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# THE KAZAKH DIASPORA IN THE REPUBLIC OF KARAKALPAKSTAN: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF ETHNOCULTURAL PROCESSES, SOCIAL INTEGRATION, AND LANGUAGE PRACTICES (1991–2022)

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**Abstract.** This article provides a scholarly analysis of the historical formation, demographic dynamics, ethnocultural values, and sociocultural integration of the Kazakh diaspora residing in the Republic of Karakalpakstan during the post-independence period (1991–2022). Having evolved over centuries across the Lower Amu Darya basin and the Aral Sea region, the Kazakh population shares deep historical and ethnogenetic ties with the Karakalpak and Uzbek peoples, constituting one of the largest ethnic groups in the region. The study conceptually examines the activities of Kazakh national cultural centers, the Kazakh-language educational system (primary, secondary, and higher education programs), mass media, and the impact of cultural diplomacy between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the diaspora.

**Keywords:** Republic of Karakalpakstan, Kazakh diaspora, ethnocultural processes, integration, bilingualism, national cultural center, Aral Sea region, humanitarian ties.

# КАЗАХСКАЯ ДИАСПОРА В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КАРАКАЛПАКСТАН: ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРНЫХ ПРОЦЕССОВ, СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ И ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ПРАКТИКИ (1991–2022 ГГ.)

**Аннотация.** В данной статье проводится научный анализ истории формирования, демографической динамики, этнокультурных ценностей и вопросов социокультурной интеграции казахской диаспоры, проживающей в Республике Каракалпакстан, в годы независимости (1991–2022 годы). Казахское население, сформировавшееся на протяжении веков в бассейне Нижней Амударьи и Приаралья, имеет общие историко-этногенетические корни с каракалпакским и узбекским народами и составляет одну из крупнейших этнических групп региона. В исследовании концептуально раскрывается деятельность казахских национальных культурных центров, система образования на казахском языке (школы и направления в высшем образовании), влияние средств массовой информации и культурно-дипломатических связей между Узбекистаном и Казахстаном на диаспору.

**Ключевые слова:** Республика Каракалпакстан, казахская диаспора, этнокультурные процессы, интеграция, двуязычие, национальный культурный центр, Приаралье, гуманитарные связи.

**INTRODUCTION.** Ethnic Kazakhs occupy an essential place within the multinational population of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This unity, historically forged on the basis of a shared geographical landscape, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles, common Turkic roots, and shared cultural values, is particularly evident in the Republic of Karakalpakstan [1, p. 24]. The Kazakhs living in Karakalpakstan are not merely an ethnic minority; they constitute an ancient, autochthonous community that has actively contributed to the region’s economic, agrarian,

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educational, and social development [3, p. 45]. Under the policy of interethnic harmony and tolerance pursued by the State of Uzbekistan during the post-independence period, all organizational and legal guarantees have been established for the Kazakh population in Karakalpakstan to preserve and cultivate their native language, culture, traditions, and customs [2, p. 88]. An objective historiographical examination of this ethnic community's ethnocultural status, school education, and contemporary self-identity is of paramount importance for the broader study of diaspora processes across Central Asia.

**METHODOLOGY.** The theoretical and methodological framework of this study relies on historical-comparative analysis, an ethnosociological approach, objectivity, systemic analysis, and retrospective principles. In exploring the topic, the ethnosociological model of "integration"—which denotes complete harmonization into society while resisting assimilation and preserving distinct identity—was employed as a conceptual tool [4, p. 112]. The empirical basis of the article draws upon demographic data from the Department of Statistics of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, reports from the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan, current archival records of the Kazakh National Cultural Center of Karakalpakstan, and field ethnographic observations conducted in the region [5; 6]. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was conducted on the scholarly conclusions of Karakalpak, Uzbek, and Kazakh researchers who have investigated ethnocultural interactions across the Aral Sea region [1; 3; 7].

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Demographic Distribution and Historical-Social Roots.** The concentrated settlement of the Kazakh population in Karakalpakstan primarily encompasses the Ustyurt Plateau, the peripheries of the Kyzylkum Desert, as well as the Takhtakupir, Kungrad, Muynak, Bozatov, and Chimbay districts [6, p. 18]. Historically, these areas served as convergence zones between pastoral nomadism and irrigated agriculture, establishing the foundation for centuries of contiguous and intermingled cohabitation between Karakalpak and Kazakh clans [3, p. 52]. Statistical data from 1991 to 2022 indicate that ethnic Kazakhs constitute approximately 25–28% of the total population of the Republic of Karakalpakstan [5, p. 33]. Although a degree of migration toward the historical homeland was observed during the initial years of independence, the vast majority of the population remained settled in their ancestral lands, fully integrating into the socio-economic life of the republic [4, p. 120].

**Ethnocultural Institutions and the Activities of the Kazakh National Cultural Center.** Following the establishment of the Republican International Cultural Center in Uzbekistan in 1992, the Kazakh National Cultural Center of Karakalpakstan commenced operations in Nukus, along with regional branches across several districts [2, p. 102]. The core objectives of this center have included: Revitalizing and popularizing traditional Kazakh rites and ceremonies, such as *Nauryz*, *Tilashar*, and *Betashar*; Preserving the art of *akyn aytys* (improvisational poetic duels) and *dombra* performance, passing these traditions on to younger generations; Participating in nationwide holidays and cultural festivities held throughout Karakalpakstan with cultural programs highlighting ethnic identity [7, p. 64]. The center has established cooperative relations with cultural and humanitarian institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (including the *Otandastar* Foundation), serving as an institutional conduit for the acquisition of books, national costumes, and traditional musical instruments [8, p. 41].

**Native Language and Education: Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Infrastructure.** The most significant achievement in preserving the cultural identity of the Kazakh diaspora in the Republic of Karakalpakstan is the sustainable establishment of mother-tongue education [1, p. 35]. **General School Education:** Over 100 general secondary schools in Karakalpakstan conduct instruction either entirely or partially in the Kazakh language. These

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institutions are systematically supplied with Kazakh-language textbooks and teaching aids by the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan [6, p. 27]. **Higher Education:** The Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz and Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh maintain dedicated academic departments and divisions that train specialists in Kazakh language and literature, primary education, and exact sciences taught in Kazakh [7, p. 78]. This infrastructure has ensured a continuous supply of qualified pedagogical personnel for the region's Kazakh-medium schools.

**Information Space and Linguistic Harmony.** Functional trilingualism (Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Uzbek) is widespread among the Kazakh population in Karakalpakstan, having emerged organically as a result of linguistic proximity and constant social interaction [4, p. 126]. At the same time, favorable conditions have been provided for mother-tongue mass media: the Karakalpakstan Television and Radio Company regularly broadcasts specialized television and radio programs in Kazakh. Furthermore, regional periodicals systematically publish Kazakh-language articles, literary contributions, and educational materials tailored to schools and the general public [8, p. 44].

**CONCLUSION.** Regarding the status of the Kazakh diaspora in the Republic of Karakalpakstan between 1991 and 2022, the following conclusions can be drawn: Kazakhs in Karakalpakstan do not form an isolated ethnic enclave; rather, they constitute a well-integrated community characterized by profound ethnocultural and social affinities with the Karakalpak and Uzbek populations. The state policy of interethnic harmony in Uzbekistan has guaranteed all necessary institutional conditions for the Kazakh populace to receive education in their native language, preserve their cultural heritage, and nurture their own intellectual elite. The Kazakh diaspora in Karakalpakstan serves a strategic role as a dynamic bridge of "people's diplomacy," reinforcing the enduring friendship, strategic partnership, and allied relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

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