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The Settlement Process of Ethnic Kazakhs in Karaganda Region (1991-2001)

This article examines the ethnic repatriation policy implemented in the Republic of Kazakhstan during the first decade following the country's independence, using the Karaganda region as a case study. At the beginning of the 1990s, Kazakhstan experienced large-scale migration processes resulting from the socio-demographic crisis, the reconfiguration of state borders, and transformations in interethnic relations across the post-Soviet space. A key component of these processes was the return of ethnic Kazakhs from abroad to their historical homeland. The study analyzes the dynamics of migration quotas, the geography of settlement, the socio-economic adaptation of repatriates, and the specific procedures for acquiring legal status between 1991 and 2001. Based on archival documents and official statistical data, the research identifies the institutional formation of repatriation policy, its regional implementation mechanisms, and its social implications. The findings demonstrate that the majority of ethnic Kazakhs arriving in the Karaganda region were repatriates from Mongolia, while those from the CIS countries predominantly migrated independently without state quotas. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive historical approach, viewing repatriates' settlement and adaptation as a complex socio-historical process and systematically analyzing the specific features of regional migration policy for the first time. The results indicate that the effectiveness of repatriation policy was directly dependent on the quality of the country's social infrastructure, economic conditions, and legal frameworks. The examination of archival sources and foreign scholarly works also made it possible to identify the comparative advantages of Kazakhstan's repatriation experience in relation to international practices. The findings have practical relevance for enhancing Kazakhstan's current migration policy, developing effective mechanisms for the social adaptation of repatriates, and planning regional ethno-demographic development strategies.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, independence, ethnic migration, repatriation, Karaganda region, Mongolian Kazakhs, quota, archival sources, social adaptation, citizenship.

Introduction

In the first decade after gaining independence, Kazakhstan's migration policy was defined as one of the key directions of the national development strategy. The socio-demographic crisis across the post-Soviet space, the reconfiguration of state borders, and the transformation of interethnic relations marked the beginning of a new phase of ethnic migration. For Kazakhstan, this issue was linked not only to demographic security, but also to the preservation of national identity, the restoration of historical justice, and the return of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland.

The phenomenon of ethnic repatriation during this period stood out as a rare occurrence in international practice. Alongside similar processes in Israel and Germany, Kazakhstan was among the few states that implemented a state-level program for systematically receiving and integrating its diaspora [1; 25]. The repatriation policy encompassed not only the quantitative parameters of migration but also complex issues such as social integration, the granting of legal status, housing provision, and adaptation to the labor market.

From this perspective, the Karaganda region became one of the significant centers shaping the regional trajectory of ethnic migration. The region's industrial potential, demand for labor resources, and relatively developed social infrastructure created favorable conditions for receiving repatriates. Moreover, the Karaganda case vividly illustrates the institutional structure of repatriation policy, its administrative mechanisms, and the particularities of socio-cultural adaptation.

This study aims to examine the stages of ethnic repatriation in Kazakhstan through the example of the Karaganda region. Drawing on archival materials and statistical data, it analyzes the dynamics of migration quotas in the 1990s, the geography of repatriates' settlement, and the features of their legal and social adaptation. This regional case study contributes to a deeper understanding of the overall evolution of the Republic of Kazakhstan's repatriation policy and highlights the broader socio-humanitarian significance of the return of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland.

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Materials and Methods

The sources materials of this research are divided into several groups: Archival documents — materials from the National Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Fond 53, Inventory 1, Cases 116 and 256) and the Karaganda Regional State Archive, as well as official reports of the regional Department of Migration and Social Programs. Statistical data — information from the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, official publications concerning migration quotas, and demographic reports. Legislative and regulatory acts — the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Migration of the Population” (1997) [2], Presidential Decrees and Government Resolutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan [3], and bilateral Kazakh-Mongolian intergovernmental agreements (1991-1992) [4].

In addition, the study draws on the scholarly works and monographs of domestic and foreign researchers. Taken together, these methods and sources provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the settlement patterns of ethnic Kazakhs in the Karaganda region, their socio-economic adaptation, and the regional specificities of Kazakhstan’s migration policy.

The settlement process of ethnic Kazakhs (kandastar) in the Karaganda region represents a historical phenomenon situated at the intersection of institutional repatriation policy and mechanisms of social adaptation. This study is based on historical-demographic and socio-political analysis and employs a set of comprehensive scholarly methods.

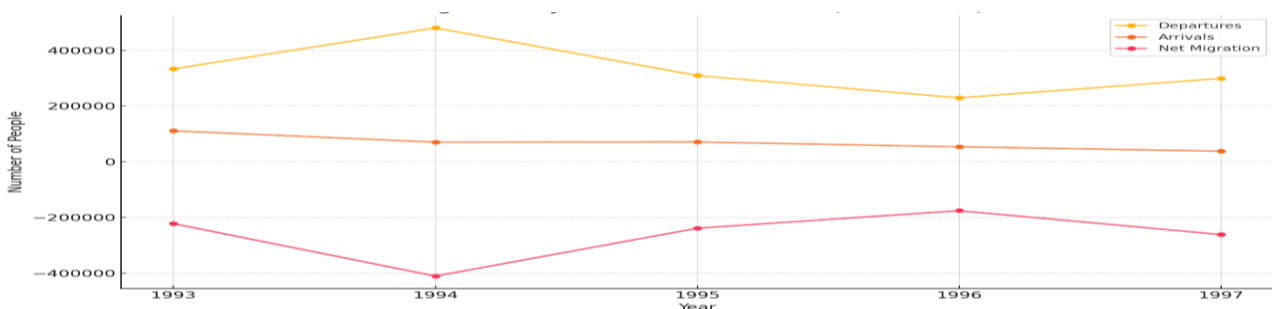
The historical-comparative method enabled the examination of the distinctive features of Kazakhstan’s migration policy during the early years of independence, both at the regional (Karaganda region) and national levels. The statistical-demographic method was applied to process data concerning immigration quotas, the number of settled families, and their social structure. The documentary analysis method was used to study the institutional dimensions of repatriation on the basis of official documents, government decrees, departmental reports, and minutes preserved in the National Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Karaganda Regional State Archive. The socio-historical phenomenological approach was employed to interpret the processes of adaptation, acquisition of citizenship, housing provision, and employment among repatriates.

Results

In the early 1990s, that is, during the initial period of Kazakhstan’s independence, ethnic migration flows intensified not only within the country but also at the international level. This process was closely linked to the demographic crisis that emerged in the post-Soviet space, the transformation of social structures, as well as the reconfiguration of state borders and citizenship legislation. Data from the period between 1993 and 1997 indicate that the migration balance during these years had a negative trend, which significantly influenced the country’s ethno-social composition (See Table 1) [5; 22].

Table 1

Migration exchange of the Republic of Kazakhstan with near and far abroad, 1993-1997



Between 1993 and 1997, international migration exchanges became a central issue in Kazakhstan’s policies on national identity, demographic security, and social integration. The imbalance between emigration and repatriation confronted the state with fundamental challenges such as replenishing the national labor force, integrating repatriates, and maintaining socio-ethnic stability.

Since 1991, newly independent Kazakhstan became one of only three countries worldwide (along with Israel and Germany) to develop a program for the repatriation of its diaspora. The largest numbers of ethnic

Kazakhs residing abroad were concentrated in Russia, Uzbekistan, China, Mongolia, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey [6; 212].

From this perspective, during the first decade of independence, the return of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland emerged as one of the state's top policy priorities. To this end, beginning in 1993, an immigration quota mechanism was introduced, with the specific number of families determined annually by Presidential Decrees or Government Resolutions. This quota system not only regulated repatriation processes but also served as a tool for the state to maintain control over migration flows.

Between 1993 and 2001, the overall size of immigration quotas in Kazakhstan steadily declined. While in 1993 the quota amounted to 10,000 families, by 2000–2001 it was limited to only 500–600 families. This reduction was linked to macroeconomic conditions, constraints of social infrastructure, and the reorientation of repatriation policy as a whole (See Table 2) [3].

Table 2

Ratio of quotas allocated to the Karaganda region to the overall national quota

| Year | National quota (families) | Quota for Karaganda region (families) |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1993 | 10 000 | 600 |
| 1994 | 7 000 | 200 |
| 1995 | 5 000 | 150 |
| 1996 | 4 000 | 170 |
| 1997 | 2 180 | 50 |
| 1998 | 3 000 | 230 |
| 1999 | 500 | 50 |
| 2000 | 500 | 10 |
| 2001 | 600 | 10 |

As shown in the table, during the initial years (particularly in 1993 and 1994) the Karaganda region was recognized as one of the key directions at the national level. However, after 1997 this indicator declined significantly. For instance, in 1993 the Karaganda region accounted for 6 % of the national quota, whereas by 2001 its share had decreased to only 1.6 % [7].

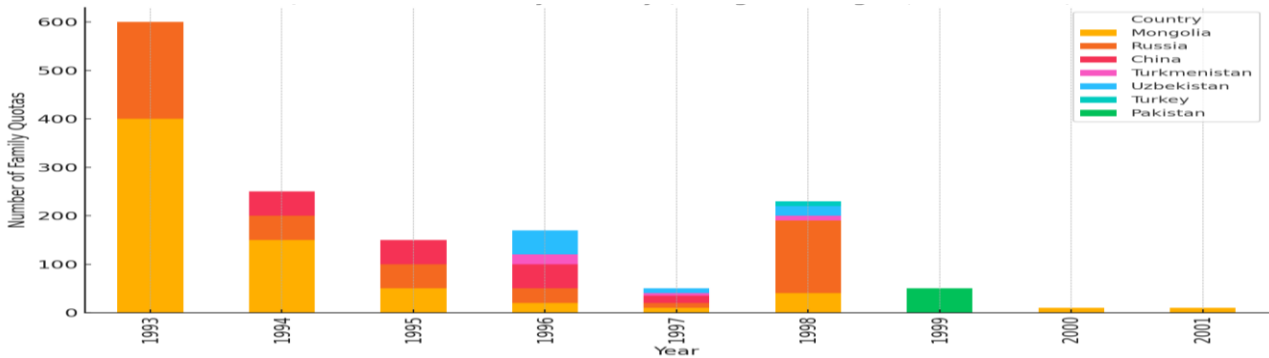
During this period, the quotas allocated to the Karaganda region were characterized by diversity in terms of countries of origin. In the early years, Mongolia and Russia predominated, while later the list of quota recipients expanded to include China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Pakistan. This change reflected the geopolitical expansion of the state's repatriation policy.

For example, the internal distribution of the 170 quotas allocated to the Karaganda region in 1996 was as follows: China — 50, Mongolia — 20, Russia — 30, Turkmenistan — 20, Uzbekistan — 50. The introduction of such diverse directions illustrated the recognition of the broad geographical scope of the Kazakh diaspora and the corresponding adaptation of migration mechanisms.

Starting in 1999, the size of the national quota declined sharply, a trend particularly evident in the Karaganda region. In 2000–2001 the region was allocated only 10 quotas, exclusively for Kazakhs coming from Mongolia. These changes were explained by the need to reduce the budgetary burden of the quota policy and by the limited capacity of integration resources (See Table 3).

Table 3

Quotas allocated to the Karaganda region by country of origin, 1993-2001



In the early years of Kazakhstan’s independence, there were specific reasons for the relatively high allocation of quotas to Kazakhs from Mongolia. According to the 1989 census, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia numbered 120,506 people [8; 137].

Between 1993 and October 1, 2005, a total of 117,698 ethnic Kazakh families—equivalent to 464,426 individuals — returned to the Republic of Kazakhstan. These figures demonstrate, first, that the repatriation process acquired a mass character and, second, that both international and domestic migration-regulating mechanisms were functioning effectively [9; 172].

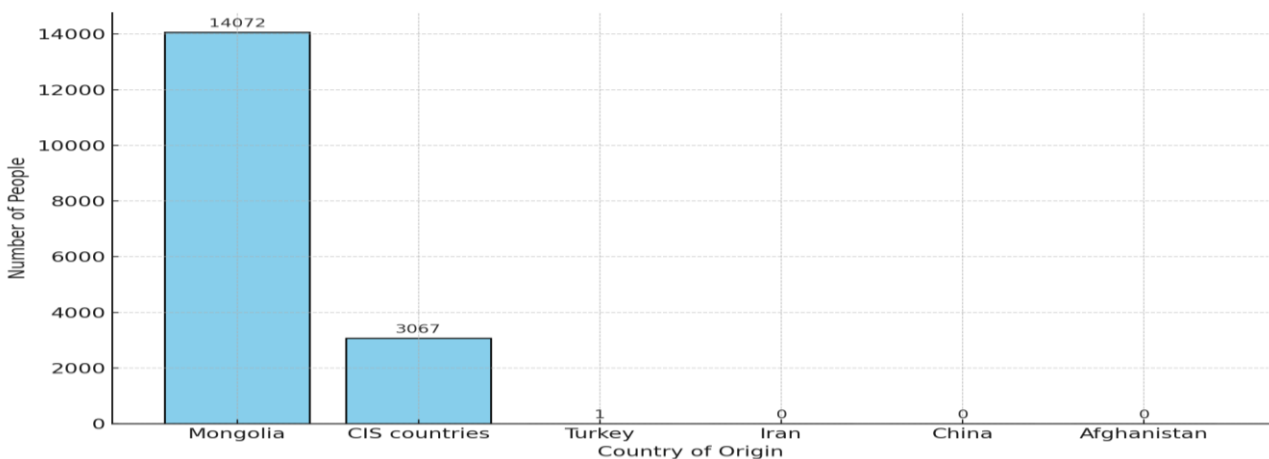
Turning now to the specific case of arrivals in the Karaganda region, as reflected in archival data:

1991-1997 period. During this stage, 2,800 repatriate families settled in the Karaganda region. Although these numbers are presented as a cumulative total, on average this amounted to approximately 400 families per year [7]. This initial stage corresponds to the formative (initiatory) phase of repatriation policy and is assessed as the beginning of structural consolidation. Given the limitations of infrastructure and the underdeveloped legal framework at the time, the pace of repatriate arrivals remained relatively modest.

The precise figures for ethnic Kazakhs (by number of individuals) who settled in the Karaganda region between 1991 and 1997 are as follows (See Table 4) [5; 5]:

Table 4

Ethnic Kazakhs settled in the Karaganda region (by number of individuals), 1991-1997



In the early years of Kazakhstan’s independence, the relatively high allocation of quotas to Kazakhs from Mongolia had its own underlying reasons. According to the 1989 census, the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia numbered 120,506 people [8; 137].

Between 1993 and October 1, 2005, a total of 117,698 ethnic Kazakh families—equivalent to 464,426 individuals — returned to the Republic of Kazakhstan. This data demonstrates, first, that the repatriation process acquired a mass character, and second, that both international and domestic regulatory mechanisms of migration were functioning effectively [9; 172].

Let us now examine the arrival of repatriates in the Karaganda region based on archival data.

1991-1997 period. Among the repatriates who settled in the Karaganda region during this time, 2,989 families came from Mongolia — representing 78.3 % of the total (by families). In terms of population size, their share was even higher at 82.1 %. This dominance can be explained by several historical and social factors:

- The ethnic cohesion, as well as linguistic and cultural homogeneity of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia;
- Long-standing connections and historical migration channels preserved since the Soviet period;
- The socio-economic crisis in Mongolia in the post-1991 period;
- Targeted support measures from Kazakhstan directed at Kazakhs in Mongolia (informational and administrative).

The predominance of arrivals from Mongolia reflected the diaspora's aspiration to link its ethnic and civic identity directly with Kazakhstan.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ethnic Kazakhs remained in the former union republics — particularly in Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. From the CIS countries, 826 families (3,067 individuals) settled in the Karaganda region, constituting 21.6 % of the repatriation flow (by families). Although this share appears smaller, repatriates from the CIS were distinguished by moving largely at their own expense, often outside the state quota framework. Moreover, their potential for socio-cultural adaptation was higher, as they had lived in the post-Soviet environment, possessed Russian language skills, and were familiar with bureaucratic structures.

The absence of repatriates from Iran, China, and Afghanistan indicates that migration channels with these countries had not yet been established and that political, diplomatic, and logistical restrictions were in place. The arrival of only a single family (one person) from Turkey represented a symbolic migration, essentially a voluntary individual movement.

The lack of migration flows from certain directions was linked to the following factors:

- Border controls and visa restrictions;
- Lack of available information;
- Limited scope of Kazakhstan's repatriation policy in relation to Kazakhs living in those countries.

Thus, between 1991 and 1997, the overwhelming majority of ethnic Kazakhs who settled in the Karaganda region came from Mongolia and CIS states. These two main directions reflect the principle of geographical selectivity that characterized Kazakhstan's migration policy in its initial stage. The absence of arrivals from other countries (Iran, China, Afghanistan) underscores the restricted scope of repatriation policy during its formative phase.

Overall, the repatriation process during this period developed in parallel with the formation of Kazakhstan's migration policy, helping to outline its initial institutional and geopolitical contours. The fact that more than 80 % of arrivals in the Karaganda region came from Mongolia highlights the crucial role of ethno-historical and social ties with that country, while arrivals from the CIS illustrate the impact of post-Soviet integration on migration channels. At the same time, the limited geography of arrivals underscored the need for Kazakhstan to diversify international repatriation channels and expand institutional frameworks.

1998–2001 period. During this stage, the number of arrivals increased sharply:

1998 — 2,464 families;

1999 — 2,515 families;

2000 — 3,036 families;

2001 — 3,348 families [7].

These figures are several times higher than the cumulative total for 1991-1997, indicating the transition of repatriation policy to a stage of institutional stabilization and expansion. The adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Migration of the Population" in 1997, as well as the broadening of social programs, were among the key factors driving this growth.

The rise in the number of repatriates settling in the Karaganda region can be explained by several factors:

- Availability of socio-economic infrastructure: industrial enterprises, educational institutions, and medical facilities made the region attractive;
- Demand for labor resources: the mining and processing industries required a steady workforce, directing repatriates to this area;

- Expansion of state support measures: gradual introduction of programs for housing, employment, and language adaptation;
- Ethno-confessional and social pressures faced by Kazakh diasporas in countries such as Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, which accelerated their return to the historical homeland.

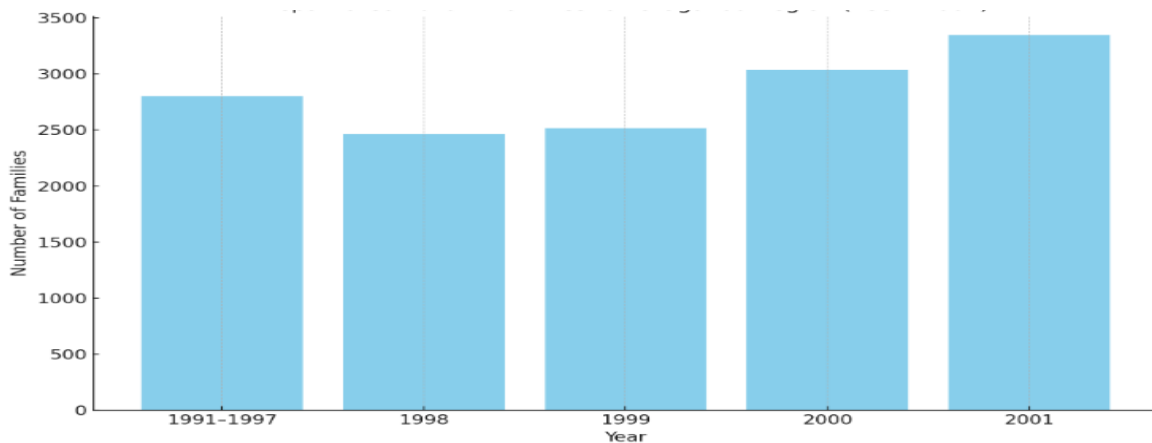
1991-2001 cumulative total. The overall number of repatriate families settled in the Karaganda region amounted to:

$2800 (1991-1997) + 2464 (1998) + 2515 (1999) + 3036 (2000) + 3348 (2001) = 14,163$ families.

Assuming an average household size of 4-5 individuals, this corresponds to approximately 60,000–70,000 people, a scale of ethnic migration that undoubtedly had a profound impact on the ethno-demographic structure, labor market, and social system of the Karaganda region (See Table 5).

Table 5

Number of ethnic Kazakhs settled in the Karaganda region, 1991-2001



Next, drawing on archival sources, we shall analyze the reception, settlement, and legal-social adaptation of ethnic Kazakh repatriates arriving from Mongolia to the Karaganda region between 1991 and 1997, in order to identify the specific features of the settlement process in this area.

The migration of Mongolian Kazakhs to Kazakhstan was given a legal foundation through several bilateral intergovernmental agreements. In particular, the Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of the Labor Market, Employment, and Social Protection of the Population between the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Labor of Mongolia (21 September 1991), as well as the Agreement on the Regulation of Migration Processes (30 June 1992), established the first institutional channels for officially attracting Kazakhs from Mongolia [5; 5]. According to these agreements, migrants were invited on the basis of labor contracts and were linked to the post-Soviet restructuring of the agrarian-industrial system.

In the post-Soviet period, more than 464,000 Kazakhs migrated to Kazakhstan, of whom nearly 71,000 were from Mongolia [6; 211]. During this period, more specifically between 1992 and 1995, approximately 12,400 families — or about 61,000 ethnic Kazakhs — arrived in Kazakhstan under labor contract schemes. These figures are explicitly recorded in the documents of the National Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan [5; 5-6].

Between 1991 and 1997, a total of 12,750 families (62,500 individuals) migrated from Mongolia to Kazakhstan. Of these, 2,800 families (14,006 individuals) were directed to the Karaganda region, which accounted for roughly 22 % of the national total [5; 5].

In this respect, the Karaganda region emerged as one of the most attractive regional centers of repatriation policy. This was due, first, to its industrial potential; second, to the structure of its labor market; and third, to the relatively developed state of its migration infrastructure. Furthermore, some local state farms (sovkhozes) and collective farms (kolkhozes) concluded direct agreements to recruit labor (e.g., in Zhairam, Karkaraly, and Bukhar-Zhyrau districts), which illustrates the institutional initiative at the local level.

According to archival data, 2,800 families — 14,006 individuals — settled in the Karaganda region from Mongolia between 1991 and 1997 [10; 153]. These figures demonstrate that repatriation policy was carried out on a large scale within the region. The majority of settlers were placed in rural districts: 2,133

families (10,200 individuals), or 76.2 % of the total. By contrast, 667 families (3,806 individuals) were accommodated in urban areas [10; 153]. This distribution reflected both the availability of land resources and the high demand for labor in rural areas, as well as the state strategy of resettling repatriates within the framework of agrarian programs.

Foreign researchers Holly Barcus and Cynthia Werner emphasize that one of the most striking features of this initial migration phase was the fact that a large portion of migrants moved as part of extended kinship groups [6; 221].

Across the region, 578 repatriate families purchased housing, while 165 families remained without any form of housing provision [10; 153]. Among them, 493 families purchased houses in rural districts, whereas 85 families acquired housing in urban areas. Such disparities reflected differences in purchasing power among repatriates, the specific characteristics of local housing markets, and the uneven capacity of local executive bodies to allocate infrastructural resources for repatriates. A particularly noteworthy case is Karkaraly district, where 173 families purchased housing, indicating the district's high potential for accommodating repatriates and its relatively effective system of social support.

According to archival records, between 1991 and 1997, a total of 1,504 families (53.7 %) submitted documents to renounce Mongolian citizenship, while only 49 families (1.7 %) were granted citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan [10; 153]. These data clearly illustrate that the process of regulating the legal status of repatriates was extremely slow, leaving many in a "transitional legal status" for an extended period. The gap between the number of applications submitted and the actual conferral of citizenship reflected the complexity of legal procedures, the existence of administrative barriers, and the low level of legal literacy among repatriates.

Among the cities, Temirtau and the settlement of Aktau stand out, with 160 families (824 individuals) residing there. Of these, 32 families purchased housing, and 337 families submitted documents to renounce Mongolian citizenship [10; 153]. This suggests that in urbanized areas legal procedures were carried out more efficiently compared to rural districts. At the same time, in some districts (e.g., Ulytau, Priozersk), no repatriates were officially registered, or settlers arrived from other countries (in Priozersk, for example, from Uzbekistan). This phenomenon reflected a structural reorientation of migration policy: while in the early years repatriation was viewed primarily as a means of addressing labor shortages, later it came to be interpreted within the logic of humanitarian concerns and national reunification.

From 1996 onward, the nature of migration underwent a significant transformation. Whereas earlier the reception and employment of repatriates had been managed with the involvement of sovkhoses and kolkhozes, from this point migration began to take place on a voluntary basis, i.e., through individual initiatives. This shift led to the institutional weakening of the migration process and a reduction in the regulatory role of both local administrations and central authorities. Consequently, in 1996-1997 only 350 families (1,500 individuals) migrated.

According to materials from Fond 193 of the Karaganda Regional State Archive, only 49 families received citizenship of Kazakhstan between 1991 and 1997, while 1,504 families applied to renounce Mongolian citizenship [10; 153]. This underscores the slow pace of legal procedures, the persistence of administrative obstacles, and the insufficiency of international-legal coordination mechanisms. Such a situation was characteristic of the "legal vacuum" that marked the post-Soviet space.

Thus, the reception and settlement of Mongolian repatriates in the Karaganda region between 1991 and 1997 was a complex historical and phenomenological phenomenon, reflecting the territorial structure of migration policy, the mechanisms of adaptation to social infrastructure, and the practical dynamics of legal transformation. The predominance of rural settlement, inequalities in housing provision, and the slow pace of citizenship procedures serve as historical evidence of the institutional weaknesses that characterized the initial stage of repatriation.

In the first quarter of 1998, a total of 10 repatriate families were received in the Karaganda region, including 5 families from Mongolia and 5 families from CIS countries, amounting to 32 individuals overall [11; 122]. This figure indicates both the gradual decline in the repatriation process over the year and the restrictions imposed by the quota system.

As of April 1, 1998, a total of 3,521 repatriate families, or 16,689 individuals, had settled in the region. Among them:

- 2,830 families from Mongolia (the absolute majority),
- 10 families from China,
- 681 families from CIS countries.

These data underscore the dominance of the main geographical sources of ethnic repatriation and the depth of historical ties with Mongolia in particular.

According to Instruction No. 20-23/3-107 issued on April 21, 1998, by Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Zh. Karybzhyanov, and based on Decision No. 29 of February 25, 1998, the Department of Migration and Demography of the Karaganda region was formally established, comprising 15 staff positions. Official reports indicated that the department's material-technical base and financial support had been fully secured [11; 122].

Moreover, analogous structural units were created within municipal and district administrations of the region. This administrative expansion was a clear indicator of the transition toward a decentralized system of managing migration processes.

In the 1990s, Kazakhstan's repatriation policy was primarily aimed at organizing the voluntary return of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland. However, in the course of implementing this strategic goal, a number of socio-economic dysfunctions and administrative inconsistencies arose at the regional level. A striking example of these processes is the issue of housing provision for repatriates in the settlement of Aktau, within the Karaganda region.

An official letter sent from Aktau constitutes a vivid example of the administrative practices and legal transformations surrounding repatriation in Kazakhstan in the late 1990s [12; 78]. The document clearly reveals shortcomings in ensuring the onomastic consistency of names, standardizing translations, simplifying legal procedures, and developing institutional mechanisms of local adaptation.

In broader terms, this case reflects the delayed phase of the legal-humanitarian integration of repatriates; in narrower terms, it highlights the transnational problem of attaining citizenship through consistency between personal names and official documents.

In an attempt to resolve the issue, the village administration petitioned for the appointment of a man named Beisen Abilmazhinuly as an official notary. His proficiency in three languages (Kazakh, Russian, and Mongolian) and his clerical experience played an important role in the translation of documents. This example illustrates how mechanisms of repatriate adaptation were, in practice, carried out informally at the local institutional level.

An official letter sent in 1998 to A.T. Abdykhanov, head of the Regional Department of Migration and Demography, reported that a community of 223 Mongolian Kazakh families, all of them large households, had settled in Aktau [10; 32]. According to archival records, unemployment in the settlement had reached its peak, driven by the closure or partial operation of industrial enterprises, which served as a key factor of social tension. This economic decline sharply reduced opportunities for the social integration of repatriates, leaving many outside the reach of institutional support.

The same document noted that many repatriate families had relocated from rural districts of the former Zhezkazgan and Karaganda regions, voluntarily settling in abandoned or dilapidated houses. In academic literature, this phenomenon is described as "informal resettlement on residual infrastructure."

In such cases, repatriates often returned the housing initially allocated to them from the immigration fund and later moved to other settlements, requesting to be provided with new state housing. This practice highlighted, on the one hand, the instability of their spatial settlement patterns, and on the other, the weaknesses of resource planning and territorial registration policy at the national level.

The housing access problem faced by the Mongolian repatriate community of Aktau is therefore a significant historical and social phenomenon that exposes the structural shortcomings of Kazakhstan's repatriation and social policies in the 1990s. The document serves as a valuable source, revealing concrete local-level challenges in the processes of social adaptation and legal legitimation of repatriates.

Discussion

An important dimension of the scholarly discussion on repatriation in Kazakhstan concerns the assessment of structural constraints that shaped the social adaptation and integration of return migrants in the post-Soviet period. In this context, both domestic and foreign researchers have emphasized the gap between the strategic objectives of state repatriation policy and the practical conditions of its implementation at the regional level, particularly with regard to employment, social infrastructure, and mechanisms of social inclusion. From the perspective of E. Yu. Sadovskaia, the problems faced by repatriates in Kazakhstan at the turn of the twenty-first century resulted from the state's structural unpreparedness for large-scale migration, particularly in the spheres of employment, social infrastructure, and legal regulation. The researcher emphasizes that, in the absence of a comprehensive and consistent migration policy, repatriation could not fully realize

its demographic and socio-economic potential, which led to the marginalization of a significant proportion of migrants [1; 113]. Researchers working on the subject of repatriation have also noted that ethnic Kazakhs who settled in northern regions during this period faced numerous problems, among which the language barrier occupied a particularly important place [13; 90].

A. Diener argues that although the majority of Kazakhs returning from Mongolia to their historical homeland settled permanently in Kazakhstan, they might remain “outsiders” who never fully integrated into their homeland, thereby becoming “deterritorialized” in comparison to their relatives who stayed behind in Mongolia [14; 375].

In the second half of the 1990s, one of the most pressing issues in the registration and social adaptation of repatriates in the Republic of Kazakhstan was their secondary migration within the country. Specifically, the intensification of intra-regional, rather than inter-regional, migration flows among repatriates significantly complicated their official registration and access to state support under national migration programs.

For example, the dynamics of internal migration in the Karaganda region during 1997-1998 demonstrate that more than 650 repatriate families (approximately 3,250 individuals) relocated from remote rural districts and settlements to the regional center or nearby towns and settlements. This demographic movement was driven, on the one hand, by the low living standards in areas with underdeveloped socio-economic infrastructure, and, on the other hand, by repatriates’ aspirations to improve their access to employment, housing, and education.

Moreover, the repatriate population was characterized by a high proportion of socially vulnerable groups, including large families, single mothers, pensioners, and persons with disabilities. This phenomenon highlighted the imbalance between macro-political strategies and micro-political tactics in constructing a social model of repatriate adaptation.

According to the official data of the Karaganda Regional Department of Demography and Migration for 1998, only 4,044 of the 7,580 working-age repatriates were in stable employment, amounting to 53.3 % of the total. By contrast, 3,536 individuals (47 %) were unemployed. Of these, only 787 were officially registered as unemployed, and a mere 350 received unemployment benefits. In addition, just 39 individuals were sent to professional retraining or skill-enhancement courses — representing only 0.5 % of the total number of working-age repatriates. These figures reveal the low level of integration of repatriates into the labor market, as well as systemic shortcomings in the implementation of institutional mechanisms of state support [15; 112-113].

According to a comprehensive study by Kazakh scholars conducted in 2015, between 1991 and July 1, 2010, a total of 21,515 families — or 107,055 ethnic Kazakhs — migrated from Mongolia to Kazakhstan [8; 263]. This statistic confirms the systematic nature of Kazakhstan’s repatriation policy in the post-Soviet period and demonstrates that migrants from Mongolia constituted a particularly significant demographic group in quantitative terms.

Among these, 4,138 families — or 18,346 individuals — settled in the Karaganda region, accounting for 17.14 % of the total. In other words, every fifth Mongolian repatriate family chose the Karaganda region as their settlement area. This high share is explained not only by the vast geographical capacity of the region but also by the preservation of its agricultural infrastructure and the preparedness of administrative structures to accommodate repatriates.

Conclusions

The migration flows of the early 1990s unfolded in parallel with the demographic crisis in Kazakhstan, the transformation of state borders and citizenship regimes, and shifts in the country’s social structures. The negative migration balance of 1993-1997 significantly affected the ethno-social composition of the population, placing issues of national human capital, social integration, and internal stability at the forefront.

Since 1991, Kazakhstan has designated the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland as a strategic priority. The introduction of the immigration quota mechanism institutionalized the repatriation process and turned it into a state instrument for managing migration flows. Nevertheless, the reduction of national quotas between 1993 and 2001 (from 10,000 families to only 500-600) reflected constraints in social infrastructure and budgetary resources, as well as a reorientation of policy priorities.

Initially, the Karaganda region was among the main host areas (in 1993, it accounted for 6 % of the national quota). By 2001, however, its share had declined to 1.6 %, which reflected both the limitations of regional resources and a process of rebalancing at the national level. Between 1991 and 1997, more than 78 % of repatriates to the region came from Mongolia. This was the result of ethnocultural proximity, historical

ties, socio-economic crises in Mongolia, and targeted state support measures. Migrants from CIS countries (about 22 %) largely arrived without quotas, funding their own resettlement and facing comparatively easier adaptation. Migration flows from China, Iran, and Afghanistan did not materialize during this period, owing to political-logistical restrictions and lack of information.

The period of 1991-1997 was characterized by the laying of institutional foundations amid weak infrastructure, underdeveloped legal regulation, slow citizenship procedures, and a predominance of rural settlement. By contrast, the years 1998-2001 witnessed a sharp increase in migration flows following the 1997 Law on Migration, expansion of social programs, and greater attractiveness of the labor market (particularly in mining and processing industries). As a result, between 1991 and 2001, approximately 14,163 families — equivalent to 60-70 thousand people — settled in the Karaganda region, producing a significant impact on the region's ethno-demographic structure and labor market.

Nearly three-quarters of repatriates were directed to rural districts, in line with available land resources, demand for labor, and the agrarian orientation of settlement policies. Housing provision was uneven: while some districts (e.g., Karkaraly) demonstrated high potential, in other cases “informal resettlement on residual infrastructure” developed. This highlighted the disparities in administrative capacity and housing markets across regions.

The protracted nature of citizenship acquisition (with thousands of families submitting applications but relatively few receiving citizenship) reflected the consequences of the post-Soviet “legal vacuum”: weak inter-agency coordination, complex procedures, and limited legal literacy. At the local level (in both towns and villages), adaptation often relied on informal mechanisms — such as translation and notarial support — which helped to mitigate institutional gaps but failed to establish a systematic framework.

High unemployment, industrial decline, and housing shortages hindered integration. While some segments of the diaspora migrated as extended kinship groups and relied on community solidarity, other studies have shown that feelings of “detritorialization” and “otherness” persisted. This underscores the insufficiency of identification and inclusion policies within the host society.

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Ж.Т. Нығметова

Қарағанды облысына этникалық қазақтардың қоныстану үдерісі (1991-2001 жж.)

Мақала Қазақстан Республикасының тәуелсіздігін алғаннан кейінгі алғашқы онжылдықта жүзеге асқан этникалық репатриация саясатына Қарағанды облысы мысалында талдау жасауға арналған. 1990 жылдардың басында Қазақстан посткеңестік кеністіктегі әлеуметтік-демографиялық дағдарыс, мемлекеттік шекаралардың қайта құрылуы және этносаралық қатынастардың өзгеруі нәтижесінде кең ауқымды көші-қон үдерістерін бастан өткерді. Осы үдерістердің маңызды құрамдас бөлігі — шетелдердегі этникалық қазақтардың тарихи отанына оралуы. Зерттеу барысында 1991-2001 жылдар аралығындағы көші-қон квоталарының динамикасы, қоныстану географиясы, репатрианттардың әлеуметтік-экономикалық бейімделуі және олардың құқықтық мәртебесін рәсімдеу ерекшеліктері қарастырылды. Мұрағаттық құжаттар мен ресми статистикалық деректер негізінде репатриациялық саясаттың институционалдық қалыптасуы, оның өңірлік деңгейде іске асырылу тетіктері және әлеуметтік салдарлары айқындалды. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қарағанды облысына келген этникалық қазақтардың басым көпшілігі Моңғолиядан оралған қандастар екенін, ал ТМД елдерінен келгендердің негізінен квотадан тыс, өз бастамасымен қоныс аударғанын көрсетеді. Зерттеудің ғылыми жаңалығы — репатрианттардың қоныстану және бейімделу тәжірибесін күрделі әлеуметтік-тарихи үдеріс ретінде қарастырып, аймақтық көші-қон саясатының ерекшеліктерін алғаш рет жүйелі түрде талдауында. Алынған нәтижелер репатриациялық саясаттың тиімділігі елдің әлеуметтік инфрақұрылымының сапасына, экономикалық жағдайына және құқықтық реттеу деңгейіне тікелей тәуелді болғанын көрсетеді. Мұрағаттық деректер мен шетелдік зерттеушілер еңбектерін салыстырмалы талдау Қазақстанның репатриация тәжірибесінің халықаралық деңгейдегі артықшылықтарын анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері этнодемографиялық дамудың аймақтық ерекшеліктерін терең түсінуге, қазіргі көші-қон саясатын жетілдіруге, сондай-ақ репатрианттарды әлеуметтік бейімдеу мен өңірлік этнодемографиялық даму стратегияларын жоспарлаудың тиімді тетіктерін әзірлеуге септігін тигізеді.

Кілт сөздер: Қазақстан, тәуелсіздік, этникалық көші-қон, репатриация, Қарағанды облысы, Моңғолия қазақтары, квота, мұрағат деректері, әлеуметтік бейімделу, азаматтық.

Ж.Т. Нығметова

Процесс расселения этнических казахов в Карагандинской области (1991–2001 гг.)

Эта статья посвящена анализу политики этнической репатриации, реализованной в Республике Казахстан в первое десятилетие после обретения независимости, на примере Карагандинской области. В начале 1990-х годов Казахстан столкнулся с масштабными миграционными процессами, вызванными социально-демографическим кризисом, переконфигурацией государственных границ и изменением межэтнических отношений в постсоветском пространстве. Важной составляющей этих процессов стало возвращение этнических казахов из-за рубежа на их историческую родину. В исследовании проанализированы динамика миграционных квот, география расселения, социально-экономическая адаптация репатриантов, а также особенности оформления их правового статуса в 1991–2001 годах. На основе архивных документов и официальных статистических данных выявлены институциональное становление репатриационной политики, механизмы её реализации на региональном уровне и социальные последствия. Результаты показали, что большинство этнических казахов, прибывших в Карагандинскую область, являлись репатриантами из Монголии, тогда как мигранты из стран СНГ, как правило, переселялись самостоятельно, без участия в государственных квотах. Научная новизна исследования заключается в комплексном историческом подходе, в рамках которого процесс переселения и адаптации репатриантов рассматривается как сложное социально-историческое явление, а региональные особенности миграционной политики впервые подвергнуты системному анализу. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что эффективность репатриационной политики напрямую зависела от состояния социальной инфраструктуры, экономических условий и качества правового регулирования в стране. Анализ архивных источников и зарубежных научных трудов позволил выявить сравнительные преимущества казахстанского опыта репатриации в контексте международной практики. Выводы исследования обладают практической значимостью для совершенствования современной миграционной политики Казахстана, разработки эффективных механизмов социальной адаптации репатриантов и планирования региональных стратегий этнодемографического развития.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, независимость, этническая миграция, репатриация, Карагандинская область, казахи Монголии, квота, архивные данные, социальная адаптация, гражданство.

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