

## Some Problems of Repatriation and Adaptation of Representatives Of the Kazakh Diaspora of Central Asia in the Historic Homeland

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**Abstract:** In the article, the authors examine some objective and subjective reasons for resettlement of Kazakh repatriates from Central Asia to their historic homeland after Kazakhstan's independence, their settling around the regions and population. Besides, the article considers the problems of traditional culture of the representatives of the Kazakh Diaspora and their social status. The issues of the current status of the Kazakh Diaspora, the loss of certain elements of their traditional culture and native language are raised. In this paper, the authors analyze the directions of the development strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which provides comprehensive support for the Kazakhs, helping them to resettle in their historical homeland. Special attention is paid to statistics on repatriates and problems of their adaptation to changing conditions in a traditional or non-traditional alien habitat. The authors point out that repatriates often face the language problem. These difficulties are caused not only by the lack of knowledge of the Russian language by some repatriates (Russian language in Kazakhstan has the status of a language of international communication and is widespread along with the Kazakh language).

**Key words:** Diaspora • Refugees • Repatriation • Resettlement • Settling • Adaptation

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### INTRODUCTION

Many articles and research works are devoted to investigation of the historical processes that have shaped and developed the Kazakh diaspora, their return to historic homeland and the problems of socio-economic, political, cultural and social adaptation in the ancestral land. For example, the main results and theoretical concepts were studied in the works by A.N. Nysanbaeva, Z. Kinayatuly, N. Muhamedhanuly, G.M. Mendikulova, *et al.* These studies have revealed the features of socio-cultural habitat of the Kazakh Diaspora in various countries of the world, objective reasons for relocation from their historical homeland, the differences in mentality, which affected the perception of Kazakhstan reality at relocation and timing of adaptation and integration of repatriates. The problems of Kazakh diaspora and repatriates are of interest not only for domestic researchers but for foreign scholars as well. For example, in the American ("Western") academic

researches, the question of "oralmans" (returnees) often appears in the context of contemporary politics of Kazakhstan, rather than in the light of broader migration processes [1]. A lot of attention is drawn to oralmans in the work by Dave Bhavna [2] and Eftihia Voutira [3]. Another work of this author analyzes and considers the socio-economic status of returnees and refers to the relation between their return and the political situation of the country [4]. Another foreign author Isik Kusu in his book writes that ethnic conditions of return have the demographic, cultural and economic values that deeply affect every citizen, living in Kazakhstan [5].

Kazakh diaspora is part of the Kazakh people; its has a single ancestral homeland – Kazakhstan, but because of the internal and foreign political events in the past, at the moment its representatives live in more than 40 countries. Migration of the Kazakhs from the historic homeland was associated with many historical events, particularly with the invasion of Dzungarian troops; besides among the reasons were the colonial and migration policy of Russia,

national liberation uprising in 1916 in Kazakhstan, the collectivization of 1926-1928, famine in 1932 and etc. For example in his work, Henry Schwartz writes: "Inconsistency in the actions of the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Bukhara military leaders and the rapidity and suddenness of oirats' (Mongols) attack have led to the destruction of some Kazakh tribes and the seizure of several settled bases in Syrdarya River, so the Kazakhs had to leave their homes " [6] p. 19). Also, the famine in early 1930-ies contributed to migration of 350 thousand more people from Kazakhstan to China and neighboring countries [7]. This is also described in the work of Ohayon, Isabelle [8].

At present, the main hub of ethnic Kazakhs is Central Asia. Most of the Kazakh Diaspora, according to official data consisting of 831200 people [9], lives in Uzbekistan, about 98 thousand Kazakhs live in Turkmenistan, 42657 Kazakhs - in Kyrgyzstan and about two thousand - in Tajikistan [10, p. 4].

**Problems with the Return of the Kazakh Diaspora to the Historic Homeland:** In 1992 after the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, President N. Nazarbayev appealed to all foreign Kazakhs to return to their historical homeland, Kazakhstan. For this, the government has established special institutions, such as the "Committee on Migration" at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, whose main task is to implement the policy of the state in relation to migration and return of "co-ethnic citizens". This government agency was the primary agency responsible for immigration and integration of Kazakh Diaspora since 2004 (in 2004 it was replaced by the Committee of the Migration Police of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs) [11].

It is from these countries, that our nationals return to the ancestral homeland after the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, both based on the quota and not. This is facilitated, on the one hand, by the support of the state and on the other hand, the complication of the internal political, social and economic conditions in the countries where they live. For example, the reasons are the lack of social protection, violation of the political rights of the Kazakhs, the belittling of their social status, the deteriorating financial situation, the closure of schools where education is given in the Kazakh language and etc. For example, in Uzbekistan due to the transition to the Latin alphabet the number of Kazakh schools has reduced. For one year (1999) 10 Kazakh schools were closed and more than 20 thousand Kazakh children were transferred to the Uzbek schools [12].

Due to the above reasons in 1997, Kazakhs made up 0.8% and in 1996 - 1.2% of the total population, who left Uzbekistan. Also, according to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in school year 2002-2003, there were 157,863 students and 581 Kazakh and mixed schools with Kazakh language. And in 2006-2007, from the reduced 521 schools, only 234 were Kazakh schools. There were only 102,372 students in these schools as it was noted in the study [13 p. 197].

For five years, the number of Kazakh schools has fallen by half and the remaining 61,873 students study in the Kazakh language [14, p. 29]. Among Kazakhs, especially among youth and women, unemployment has increased; among people with secondary education it is 50-60%, in Karakalpakstan, 70% of the working population are unemployed [15, p. 215]. Problems relating to education in the mother tongue, reduction of the number of mass media broadcasting in Kazakh language and institutions of culture, literature, art, etc. started the return of Kazakhs to their homeland. These reasons were added with Kazakhs' confidence in the fact that Kazakhstan lands, leased by Uzbekistan under the Soviet Union (for example, land in Bostandyk district), will not be returned; this also had its action on the start of Kazakhs resettlement to historical homeland. On the one hand, migration and demography agency explains the main reason of the increase in the number of immigrants from Uzbekistan by the resolution of the border issue between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, by solving the problem of the disputed settlements and by signing a bilateral agreement between the countries. In this regard, 96 of the 117 families living in the village Turkestan transferred to Uzbekistan, which is located near the Saryagach, were relocated to the South Kazakhstan region, the rest 21 families were provided with support and the akim (head of the region) said that KZT 140 million (875 thousand EURO) was allocated from the budget to the residents [16]. Indeed, one of the priorities of the state migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is management of active processes of immigration of ethnic Kazakhs returning to their homeland.

From 1991 to 2005, 122,845 families of returnees (481.4 thousand people) arrived in Kazakhstan. Almost all of repatriates who came to Kazakhstan on the basis of special quotas have successfully adapted to the new environment. In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Migration" approved by the Committee on Migration of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the state

authority shall provide the returnees with relevant benefits and compensations [17]. It should be noted that most of the Kazakhs who moved from Uzbekistan, tried to settle in the southern regions of the country and in Mangystau due to warm climate habitual for them. For example, according to statistics in the period 1989-1998, 155,35 immigrants settled in the Almaty region; 136,05 – in the South Kazakhstan region, 111,49 – in Zhambyl region and 6,341 people – in Mangystau region [18].

Among the repatriates the intention to settle in the cities is prevalent in the Kazakhs, who came from Turkmenistan, for example, from 6,341 of above mentioned repatriates 5,731 immigrants settled in the cities. A majority of Kazakhs from Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan settled in rural areas. In the years 1989-1998, 85,502 of our nationals returned to Kazakhstan from Central Asia, among them 50,264 are immigrants from Uzbekistan [19, p. 129]

In the period from 1991 to 2000, with the state support 42,587 Kazakh families or 183,652 people have moved in Kazakhstan from different countries; 60% of them are immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Over the years, 62,737 people came from Uzbekistan [20, p. 16]. By 01.01.2003, 21,803 Kazakhs came from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan and by 01.01.2004 the figure was 28,025 Kazakhs [10, 327b]. But all of this is due to objective reasons and a transitional period in the country. Also in 2003, from 5 thousand families who came under the quota, 4,096 immigrated from Uzbekistan, 91 - from Turkmenistan, 10 - from Tajikistan and 10 - from Kyrgyzstan. In the city of Priorsersk in Karaganda region there are 1,245 repatriates, who arrived from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. For them the renouncement from Uzbekistan citizenship was to some extent difficult [10]. Repatriates had to pay some amount of money for canceling the state registration of the country. In 1991-1999, 516 families, total 1,585 people, moved in the Karaganda region from Uzbekistan, from Turkmenistan - 2 families (6 people), from Tajikistan - 4 families (13 people) and from Kyrgyzstan - 3 families (8 people) [21, p. 88-89]. The bulk of repatriates settled in the rural areas of Bukhara-Zhyrau, Shet, Karkarala and Abay districts [22, p. 322].

According to the Agency for Migration and Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan for each of the years from 1989 to 1993, more than ten thousand people returned to their homeland from the Aral Sea region and in the years 1992-1997, 40,700 people returned from Uzbekistan. Of these, 75% were migrants from Karakalpakstan. Thus, in the period from 1991 to July 1,

2010, 124,605 families or 484,749 Kazakhs arrived from Uzbekistan. This is 60.1% of the total number of repatriates of the country [23, p. 75].

The bulk of repatriates, who settled in Mangystau region, consists of the settlers from Turkmenistan and Karakalpakstan. 33 Kazakh schools in Turkmenistan enrolled 4,800 Kazakh children, but education in Turkmen schools was reduced to 9 years; whereas the program of secondary education in Kazakhstan aimed at the transition from 11 to 12 years of education is very different from the Turkmen one. In addition, higher educational institutions have completely switched to training in the Turkmen language. Therefore, the Kazakhs of Turkmenistan, caring about the future of their children, return to their historical homeland [18, p. 19].

According to the statistical data of 1989-1998 years, 22,746 Kazakhs returned to the Mangystau territory from Turkmenistan. Of them 22,118 people settled in the cities and 628 - in the villages. In 1991-2003, 41,024 repatriates moved to this region. In addition, 1,886 Kazakhs moved to the Almaty region, 1886 - in the to Zhambyl region, 1,011 - in the South Kazakhstan Region, 38 – in the Kyzylorda region, 35 - in the Atyrau region, 35 - in the Karaganda region and 187 - in the Aktobe region [24]. Slow economic and social development of the countries, where representatives of the Kazakh Diaspora live and dissatisfaction of people with everyday life, social, political and cultural conditions is the main factor of mass resettlement of repatriates to their historical homeland. In the period from 1991 to July 1, 2010, 16,098 families (63,120 Kazakhs) came from Turkmenistan. This is 7.8% of the total number of the country repatriates [21, p. 75].

Our fellow citizens started to move from Tajikistan to their historical homeland in the early years of Kazakhstan independence. The Civil War and the socio-economic difficulties that occurred at that time in Tajikistan provoked return of the Kazakhs. 4,357 Kazakhs settled in the South-Kazakhstan region, in Zhambyl - 581, in the Almaty region - 94, in the Karaganda region – 47, in Kyzyl-Orda region - 69, in the East Kazakhstan region - 28, in Kostanai region - 14 and in Mangystau region - 82 [18, p. 129]. During this period, the total number of repatriates who have moved from Tajikistan to Kazakhstan amounted to 5,337 people. In Tajikistan until 2000 there were 2.5 million Kazakhs, at present, according to unofficial sources, their number is about 900 people [25, p. 45]. In the period from 1991 to July 1, 2010, 2,752 families (11,657 Kazakhs) moved from Tajikistan.

This represents 1.4% of the total number of immigrants of the country [23, p. 75]. Part of the Kazakhs remaining in Tajikistan is either in a difficult life situation, or has lost contact with their relatives. They do not have information about life in Kazakhstan and fear to go back. Lack of money and the difficulty of crossing the borders of Uzbekistan are a significant barrier for ethnic Kazakhs who wish to return to their historic homeland.

Kazakhs' situation in Kyrgyzstan is better compared to the their situations of in other countries. Despite this, young Kazakhs want to return to their homeland. According to the statistical data for the years 1989-1998, the number of repatriates from Kyrgyzstan is as follows. 1224 Kazakhs came in Zhambyl region, 390 - in Almaty oblast, 101 - in the South-Kazakhstan region, 105 - in the Karaganda region, 90 - in the East Kazakhstan region, 17 - in the Aktobe region and 33 repatriates returned to Akmola region. In the West Kazakhstan region 13 people settled, in the North-Kazakhstan oblast – 16 people, in Kostanai region - 19, in Kyzyl-Orda - 37 and in Mangystau - 21 people [26, p. 129]. During this time only 2,093 Kazakhs returned from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan. In the period from 1991 to July 1, 2010, 2,260 families (8,611 persons) arrived from Kyrgyzstan. This amounted to 1.1% of the total number of repatriates of the country [27, p. 75]. Compared with other countries of Central Asia migrants from Kyrgyzstan make up the smallest number, since despite the low socio-economic development of the country, most of the Kazakhs are financially secure. Therefore, unlike young people, who care about their future, the adults are not in a hurry to leave the country. So, for the above period only 2,093 returned from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan [28].

Many returnees settled in South Kazakhstan region. In different districts, the villages Dastan, Dostyk, Atameken and Saule appeared. Repatriates themselves have built schools and health centers, engaged in business and are now living on their own. Since then many repatriates have received the country benefits, such as exemption from visa and travel fees, pension payments, deferment of military service, training opportunities, training in the Kazakh and Russian languages and etc. [29].

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population in 1991-2007, Kazakhstan has hosted 651,299 people from the neighboring countries (165,861 families) [26]. In view of the growing economic prosperity, not only repatriates but migrant workers come from Central Asia to Kazakhstan. For example, 25-30% of

the working-age population of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, cross Kazakhstan borders every year to search for seasonal jobs [30].

A large number of repatriates returning from abroad to their historical homeland directly resulted from the state policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. At the moment, despite the absence of quotas for the return of foreign Kazakhs, our compatriots have not stopped moving home. Insufficient socio-economic development of the mentioned countries and dissatisfaction in the everyday, social, political and cultural needs of the people is a major factor of mass resettlement of returnees to their historical homeland [31].

#### **Problems of Adaptation of Kazakh Repatriates in the Historic Homeland:**

One of the most important issues in modern ethnological science is the problem of repatriates' adaptation to changing conditions in a traditional or non-traditional alien habitat. The book "A Dictionary of Social Sciences" gives the definition of "adaptation": "Adaptation can be defined as a process and resulting condition, in which the changes occurring in the body, a system of social organization, group or culture, help to survive, function, strengthen or achieve goals as part of the body, the personality, the group, culture, or the like" [32, p.8]. It should be noted that within adaptation, modern scientists distinguish climatic, psychological, social, cultural, economic and other types. Characteristics of these types of adaptation can be found in numerous monographs of foreign scientists [33, pp. 69-85]. According to S. Keller an immigrant or a refugee feels more or less stable only after 10 years of being in the country [34, pp. 36-38]. Speaking about the problems of immigrant adaptation to the local environment, it is necessary to note the fact that, despite the lowering of social status of Kazakh ethnos, the high-level ability of adaptation helps them to find a proper place in society and in the new environment. A specific feature of the representatives of the Kazakh Diaspora is that Kazakhs are able to successfully adapt to any environment. Some foreign researchers believe that the main feature of the Kazakhs, helping them to maintain traditional values, is a marked tendency to emphasize their belonging to certain hereditary groups. I. Svanberg, speaking and describing the Kazakh diaspora in Turkey, writes: "Conscious and strong Kazakh group identity continues to exist even if part of the daily rituals changes in the new environment, or if there are different technologies, a different way of farming, the new pace of work, the

entire life style, as well as food culture" [35, pp. 22-237]. For example, in 1995, 530 families arrived from the Bukhara region of Uzbekistan; they settled in empty houses of the military town Priosersk of Karaganda region. They started collecting scrap metal, which allowed them to improve their financial situation [37]. Some of them bought land and left comfortable high-rise buildings to do animal husbandry. However, despite this, the resettlement of immigrants away from the regional and district centers contributed to the increase in unemployment in the regions, where its level was already high.

About 10,000 repatriates settled in summer cottages near the cities of Aktau and Zhanaozen in Mangystau region; the authorities provided the conditions for their proper official registration. Measures were taken to provide repatriates with land to build their own homes. In 2002, according to the decision of akim of Aktau city in suburban dachas "Progress", "Chemist", "Michurinets" and "Synthesis", 53 plots of land were transferred in private ownership and 148 families could build houses and obtained the right to lease them. In residential areas of Priozerny-3, Magystau and Kenty near the city of Aktau, immigrants received 10 plots in private ownership and lease 21 more plots. Our compatriots, who arrived in the country on a quota, are assisted by the state. For example, in the town of Zhanaozen, 400 families of repatriates from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan received plots of land. And in Beineu district, 33 families of returnees were provided with land plots for building houses, in Mangystau region, 4 families and in Karaka, 23 families of returnee were assigned with land [38].

Still, returnees face many problems. Those who live in Aktobe came here mainly from Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, which is their historic homeland. Most of them came in the Aktobe region due to the difficult economic situation. Here returnees also face some unresolved problems: housing, registration, social support and etc. For example, only during one year 53 families of returnees resettled in the Aktobe region. 90% of them came from Karakalpakstan and Uzbekistan [38]. The settlement of repatriates away from the regional and district centers contributed to the increase in unemployment. It is necessary to pay particular attention to the resettlement of returnees in the regions of Kazakhstan. Most often, immigrants settle in the south due to favorable climatic conditions. There is a need in an effective mechanism for the resettlement of returnees in the northern regions that may include tax breaks, loans and assistance with employment.

In the areas with the highest density of repatriates from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, residential areas of the city of Zhanaozen, plots of land were allocated to 400 families. In the area of Beineu, 33 families of returnees were provided with houses and land plots for building houses, in Mangystau region - 4 families and in Karaka - 23 families. For the eleven years of Kazakhstan independence more than 41 thousand of our compatriots returned in Magystau. In terms of Mangystau region, the figure is equal to the population of two small districts [39, 41-49 bb].

One of the problems in adaptation of our countrymen, who moved from near and far abroad, is Kazakh alphabet. Currently, there is no difference in the speech of the Kazakhs living all over the world; however, writing of Kazakhs living in different countries is different. For example, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have switched to the Latin alphabet, the Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia write in Cyrillic; and the Kazakhs from Europe study in the Latin alphabet. This difference causes difficulties for our nationals who have returned to their historical homeland, especially in terms of secondary and higher education. Therefore, special conditions are created for students entering schools. For example in Almaty, the Kazakh Women's Pedagogical University organized preparatory departments, whose students are provided with free meals and a dormitory.

In general, the creation of conditions for education of our compatriots from abroad in the historic homeland will definitely speed up the process of adaptation. But every year, it is impossible to provide education to everyone at the expense of the state on special quota for students from near and far abroad. Therefore, there would be an undoubted advantage if the representatives of the Kazakh Diaspora living in the developed countries (the U.S., Japan and Europe) could return home, having received education there.

Solving the problems of migration we should focus on the question of adaptation to the local environment. The main thing here is not to scatter our resettled compatriots over our vast country, but to put them in one place for as long as they get used to the environment, find jobs and organize their lives. This is the right decision both from the socio-economic, demographic and political point of view. It is necessary to pay particular attention to the resettlement of returnees evenly across regions and areas of the country. Often they settle in the southern regions due to favorable climatic conditions. We need to

create an effective mechanism to help immigrants settle in the northern regions, including, for example, tax breaks, credits, loans and assistance in their employment.

Government support and help of the local administration contribute to solving the immigrants' problems in general. An important factor is also their psychological readiness to current changes in society and market economy. Today, many repatriates have established their own farms and businesses. But many immigrants are in difficult financial situation. Therefore, the free housing and lump-sum allowance to households, which is about 12 thousand for the head of the family and about 8 thousand for each member, is not enough. In addition, many of the immigrants do not know the Russian language, which causes additional difficulties. Thus, returning to their historical homeland immigrants need help from the state. In this connection, the Head of State N.A. Nazarbayev regularly reminds the Government of the Republic and the governors of the regions and cities of Astana and Almaty about the support to the independently resettled returnees. This will help to meet them with hospitality, to adapt to local conditions and will not let them feel as strangers at home. We should try to settle immigrants in one area, which will make their adaptation faster.

### CONCLUSIONS

Repatriates who have preserved the traditions and customs of the people can make a significant contribution to the consolidation of the Kazakh ethnos and enrich the national culture. Return of Kazakh Diaspora will not only affect the demographic situation in the country but will also contribute to the revival of traditional culture.

One of the main directions in the development of the strategy for the Republic of Kazakhstan is the full support of the Kazakhs in relocation to their historical homeland. The Republic of Kazakhstan has become a full member of the world community and as every civilized nation has included support to the Kazakhs living in other countries and returning to their historical homeland in its public policies. The Head of the State spoke of the need to increase the number of the population to 20 million people by 2015 that is necessary to strengthen the national security and provide the economy with new labor resources. Therefore it is necessary to effectively use two methods of population growth, determined by the demographic science: natural increase and migration from outside.

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