлерінің филогенетикалық мәліметтері және олардың паразитті үштіктің басқа мүшелерімен арақатынасын анықтау ұлкен маңызға ие. Бұл теориялық және практикалық маңызы бар сұраптардың жауабын алу үшін класикалық экологиялық-биологиялық және морфобиологиялық әдістермен қоса, соңғы жылдары генетикалық және молекулярлық-биологиялық әдістер кең қолданылып келеді.

Мақалада үш географиялық өкшашуланған ошактағы (Бетпақдала, Балқаш маңы және Үстірт маңы) ұлкен құмтышқан геномының популяциялық ерекшеліктерін зерттеу нәтижелері көрсетілген. Жогарыда аталып отынен автономды ошактағы ұлкен құмтышқанның митохондриальді ДНҚ-ның в цитохром ген полиморфизміне анализ жасалды. Ұлкен құмтышқанның мекен ету ортасындағы санының өзгеруіне («популяциялқ толқын») әсер ететін экологиялық-биологиялық жағдайының, оның ішінде ауа температурасы мен жауыншашын мөлшері, шөптектес өсімдік жамылғысы биомассасының айлық, жылдық және көпжылдық динамикасының өзгеруіне анализ жасалды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде үш табиғи ошактың климаттық жағдайы мен қоректік өсімдік жамылғысының айырмашылықтары анықталды. Бетпақдала және Үстірт маңы табиғи ошактары өзара табиғи бөгетпен бөлінбегендігі анықталды. Балқаш маңы табиғи ошактың құмтышқандар миграция барысында асып өте алмайтын табиғи кедергілермен, яғни Іле және Қаратаң өзендерімен және Балқаш көлімен өкшашуланған. Әрбір ошактағы метео жағдайлардың өзгеруі үш метеостанция мәлеметтерінің орташалануы негізінде сипатталған. Құмтышқан колониясында косымша Kestrel 4500NV портотивті метеостанция арқылы атмосфералық қысым, желдің жылдамдығы, ылғалдылық, ауа температурасы өлшеннеді. Зерттелген нүктө координаталары Garmin 62 GPS- навигаторы арқылы бекітілді. Жылы мезгілдегі ауаның орташа температурасы Үстірт маңы мен Бетпақдала ошағында Балқаш маңы ошағына қаралғанда жоғары болатындығы көрсетілді. Жылдың сүйк мезгілінде ең төменгі ауа температурасы анықталды. Бетпақдала мен Балқаш маңына сәйкестігі көрсетілді.

Үстірт маңы ошағында атмосфералық жауын-шашынның жылдық үлесіндегі бірінші максимум сәуіршілде айна, ал екінші максимум күзде, қазан-қараша айна сәйкес келеді, Бетпақдала ошағында максимум наурыз-мамыр және қазан-желтоқсан айна, Балқаш маңы ошағында наурыз-шілде және қазан-қараша айна сәйкес келеді. Бұл шөлді аймактардағы өсімдіктердің вегетациялық максимумына сәйкес келеді. Обаның паразитті триада санына ауа температурасы, жауын-шашын мөлшері мен өсімдік жамылғы көлемінің әсер етуіне байланысты косымша NDVI вегетациялық индексі анықталды. Зерттелетін аумақтың ұлкендігін ескеріп, MODIS-MOD13A1v006 космостық аппаратының 16 күндік орташаланған NDVI 500 көрсеткішпен алынды.

Қазақстанның жер көлемінің шамамен 1,1 млн шаршы шақырымын алғып жатқан аридті аймактардағы қауіпті зооноздық инфекциялардың негізгі тасымалдаушысы – ұлкен құмтышқан (*Rhombomys opimus*). Табиғи ошактарда паразитті триаданың (қоздырушы – таратушы – тасымалдаушы) қалыптасуы барысында

барлық мүшесінің орта жағдайына бейімделіп, қоэволюция журеді. Макалада занозды инфекциялардың үш табиғи ошағындағы (Бетпақдала, Балқаш маңы, Үстірт маңы) үлкен құмтышқанның түрішілік, популяциялық гетерогенді келетінін және кейбір геномдық ерекшеліктерін зерттеу нәтижелері көрсетілген. Сондай-ақ зерттелген аумақта климат және өсімдік-топырақ жамылғысының ерекшеліктері мен олардың көпжылдық және маусымдық өзгерістері, тенденциялары зерттелді. Жауын-шашын мен ауа температурасы өзгеріс трендтерінің жоғарғы синхронизациясына аталған үш табиғи ошақтың климаттық жағдайы мен топырақ-өсімдік жамылғысының айырмашылығы анықталды. Үш автономды ошақтан алынған үлкен құмтышқанның 88 данасының *cytB* генінің фрагменті 19 гаплотипті көрсетті. Бұл гаплотиптер өзара үш гаплогруппа құрайды. Қазақстан мен Қытайдың үлкен құмтышқан популяциясы бір кластерге жатады және генетикалық түрғыда Иран популяциясынан окшауланған. Географиялық окшаулық, климаттық, ландшафттық және коректік жағдайлардың ерекшелігі, геномдық орнының микроефолюциялық өзгерісі сипатталатын үш популяцияның гетерогенділігін анықтады. Үлкен құмтышқан популяциясына және табиғи ошақтардың өзиоотологиялық дәрежесіне көрі әсердің ұлғайғаны анықталды. Табиғи фитоценоздарға антропогенді қысым малды шамадан тыс жайғандықтан артып отыр.

**Түйін сөздер:** үлкен құмтышқан (*Rhombomys opimus* Licht., 1823), популяциялық генетика, микроэволюция факторлары, б цитохромы генінің полиморфизмі, экологиялық-биологиялық ерекшеліктер.

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## ЭКОЛОГО-БИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ И ГЕНЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ НЕКОТОРЫХ ПОПУЛЯЦИЙ БОЛЬШОЙ ПЕСЧАНКИ (*Rhombomys opimus* Licht., 1823) КАЗАХСТАНА

**Аннотация.** Учитывая, что в процессе глобализации в XXI-ом веке резко возросли эпидемиологические риски контагиозных инфекций из природных очагов, интересы исследователей из многих стран направлены в настоящее время на изучение различных аспектов паразитарных систем на энзоотичных территориях. Актуальность исследований популяций большой песчанки (*Rhombomys opimus*), обусловлена двумя обстоятельствами: значением данного вида в функционировании аридных экосистем, занимающих в Казахстане площадь около 1,1 млн. км<sup>2</sup>, и тем, что этот массовый вид является основным носителем в природных очагах особо опасных зоонозных инфекций, в частности, чумы, сибирской язвы и других заболеваний, представляющих опасность для человека, домашних и диких животных. Известно, что для классических природных очагов особо опасных зоонозных инфекций характерен исторический процесс формирования т.н. паразитарной триады (возбудитель – переносчик – носитель), адаптация и қоэволюция всех ее членов к средовым условиям. Именно в колониях песчанок, особенно большой песчанки, перманентно персистируют возбудители особо опасных инфекций, вызывающие, в том числе, эпизоотии среди самих песчанок, иногда уничтожающие население целых колоний этих зверьков. Несмотря на пристальный интерес со стороны исследователей, многие важные вопросы биологии большой песчанки, включая ее подвидовую дифференциацию, межпопуляционные отношения в различных частях ареала, ряд этологических аспектов, генетические и фенетические характеристики популяций, определяющие специфичность их взаимоотношений с возбудителями и переносчиками инфекций, существенным образом определяющие уровень энзоотичности природных очагов, остаются слабо изученными. Принципиальное значение имеют данные о филогении различных подвидовых образований большой песчанки из различных в эколого-биологическом отношении природных очагов и взаимосвязанных с ними других сочленов паразитарной триады. Для выяснения этих, важных в теоретическом и практическом отношении вопросов, наряду с классическими эколого-биологическими и морфологическими методами, в последние годы активно используются генетические и молекулярно-биологические методы.

В статье представлены результаты исследования популяционных особенностей генома большой песчанки из трех географически изолированных автономных природных очагов: Прибалхашского, Бетпакда-

линского и Предустюртского. Выполнен анализ полиморфизма гена цитохрома b митохондриальной ДНК больших песчанок, а также изучена многолетняя динамика изменений эколого-биологических условий их местообитаний, определяющих колебания численности («популяционные волны») песчанок, в частности многолетняя, годовая и месячная динамика температуры воздуха и количества осадков, колебания биомассы травянистой растительности в описываемых автономных природных очагах. Были выявлены различия климатических условий и особенностей вегетации кормовой растительности между 3-мя очагами при довольно высокой степени синхронизации тренда изменений температуры воздуха и осадков. Выяснилась важная роль того, что Бетпакдалинский и Предустюртский природные очаги не изолированы естественными преградами. Тогда как Прибалкашский природный очаг изолирован непреодолимыми для миграции песчанок преградами: озером Балхаш, большими реками Иле и Карагатал. Изменения метеоусловий в каждом из очагов описаны по усредненным данным трех метеостанций. Дополнительно на территориях колоний песчанок с помощью портативной метеостанции модели Kestrel 4500NV измерялись скорость ветра, влажность, температура, атмосферное давление. Координаты обследованных точек регистрировались с помощью GPS-навигатора Garmin 62. Было показано, что более высокие средние температуры воздуха в теплый период года типичны для Предустюртского и Бетпакдалинского очагов по сравнению с Прибалхашским. В холодный период года особенно низкие температуры характерны для Бетпакдалинского и Прибалхашского очагов. В годовом ходе атмосферных осадков первый максимум в Предустюртском очаге приходится на апрель-июль, а второй максимум осадков наблюдается осенью – в октябре-ноябре, в Бетпакдалинском очаге максимумы осадков приходятся на март-май и октябрь-декабрь, в Балхашском – на март-июль и октябрь-декабрь, т.е., совпадает с вегетационным максимумом пустынной растительности. В связи с тем, что на численность популяций чумной паразитарной триады непосредственно влияют количество осадков, температура и обилие растительности на обследованной территории, также определялся вегетационный индекс – NDVI. Учитывая большую площади обследованных территорий, были выбраны 16-ти дневные усреднённые NDVI с разрешением 500 метров космического аппарата MODIS-MOD13A1v006.

Филогенетический анализ фрагмента *cytB* гена от 88 особей из трех автономных очагов чумы определил 19 гаплотипов, которые формируют три гаплогруппы, одна из которых представлена особями из популяций двух автономных очагов чумы. Популяции больших песчанок из Казахстана и Китая входят в один кластер и генетически отделены от популяций Ирана. Более или менее выраженная географическая изоляция, значительные отличия в климатических, ландшафтных и кормовых условиях, микроэволюционные изменения геномного статуса обусловили гетерогенность трех описываемых популяций большой песчанки. Отмечено растущее негативное воздействие на популяции большой песчанки и эпизоотический статус природных очагов потепления климата и усиливающийся антропогенный пресс, на кормовые ресурсы естественных фитоценозов природных очагов, прежде всего, в форме перевыпаса скота.

**Ключевые слова:** большая песчанка (*Rhombomys opimus* Licht., 1823), популяционная генетика, факторы микроэволюции, полиморфизм гена цитохрома b, эколого-биологические особенности.

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