# Development of hybrid identity among *Oralmans* in Kazakhstan: ethnic return migration and the government-sponsored policy

By

Zhaniya Sazanova

Submitted to:

Central European University

Nationalism Studies program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Szabolcs Pogonyi

Budapest, Hungary

2020

**Abstract**

My research is focused on the case of the ethnic return migration in Kazakhstan and the related governmental policy which appreciates the homecoming of returnees. *Oralmans,* or ethnic repatriates, often face problems with social integration and experience discrimination and prejudice. The dichotomy between "us" and "them" demonstrates how society views *Oralmans*, based on different factors. The research aims at examining the *Oralman* perception of identity, based on the experience of alienation and disintegration from the host society, and the development of the hybrid ethnic identity. The theories about return migration, ethnic affinity, and identity are used throughout the work.

The qualitative research includes the discourse analysis and investigation of ten in-depth semi-structured interviews. The findings provide the contribution to the field of ethnic return migration, and to the understandings of ethnic and national identity.

**Keywords: ethnic return migration, hybrid identity, nationhood, identity dilemma, national feeling**

**Acknowledgements**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my beloved grandfather, Satybaldy Sazanov, who always supported me in any beginnings. He always provided me with emotional and intellectual support, for which I cannot be enough grateful. My grandfather played an important role in assisting me to become a scholar. His academic pursuits always inspired me and motivated me to learn. Thank you, grandfather, for everything you contributed to me and for your unconditional love. Your belief in me has made this work possible.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Szabolcs Pogonyi for his guidance and assistance throughout the process of shaping this work. I am very grateful to my peer, Lunara Shingaliyeva, who assisted me to develop the ideas for the topic of the thesis and always motivated me throughout the thesis-writing process.

Also, I am very grateful to my dearest family, for their faith in me and enormous assistance throughout the whole academic year. I owe my deepest gratitude to my parents, Bayan and Murat, for their encouragement and moral support.

I am most thankful to my friends, who contributed a lot and helped me with finding the participants for the interviews which made the whole fieldwork possible. I wish to thank Jemile and Aiten for always giving me the words of encouragement. Special gratitude goes to the participants, who assisted a lot and consented to participate in the interviews during these challenging times.

**Table of contents**

Introduction ..... 1
Chapter 1. Kazakhstani ethno-national identity ..... 7
1.1. Nation-building in the independent Kazakhstan ..... 7
1.2. "Friendship of people" or internationalist policy ..... 11
1.3. Language Policies and identity debates ..... 14
1.4. Studying ethnic return migration ..... 16
Chapter 2. Emigration and establishment of diaspora abroad ..... 22
2.1. Re-orientation of Kazakh identity in the aftermath of the Soviet policies ..... 22
2.2. Emigration of refugees or *"otkochevniki"* ..... 27
2.3. The current population of diaspora abroad ..... 30
Chapter 3. The overview of Kazakhstani return migration policy ..... 35
3.1. The aims of the policy ..... 35
3.2. Implementation of ethnic return migration policy ..... 37
3.3. Challenges on the institutional level ..... 42
Chapter 4. *Oralmans'* construction of identity ..... 50
4.1. Ethnic return migration in practice ..... 52
4.2. Attitudes towards Kazakh language and the language barrier ..... 57
4.3. "Us" and "Them" or group dichotomization ..... 61
4.4. Identity dilemma ..... 66
4.5. *Oralmans* as heterogeneous community ..... 70
Conclusion ..... 73
Bibliography ..... 76

**List of tables**

Table 1. List of respondents of the semi-structured online interviews ..... 51

## Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the creation of nation-building processes in the 15 newly independent states. After the long history of "Sovietization" and the re-orientation of national identity (in Kazakh case, the shift from nomadic pastoral lifestyle to sedentary, ban of religious and cultural traditions), the questions of national identity and sense of belonging became increasingly important. Therefore, the revival of national identification became the goal of domestic policies in many countries. For Kazakhstan, this issue happens to be very meaningful, and the state adopted different policies for the enhancement of national solidarity. Much attention was put on the language issues, as the complexities of bilingualism (Kazakh and Russian languages) uncover the challenges of identity and ethnic belonging. Another significant domestic policy which aims at strengthening national unity is the immigration policy established right after independence. The policy of ethnic return migration was established by the government to catalyze the process of nationalism and welcome the diaspora communities in their ethnic homeland. An open call for the ethnic populace from all over the world was initiated by the former president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. The main reasons for the eagerness to accept people are the need for increasing the level of demography and enhancing the workforce level, which would help to cultivate underdeveloped regions of the country[1]. Therefore, the state is eager to accept people and grant them citizenship based on their ethnicity.

The worldwide practice of ethnic return migration shows that many states establish a similar policy and welcome the ethnic populace at their historical territory. However, there are many complexities with this policy that lead to different and unexpected circumstances. Many



[1] "Kazakhstan's Returnees Frustrated by Cold Shoulders," Eurasianet, accessed December 8, 2019, https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstans-returnees-frustrated-by-cold-shoulders.

scholars identify the problems with an ethnic affinity of the returnees and the hostile reactions of the host populace towards returnees. The bias and stereotypes about returnees in many instances lead to discrimination. Overall, the literature discusses the complexities of the relationship between host society and returnees. In the Kazakhstani case, returnees also face challenges and there are also issues with the policy itself because the government promises many facilities for those who return. But in many cases, when returnees move to Kazakhstan, they face struggles and experience challenges to get all the promised facilities by the government. Baurzhan Bokayev, Astrid Cerny, Oka Natsuko, and Alexander Diener extensively discussed the challenges that returnees face based on institutional and linguistic levels[2]. The problems include the documentation processes, which lead to the inability to acquire citizenship and the poor socio-economic conditions for returnees.

The policy of immigration is quite complex and requires many steps to accomplish to get citizenship and other facilities, such as housing, employment, military exemption, and others. Besides, the societal reaction to returnees is generally hostile, as the majority of members of the host society believes that this policy is unjust and provides returnees with the list of facilities that they do not deserve[3]. This reaction often leads to the appearance of bias towards returnees. However, while Bokayev, Cerny, Diener, and Natsuko focus on the challenges in adaptation and integration of returnees, they do not go further and discuss the effects that these challenges produce. Considering the influence of the Soviet past to the current understanding of Kazakh national identity and culture, adding the linguistic problems,



[2] Alexander C. Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora: Settlement Planning and the Oralman Dilemma," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (2005): 327–48.
[3] Erica Marat, *The Politics of Police Reform: Society Against the State in Post-Soviet Countries* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 162.

currently, there is no extensive research on how all these factors contribute to the formation of identity of returnees.

While the common understanding of nationhood could be distinct among different groups, I hadn't thought about the complex language issue that is incorporated in this difference until I came to Budapest. When people here started asking me why I speak Russian and consider this language as my native, I understood how language is embedded in the national feeling. I used to think that returning migrants are too conservative in their own way of treating language and traditions as sacred, and decided to research this topic to find out why people of the same ethnic affinity could be so different in their understanding of national identity. Kazakh case demonstrates how the past trauma and historic events lead to the construction of strong national identity narratives among diaspora groups, and how the so-called 'return' to the historic homeland could make returnees acquire a hybrid identity.

This work aims to explore the gap and the reasons of alienation of the ethnic return migrants from the host populace and explore how this influences their perception of ethnic identity. The Kazakh culture and traditions were influenced by the Soviet Union, and especially the language attributes and usage became different than it was before the emigration of the Kazakh population in the 20$^{th}$ century. In my thesis, I argue that because returnees face the challenges upon their move to Kazakhstan, they alienate themselves from the host society as a reaction. After analyzing the results of the qualitative investigation, I argue that returnees' identification of ethnic and national affinity is strongly affected by all these factors and alienation leads to the transformation of the perceived identity. The findings from the interviews demonstrate that before immigrating to Kazakhstan, *Oralmans* expected that their perception of Kazakh identity would correspond to the general understanding of identity among Kazakhstani society. Hence, the hybrid identity emerges as a reaction to the challenges as well as a different perception of the Kazakh culture. Nevertheless, neither Oralmans nor the locals

constitute homogeneous groups, and the different levels of hybridization among Oralmans from different states would be discussed in the last chapter.

As there is a lack of qualitative study on this topic, this chapter will focus on the challenges *Oralmans* face after immigrating to Kazakhstan and how it reflects their self-identification. To investigate these issues, I apply the qualitative approach and use in-depth online semi-structured interviews, because this issue has not been explored deliberately by scholars. I conducted 10 in-depth interviews with the returnees who currently live in Kazakhstan. The main sample consists of young people (20-30 years old), but there is also one respondent at his 50s. The common feature is that all the respondents acquire middle or high education (graduated from high schools/ universities). In addition, the majority of respondents moved to Kazakhstan from China, and there are also respondents, who come from Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Another common trend among respondents is that all are considered to be the middle-class representatives. Individual interviews provide valuable insight and assistance to acknowledge the overall degree of integration in the host society among returnees and their level of affiliation within the society. I also make discourse analysis of the public policy of return migration and public speeches of state officials and analyze three documentaries about Kazakh diaspora.

The thesis is divided into four chapters and for this study, the concepts of ethnic identity, self-identification with regard to nationality and ethnicity, ethnic return migration, assimilation, and many other concepts are significant.

The first chapter looks at Kazakhstani ethno-national identity in the wake of independence. The chapter focuses on the policies of the state, which aim at consolidating national identity. Firstly, it demonstrates how the Kazakhstani government applies Soviet rhetoric to establish the “friendship of people” policy, which aims at civic identity-building. Following this, the conceptual framework about nation and ethnicity discusses the works of

Rogers Brubaker, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner, Will Kymlicka, and many other influential scholars. The chapter also portrays the history of ethnic return migration and demonstrates the examples of Israel, Armenia, and Japan. I will use the works of Fittante, Toren, and Tsuda to analyze the cases and show that returnees face similar challenges, such as discrimination and hostility. The first chapter aims to show how the post-independent Kazakhstan attempts to create different domestic policies aiming at nation-building and how all of these policies are related to each other.

The second chapter portrays the history of emigration from Kazakhstan. It looks at the Soviet policies of industrialization and "sedentarization", which led to the famines in the Kazakh Steppe. Along with linguistic and cultural "Russification", these policies led to massive exodus of the Kazakhs into the neighboring countries. The chapter looks at the statistics and other features of migration, which led to the demography loss. Consequently, it identifies the diaspora communities of Kazakhs in the post-independent period. The number and features of the current ethnic populace abroad are demonstrated.

In the third chapter, I show the implementation of the policy of return migration by the Kazakhstani government. Then, the challenges and complexities of the policy are shown. The chapter aims to show the features of the Kazakhstani policy and the effects of it. The discourse analysis of the challenges is needed to portray the implementation of the policy on the institutional level, which in turn affects returnees' self-identification.

The final chapter identifies the current situation of *Oralmans* and uses qualitative research. The findings of semi-structured online interviews are analyzed in this chapter. I portray the identity problem of *Oralmans* and the consequences of return migration in this chapter. I aim to contribute to the literature about *Oralmans* by evaluating the data from the qualitative investigation and the theoretical framework. Furthermore, I aim to add to the

literature about the correlation between language and ethnicity, and discrimination of return migrants in the host countries.

I aim to contribute to the field of nationalism studies by exploring the complexities of the identity dilemma of ethnic return migrants in Kazakhstan and by investigating the existing gap in the literature about *Oralmans'* self-identification. As there has been an increasing level of ethnic return migration during the last century, the issue of returning is significant and implies not only the reasons for migration, but also the results of it. The research intends to provide field with more understanding of how the challenges of return migrations reflect the returnees' self-identification. The empirical contribution to the literature entails the peculiarity of the historical context concerning the appearance of the current differences between the host population and return migrants, which leads to the distinctions in the self-identification of *Oralmans.* The aim of the research is also to contribute to the theoretical framework about hybrid identity and connect it to the ethnicity, nation, culture, and self-identification.

## Chapter 1. Kazakhstani ethno-national identity

The study of immigration involves not only the investigation of the migratory flows, globalization, and economic as well as political theories. It also includes the consideration of the conceptions of ethnic belonging and national identity, which influence the immigration choices, motivations, and lead to the mass movements of people around the world. Notwithstanding, the complexity of studying and defining the concepts of ethnic and national belonging is demonstrated by different scholarly perspectives. The first chapter will give an overview of the Kazakhstani ethno-national identity and reflect the challenges of pursuing the nation-building policy in the modern post-Soviet realm. Also, this chapter will discuss the attempts of the government to consolidate national unity by implementing the language and immigration policies. The identity debates connected to these policies will also be demonstrated.

### 1.1. Nation-building in the independent Kazakhstan

The national paradigm in Kazakhstan involves the conjunction of social, historical, political, and cultural realms[4]. After gaining independence in 1991, the new form of national identity with the emphasis on ethnocultural and civic ideas started gradually developing in the official governmental discourses[5]. Kazakhstani national identity encompasses the shared history and culture[6]. This reflects Antony Smith's conception of national identity, which should implicate the core of political society with the social scope and bounded area[7]. Also, Smith

[4] Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, "Between 'Imagined' and 'Real' Nation-Building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 3 (May 4, 2015) https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1029044.
[5] Jiri S. Melich and Aigul Adibayeva. "Nation-Building and Cultural Policy in Kazakhstan," (2014).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Anthony D. Smith: National identity. Penguin Books, London 1991. Ch. 1. p. 9

argues that nations should include accepted civic culture and ideology, as well as common beliefs[8]. Consequently, Anthony Smith defines a nation as a human society with particular historic boundaries, shared myths, civic conventions, and culture, as well as collective legal rights and responsibilities[9]. Therefore, the question of nation-building in Kazakhstan became apparent after gaining independence in 1991. However, there were many challenges related to the nation-building process. Firstly, the newly independent country derived the heterogeneous population, and the former Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was composed of different ethnic groups: mainly of Kazakhs (40%), Russians (40%), Germans, Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Chechens, Poles, Koreans, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups[10]. The demographic composition is heterogeneous because of the Soviet policies in the 20th century. One of the examples is that Kazakhstan became a location for the exile of 'anti-socialist' or politically condemned ethnic communities, such as Germans (444,005), Chechens (244,674), Koreans (95,241), Poles (28,130), and other ethnic groups[11]. Consequently, by 1953, the number of "*spetsposelentcy*" or "special settlers" reached 988,373[12]. Also, around 325,000 of Russians and Ukrainians each year moved to Kazakhstan during the 1950s[13]. Moreover, because of the policies of industrialization and the campaign of Virgin lands (*Tselina*) facilitated another flow of immigration to Kazakh steppe[14]. Therefore, Kazakhs became a minority and constituted around 30% of the whole population in Kazakh SSR[15]. Among the Soviet republics, Kazakh SSR



[8] Ibid, 11.
[9] Ibid,14.
[10] Kristoffer Michael Rees and Nora Webb Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani Identity: Supraethnic Identity, Ethnicity, Language, and Citizenship," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (September 2017): p. 816 https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1288204.
[11] Juldyz Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3–4 (July 1, 2008): 444, https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798.
[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

became the only where the titular ethnic group was considered as a minority[16]. Hence, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the demographic and ethnic composition was very heterogeneous. Because of that, the challenge of the nation-building process was presented in the dilemma of either pursuing civic nationalism or advocating the ethnically persistent national policy[17]. This challenge led to the creation and implementation of language and immigration policies which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The process of Kazakhstani state-formation led to the consolidation of Kazakh national identity. Many scholars connect the concepts of nation and state, arguing that they should be congruent with each other. For instance, Ernest Gellner holds that the historical roots of nationalism are related to the recognition of a state as it is[18]. He argues that nationalism appears only when the 'states' are regarded as normative to society[19]. Moreover, culture and ideology are the most important attributes of a nation, according to Gellner[20]. Also, he suggests that people constitute a nation, only if they identify themselves as of the same nation or community[21]. Therefore, both Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson claim that the nation is constructed and "*nations maketh man*"[22]. Especially, a member of the nation should distinguish reciprocal rights and obligations to other members of the collective nation[23]. Accordingly, the nation-building policy which recognizes the variety of cultures and implies the importance of different languages in the multi-ethnic community was pursued by the Kazakhstani government.



[16] Ibid, 446.
[17] Rees and Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani Identity."
[18] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press, 2008), 1.
[19] Ibid, 4.
[20] Ibid, 7.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

Modern Kazakhstan comprises a multi-ethnic and multi-religious national form, which could be defined as polyethnic[24]. The issues of ethnicity and ethnic affinity are therefore very substantial in this regard. Rogers Brubaker states that the terms as ethnicity, nation, and race should be viewed as practical categories, cultural dialects, discursive structures, or political constructions[25]. In *Ethnicity without groups*, Brubaker opposes the conceptualization of "ethnicity", which is usually linked to groups and the idea of collective individuals[26]. "Groupism" is referred to here as the way of constructing the social world by separating it from a certain cultural, ethnic, and racial unit[27]. By challenging the notion of "groupism", Brubaker claims that the presence of ethnicity and national identity should not be revolved around the existence of ethnic or nation groups[28]. As an alternative to thinking further than "groupism", he suggests looking at the concepts of ethnicity, nationhood, and race as to the way of comprehending, elucidating, and portraying the social world[29]. More importantly, this demonstrates that it is the people, who construct ethnicity and distinguish their membership in the ethnic, racial, or national categories[30]. Therefore, by viewing this concept from the cognitive aspect, ethnicity depicts how human beings interpret the social world and categorize themselves. Connecting Brubaker's approach to the case of Kazakhstan, it is important to view how and why the citizens use, consume, and prioritize national identity and ethnicity. It is important to demonstrate how non-governmental actors regard the national framework in Kazakhstan. The governmental attempts to establish a civically characterized Kazakhstani



[24] Rees and Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani Identity."
[25] Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without Groups," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 11.
[26] Ibid, 11.
[27] Ibid, 4.
[28] Ibid, 12.
[29] Ibid, 17.
[30] Ibid, 18.

nation created the dichotomization into "Kazakhstani" and "Kazakh" by citizens[31]. Imagining the Kazakh nation, the citizens are constructing their national identities by dividing into these two groups[32]. Official policies define "Kazakh" as more ethnocentric related, and "Kazakhstani" as more focused on the civic contention of nationality[33]. Those, who identify as "Kazakhs", refer to the ethno-national terms and highlight ethnocultural features of their identity[34]. And people, who refer to "Kazakhstani", prioritize civic aspects and focus on the ideological and territorial form of identity[35]. This dichotomization reflects the constructivist nature of the consideration of ethnicity and nationalism. Theoretical concerns of different scholars focus on the constructivist approach to the given fields. For instance, Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community", and believes that the individuals who constitute the nation do not know each other, but perceive themselves to be part of one shared community[36]. Regarding the features of an "imagined political community", Anderson recognizes that each nation has its cultural roots, is limited, sovereign, and constitutes a community[37]. Therefore, Anderson's conception provides an accurate overview of how one could perceive a nation.

### 1.2. "Friendship of people" or internationalist policy

The reinforcement of political stability after the collapse of the Soviet Union was the primary goal for the government of modern Kazakhstan. Kazakhstani nation-building processes



[31] Rees and Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani Identity," 817.
[32] "National Identity Issues in Kazakhstan · Publications · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal," accessed April 18, 2020, https://e-history.kz/en/publications/view/national_identity_issues_in_kazakhstan__4803.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "National Identity Issues in Kazakhstan · Publications · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal."
[35] Ibid.
[36] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), 6.
[37] Ibid, 7.

reflect the government's approach to achieving inter-ethnic harmony by respecting shared history, culture, and political engagement. On the official level, the government proclaimed the public policy targeted on the inter-ethnic harmony and advertised the 'friendship of the people'[38]. For the progressive democratization process, the government began to pursue the policy of multiculturalism and created the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan in 1995[39]. The primary purpose of the Assembly is to maintain communication and dialogue with different ethnic societies and to shape an ideology that would contribute to the peaceful relationship among ethnic and religious groups in Kazakhstan[40]. The topic of multicultural citizenship was extensively discussed by Will Kymlicka, who advocates for the liberal appeal to minority rights. He claims that minority groups should be granted with the unique rights and recognizes the "group-differentiated rights"[41]. The government of Kazakhstan addressed these issues and established a balanced approach for maintaining the rights of different ethnic groups. The government founded distinct innovative unions of various ethnic communities, such as Korean, Uzbek, Uyghur, German, and Russian[42]. Also, the state allowed broadcasts, print media, and radio facilities in the languages of ethnic communities in the areas where they are predominant[43]. Furthermore, the national celebration of the languages is held in all cities of Kazakhstan[44]. By these attempts, the government claims that it respects the cultural heritage of



[38] Chaimun Lee, "Languages and Ethnic Politics in Central Asia: The Case of Kazakhstan," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 113.
[39] Altynay Kadyraliyeva et al., "Kazakhstan's Experience in the Enhancement of the Intercultural Dialogue in a Multicultural Society," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3rd Cyprus International Conference on Educational Research, CY-ICER 2014, 30 January – 1 February 2014, Lefkosa, North Cyprus, 143 (August 14, 2014): 914, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.526.
[40] Ibid, 914.
[41] Will Kymlicka, *Individual Rights and Collective Rights, Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford University Press), 38, accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0198290918.001.0001/acprof-9780198290919-chapter-3.
[42] Altynay et al., "Kazakhstan's Experience in the Enhancement of the Intercultural Dialogue in a Multicultural Society," 914.
[43] Ibid, 914.
[44] Ibid, 914.

all ethnic groups residing in the country. Additionally, Kymlicka distinguished multination states, which include territorially located and condensed cultural communities, and polyethnic states, which include ethnic communities of immigrants[45]. As the Soviet Union was a multinational state, the demographics and history of independent Kazakhstan show that the state corresponds to both types proposed by Kymlicka[46]. Also, the experience of post-Soviet states in politics demonstrates that semi-authoritarian states utilize the top-down approach in a relationship between the state and citizens which makes it problematic to acquire the liberal policies aimed to multiculturalism. Rees and Williams argue that the government uses the institutions and official policies to make a visibility of democracy[47]. Hence, when the government proclaimed the internationalist policy and 'friendship of the people' right after gaining the independence, it resembled the way how the Soviet Union attempted to create "one big family" or the notion of "Soviet people"[48]. Burkhanov argues that the internationalist policy was attempted to be a "safe choice" for national identity creation, where the Kazakhs would maintain a role of a "big brother" along with accepting the multi-ethnic rhetoric[49]. Hence, the legacy of the Soviet regime, as well as nationality and language policies, presume many complexities in the post-independent identity construction in Kazakhstan. Although the Kazakh government established the Assembly of People and pursued multiculturalist policies, generally there are certain hurdles to maintain these goals.



[45] Kymlicka, *Individual Rights and Collective Rights*, 12.
[46] Rees and Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani Identity," 819.
[47] Ibid, 835.
[48] Aziz Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions," *Cornell International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 13.
[49] Ibid.

### 1.3. Language Policies and identity debates

Linguistic and ethnic composition play a meaningful role in the consideration of nation-building in Kazakhstan. The languages in Kazakhstan generally pertain to the Turkic (60,5% of the speaking population), Slavic (34,6% of the speaking population), and other language families, such as Germanic and Semitic (4,9% of the speaking population)[50]. The Kazakh language pertains to the western section of Turkic languages[51]. Initially, Turkic communities applied different runic scripts for writing, but with the proliferation of Islam in the territory, the writing methods were substituted with Arabic script[52]. Consequently, in 1940 the alphabet was substituted with Cyrillic script[53]. Earlier in 1938, the learning of Russian in all schools became mandatory[54]. And later in 1955, teaching Kazakh was no longer mandatory in Russian schools[55]. Consequently, the Soviet educational reforms led to removal of 700 Kazakh schools[56]. Accordingly, most students had very scarce knowledge of Kazakh[57]. In addition, social, educational, and many other institutions offered a higher salary and better positions for Russian speakers[58]. All these circumstances led to the language assimilation of Kazakhs. More importantly, this assimilation led to the social differences among rural and urban Kazakhs: while rural Kazakh speaking Kazakhs were generally more religious and with a lower education degree, the Russian speaking Kazakhs were considered more urban and ambitious, successful,



[50] Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," 442.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "Kazakhstan to Switch from Cyrillic to Latin Alphabet," accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/kazakhstan-switch-cyrillic-latin-alphabet-171028013156380.html.
[54] "Language Policy in Kazakhstan · Publications · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal," accessed April 19, 2020, https://e-history.kz/en/publications/view/3053.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," 444.
[57] Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy," 5.
[58] William Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools," *The Russian Review* 65, no. 1 (2006): 101.

and with higher education degree[59]. Therefore, the Soviet policies influenced the decrease of the Kazakh language in the sociolinguistic hierarchy.

Thus, after gaining independence in 1991, the transformation of the script was discussed by officials and the mass media. Starting from 2006, President Nazarbayev made several inquiries about the action plan for the change[60]. The Kazakh language is the sole state language of the Republic, while Russian is considered as the official language of interethnic communication[61]. The government started to implement different policies aimed at *"Kazakhization"* of the state and to increase the Kazakh literacy skills[62]. For instance, as the education method is separated by the language of instruction, there are mainly Russian and Kazakh schools[63]. For both types of education, Russian and Kazakh language courses are mandatory. Also, the state made attempts at motivating people to learn Kazakh, and each Ministry has a branch that is responsible for the Kazakh language courses for the employees[64]. However, rather than a systematic and progressive transformation, the sporadic implementation of more rigorous requirements of Kazakh proficiency in the daily life and fields of education and office work was reinforced by the government[65]. Although the particular policies and resolutions were mandated by the state, the usage of Russian remains persistent in the country.



[59] Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," 445.
[60] Andrew Higgins, "Kazakhstan Cheers New Alphabet, Except for All Those Apostrophes," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2018, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/15/world/asia/kazakhstan-alphabet-nursultan-nazarbayev.html.
[61] "The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan — Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan," Akorda.kz, accessed April 19, 2020, http://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/constitution.
[62] Narek Mkrtchyan, "New Language Policy of Kazakhstan: A Project of Kazakhization?," *Ժամանակակից Եվրասիա =Contemporary Eurasia* 6, no. 1 (March 10, 2017): 109.
[63] Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," 455.
[64] Aneta Pavlenko, *Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries* (Multilingual Matters, 2008), 184.
[65] Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy," 3.

Language policies reflect the attempts of the government to pursue the consolidation of Kazakh identity. The resolutions about language are one of the most precarious and sensitive domestic policies in Kazakhstan[66]. Kazakh nationalist groups often criticize the government's treatment of Russian and argue that the state should encourage ethnic Kazakhs' interests and goals, by increasing the status of Kazakh language in the country[67]. The members of these groups argue that the government reinforces the colonial mentality and dishonor the Kazakh culture[68]. Thereupon, another delicate issue which different groups are discontented with is toponymics of Kazakhstan. During the Soviet era, many geographical areas and locations were named in Russian versions, such as *Tselinograd, Vernyi, Leninsk* (cities in Kazakhstan)[69]. However, the government promoted a huge number of renaming and imposed either ideological or historical meanings to these localities[70]. Hence, by attributing the socio-ethnic meaning to the language policies and toponymics, one can see the impact on the nation-building process and shaping the Kazakh identity. More importantly, the opposition between nationalist and multiethnic perceptions of Kazakhstan increased in the public and state discussions.

### 1.4. Studying ethnic return migration

After independence, the state began an exploration of the new cultural identity and re-identification of national identity, and the notion of "Kazakhness" became a very meaningful notion. While ethnic identifiers as "Kazakh" acquired new significance, the attention also was put on the territorial borders and the diaspora communities abroad. Not only the language and



[66] Rizagul Syzdykbayeva, "The Role of Language Policies in Developing Plurilingual Identities in Kazakhstan," 2016, 16.
[67] Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy," 8.
[68] Ibid, 9.
[69] Ibid, 10.
[70] Zhazira Dyussembekova in Nur-Sultan on 30 September 2015, "Astana Street Names Provide Historical Guide for Residents," *The Astana Times* (blog), September 30, 2015, https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/astana-street-names-provide-historical-guide-for-residents/.

ethnic policies transformed the debates between civic and nationalist approaches, but also the new immigration policies were implemented by the state. The new immigration policy encourages the in-migration of Kazakhs from the diaspora communities abroad, to reinforce the Kazakh culture and strengthen nationalist discourse in the country[71].

Ethnic return migration is the type of immigration, where the diasporic groups or descendants of the ethnic populace, who live abroad, return to their homeland[72]. This type of immigration is closely connected to the diasporic groups – the ethnic groups, which are territorially scattered around different states and which maintain national solidarity as well as the sense of connection to their ethnic homeland[73]. William Safran also mentions that the term "diaspora group" is generally used for such groups of people, as immigrants, expatriates, refugees, and minorities[74]. Consequently, the migration of diasporic groups could be of different types – the first-generation return migration and the return of descendant generations[75]. More importantly, in the case of the descendants' immigration, the 'return' is made to the ethnic origin of their ancestors.

Scholars identify different reasons for 'return', and mainly discuss political and economic ones. Notwithstanding, many diaspora communities experience the so-called myth of return, which also serves as one of the motivations for immigration. Cohen and Gold assume that immigrants, in the course of assimilation, maintain a stable emotional connection with their

[71] Astrid Cerny. "Going where the grass is greener: China Kazaks and the Oralman immigration policy in Kazakhstan." *Pastoralism* 1, no. 2 (2010): 218-247.
[72] Takeyuki (gaku) Tsuda, "Ethnic Return Migration and the Nation-State: Encouraging the Diaspora to Return 'Home,'" *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 4 (2010): 616, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2010.00444.x.
[73] Ibid.
[74] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83, https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.1991.0004.
[75] Tsuda, "Ethnic Return Migration and the Nation-State," 617.

ethnic homeland which in turn operates the delusive wish to return[76]. Also, migrants' wish to return is developed by the states, which encourage repatriation and ethnic return migration. Especially, this anticipation of return is compatible with manifested patriotism[77]. The scholars also agree on the claim that while the motivations for return are practicable, the return itself evolves into the 'social myth', as it does not eventually materialize[78]. Besides, Safran argues that the manifestation of homeland myth makes diaspora groups respond in meaningful behavior, but not conducting any actions to return[79]. Safran states that the myth acts as an emotional and cognitive mechanism, and reflects the problem of the relationship among diasporic communities with homeland and host communities[80]. It, thus, becomes an eschatological notion, by holding moral assistance to immigrants[81]. Consequently, many qualitative investigations on immigrants show that wish to return could be articulated as a myth, which endows the social construction of the given ethnicity. By expressing the motivations for return, migrants gradually exclude themselves from the society and strengthen the diasporic ties. Therefore, the myth of return influences the construction of immigrants' identification.

During the last decades, ethnic return migration became increasingly prevalent. However, many examples demonstrate return migrants might face public criticism and inefficiency of the policies. For instance, Israel implemented the return migration policy in the 1950s. The special Hebrew term "Aliyah" was introduced for this purpose, which means the "move to Israel"[82]. However, emigration is viewed in Israel negatively, and emigrants are



[76] Rina Cohen and Gerald Gold, "Constructing Ethnicity: Myth of Return and Modes of Exclusion among Israelis in Toronto," *International Migration* 35, no. 3 (1997): 374, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00018.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid, 375.
[79] Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 94.
[80] Ibid, 95.
[81] Ibid, 94.
[82] Moshe Lissak, "The Demographic-Social Revolution in Israel in the 1950s: The Absorption of the Great *Aliyah*," *Journal of Israeli History* 22, no. 2 (October 2003): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/13531040312331287624.

usually called "*yordim*", which means "those, who go down from Israel to the inferior place"[83]. This is tightly connected to the Zionist perception of immigration, which discourages the "*yerida*" or emigration, and encourages "*Aliyah*"[84]. Israeli case shows that the public viewed the allocation of benefits to returnees as unjust, and this reflects the financial issues and problems which many local inhabitants faced[85]. Anti-immigrant bias is present in the consideration of ethnic return migration and could be explained by the prevalent characterization of return migrants as a potential threat[86]. Ethnic immigrants might become victims of prejudice and discrimination because of the group competition over material and symbolic resources, according to Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer[87]. As a consequence, ethnic immigrants might become rejected by the host community.

Ethnic return migrants could experience the alienation from the host society. However, there is not a high number of scholarly investigations about the alienation of returnees from the host society. Daniel Fittante, who studies North American Armenians, contributed to the investigation of the migrants' disconnection from society and, at the same time, attachment to the homeland[88]. By describing "ethnically privileged" migration, Fittante mentions willful and intentional motivations for return, which are found in sentiments and nostalgia[89]. He describes "ancestral" returnees as those who deliberately "return" to the ethnic homeland, which they had never inhabited[90]. Fittante's investigation demonstrates that while many returnees have a strong



[83] Cohen and Gold, "Constructing Ethnicity," 375.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Nina Toren, "Return Migration to Israel," *The International Migration Review* 12, no. 1 (1978): 43, https://doi.org/10.2307/2545627.
[86] John F. Dovidio et al., *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination* (SAGE, 2010), 361.
[87] Ibid, 365.
[88] Daniel Fittante, "Connection without Engagement: Paradoxes of North American Armenian Return Migration," *DIASPORA*, July 21, 2017, 147, https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.19.2-3.147.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

attachment to ethnic homeland, many of them also experience detachment from society[91]. Also, the example of North American Armenians shows that among motivation for return, there could be not only economic, political, or emotional reasons for "return", but also the wish to transform their homeland could be a strong motivation[92]. Moreover, Takeyuki Tsuda has many works about Japanese ethnic return migration, and discusses various issues in this field, like alienation, identity, and discrimination. Tsuda demonstrates the case of Japanese-Brazilians return migrants, who move to Japan as low-skilled employees[93]. Therefore, Tsuda contributes to the scholarly literature about ethnic return migration, discrimination and alienation from the host society, and distinct ethnic affinity in the case of Japanese-Brazilians. The examples of the practice of this immigration policy in different states also show the complexities after the return. Hence, the scholarly perspective demonstrates that this type of migration became prevalent starting from the 20th century and that ethnic and national affinity plays a very meaningful role in shaping returnees' identification.

To conclude, ethnic return migration has become a prominent way of enhancing the process of nationalization in different countries starting from the 20th century. The scholarly literature shows that because of various circumstances, such as idealized "myths of return", and differences in expectations and reality, many returnees face discrimination and alienation from the host societies. I argue that in Kazakhstani case, the post-independence policies of re-identification and revival of national identity were largely affected by the Soviet past, but were not properly developed and implemented. The efforts to create the "friendship of the people" clearly resembles the "Soviet people" approach, where ethnic and national identities were



[91] Ibid, 149.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Takeyuki Tsuda and Harper-Schmidt Instructor, "Migration and Alienation: Japanese-Brazilian Return Migrants and the Search for Homeland Abroad," n.d., 4.

largely removed. However, the state attempts to officially rationalize the civic and internationalist approach were opposed by the inconsistent nationalist polarizations. To catalyze the nation-building process, the government established the language policies which aimed at increasing the status of Kazakh language. Besides, the state opened call for ethnic Kazakhs from abroad and encouraged diasporic communities to 'return' to their ethnic homeland. The literature demonstrates that ethnic return migration is followed by many complexities, and the following chapters will illustrate the comparison of different cases with the Kazakhstani case and the subsequent complexities of return migration, which are connected with the issues of language and Soviet past.

## Chapter 2. Emigration and establishment of diaspora abroad

To understand the peculiarity of returning migrants' identity, the Soviet policies during the 1930s should be discussed. The historical background plays a significant role in the return migration, as it demonstrates how the diasporic communities were created and, to some extent, shows why there are challenges in the adaptation of returnees. The roots of return ethnic migration in different societies more or less are grounded in the historical narrative. Hence, historical background serves as one of the explanations both for migration and for the problems that migrants encounter upon their return to the homeland. In the Kazakhstani case, the significant flow of emigration from the Kazakh Steppe happened in 1920-1930s, after the implementation of the Soviet policies of industrialization, and "sedentarization", which led to the massive famines and decrease in population size. Also, the repression of the Kazakh intelligentsia was one of the main reasons for emigration. The massive exodus from the Kazakh Steppe influenced the loss in demography, which led to the creation of the diaspora groups abroad. However, emigration also affected the decrease in ethnic population inside the state, making Kazakhs become an ethnic minority at the time of getting the independence of the country.

### 2.1. Re-orientation of Kazakh identity in the aftermath of the Soviet policies

It is crucial to understand the rationale behind the emigration, as it shows how the current returnees face struggles and why there are differences in the identification of returnees and the host Kazakhs. Various reasons explain the massive migration of population to mainly neighboring states, but all of them are connected with the Soviet Union's expansion into the region of Central Asia. Among different Soviet policies that aimed at boosting the economic level of the state, the policies of collectivization and "sedentarization" proved to be the harshest and led to massive famines in the Kazakh steppe. These particular policies aimed at

transforming the nomadic way of life, and at settling the pastoral nomadic community of Kazakhs. The nomadic way of life involved seasonal migrations to the planned itineraries with the animal flocks (horses, camels, sheep)[94]. The seasonal movements were done with camps (2-8 families) called *auls*[95]. At the end of the 1920s, 23% of the whole Kazakh population (3,8 million) was sedentary, and the rest of the population were semi-nomadic or nomadic[96]. Thus, animal herding and movements to summer and spring pastures constituted the pastoral lifestyle of Kazakhs by the 1920s.

After the Soviets acquired power in the region, the propaganda of social revolution spread rapidly. Rural elite or the "*bai"*, as well as the nationalist intelligentsia (Alash Orda), were the main targets of the Soviet policies[97]. Arrest and repressions of numerous political activists, national movements' members, and other anti-Soviet people occurred on a large scale. It was followed by Stalin's Five-Year Plan, which was aiming at massive industrial plan to reconstruct society, farming, and industry in the Soviet Union, and was initiated in 1929[98]. The involvement of peasants and requisition of the agricultural products and livestock from different regions of the Soviet Union was incorporated in the policy called collectivization[99]. Although collectivization was implemented in the different Soviet Republics, Kazakhs were the first to experience this campaign. Kazakh SSR was the second largest territory in the Soviet Union, where the large regions were "under-utilized" and could be served as the land for cultivation



[94] Sarah Cameron, "The Kazakh Famine of 1930-33: Current Research and New Directions," *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 10, 2016): 118, https://doi.org/10.21226/T2T59X.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Niccolò Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe: The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2004): 140.
[97] Ibid, 147.
[98] Robert Kindler, *Stalin's Nomads: Power and Famine in Kazakhstan* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 35.
[99] Ibid, 36.

and grain production[100]. As the first collectivized territory in the Soviet space, Kazakh SSR was planned to be settled and collectivized at the same time[101]. The program was targeting the "full collectivization based on sedentarization"[102]. Because meat and grain were abundant in the territory, these goods as well as wool, dairy products, and hides were regularly confiscated and shipped to the big cities such as Leningrad and Moscow[103]. Also, the massive expropriation of wealth, heavy taxations, as well as the imposition of fines for every reason, led a huge decrease in the numbers of livestock[104]. Heavy control of the food supply and requisition of the grain and livestock to accomplish the massive industrial plan, led to the scarcity of food supply[105]. Because of this, people needed to sell remaining animals to obtain money for the acquisition of grain and paying the taxes, which accompanied the emerging crisis[106]. By 1931, the livestock appropriation reached 68,5% of the total number of owned livestock[107]. This led to the disappearance of animal herds in the Kazakh Steppe. All the collected goods were sent to Moscow and Leningrad. Regarding the policy of "*sedentarization"*, the intentional settlement of nomads in the "*kolkhozes*" or collective farms was assumed to regulate the nomadic community[108]. While authorities collected a huge quantity of grain, wheat, and remaining livestock from people, the system of collective farms was at a "standstill" and no cohesive plan was made to accomplish the building of farms for the agriculture and the construction of



[100] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 156.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Cameron, "The Kazakh Famine of 1930-33," 119.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Massimo Livi-Bacci, "On the Human Costs of Collectivization in the Soviet Union," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 4 (1993): 745, https://doi.org/10.2307/2938412.
[105] Niccolo Pianciola, "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (2001): 241.
[106] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 150.
[107] Pianciola, "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933," 241.
[108] Isabelle Ohayon, "The Kazakh Famine: The Beginnings of Sedentarization," n.d., 3.

housing for people[109]. The massive reduction in animal herds as well as grain and wheat led to the outbreak of famine in 1930[110]. By launching these policies, Soviet rule aimed at centralizing its power in the region. However, the rapid and harsh collectivization and intense "*sedentarization"* processes brought a severe famine to the Kazakh Steppe.

After the outbreak of the famine, the state launched the massive peasant settlement and banned nomadic customs and traditions, which provoked the hostility from Kazakhs and resulted in a more intensified crisis[111]. Focusing on the peasant resettlement, the Soviet authorities launched deportations for those who protested joining the collective farms[112]. Kazakh SSR became a place of destination for nearly 300,000 "*dekulakized"* or deported peasants from the North-Caucasus region, Transcaucasia, Central Asian regions, Russian regions as Nizhny Novgorod and Ivanov regions in 1930-1934[113]. The deported peasants became "special colonists" (*specpereselency*)[114]. As Gulag prisoners needed to establish in the Steppe, many Kazakhs were expelled from their places[115]. Hence, after the appearance of the huge number of European peasants in the Kazakh lands, the friction between herdsmen and peasants led to the adverse effect in the farming processes and to the increased shortages of food supply[116]. The state's interference in the cultural and traditional life of Kazakhs also plays a significant role in the eruption of massive emigration. The social and cultural changes in the



[109] "Collectivization in Kazakhstan · Kazakhstan during the Formation of the Totalitarian System · Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union · History of Kazakhstan · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal," accessed May 1, 2020, https://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/294.
[110] Ohayon, "The Kazakh Famine: The Beginnings of Sedentarization," 4.
[111] Pianciola, "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933."
[112] "Peasant Exile to Kazakhstan · Kazakhstan during the Formation of the Totalitarian System · Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union · History of Kazakhstan · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal," accessed April 30, 2020, https://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/peasant_exile_to_kazakhstan__1657.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 157.
[115] Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Cornell University Press, 2018), 98, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt21h4vb7.
[116] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 155.

lifestyle include the category of "crimes based on tradition" that made many traditional practices forbidden[117]. Hence, the massive peasant settlement as well as the ban of Kazakh traditions and customs deteriorated the situation and contributed to the re-orientation of Kazakh identity.

The consequences of these Soviet policies were very harsh. One of the most unexpected and severe aftermaths of the collectivization drive was the almost complete vanishing of the livestock (decreased by 90%)[118]. This led to the impoverishment of Kazakhs which was followed by the spread of starvation and epidemics in the region. The outbreak of famine in Kazakh SSR began earlier than in other Soviet republics and was characterized by the hunger and the spread of smallpox and typhus[119]. Based on different statistics, the population of Kazakhs diminished by nearly 2 million people[120]. Also, according to the census of 1937, the ethnic population decreased by 41.3%, from nearly 3,8 million to 2 million people – as the result of the Soviet policies[121]. This made Kazakhs become an ethnic minority.

Scholars assume that Soviet authorities made an assault on the Kazakh's lifestyle and attempted to eradicate the traditional authority. Cameron argues that the Bolshevik rule attempted the impoverishment of Kazakhs and the elimination of their status as nomads which would as the result lead to their full embodiment with the Soviet Union[122]. According to Cameron, Stalin focused on the production of grain and other goods more than on the lives of



[117] Pianciola, "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933," 239.
[118] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 165.
[119] Nazira Nurtazina and Tomohiko//Foreword Uyama, "Great Famine of 1931-1933 in Kazakhstan : A Contemporary's Reminiscences," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 32 (2012): 109.
[120] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 168.
[121] Isik Kuscu Bonnenfant, "Constructing the Homeland: Kazakhstan's Discourse and Policies Surrounding Its Ethnic Return-Migration Policy," *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 31–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2012.650004.
[122] Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe*, 98.

Kazakhs and accepted the emerged crisis and sufferings[123]. The radical reorientation of Kazakh identity was followed after the events of the 1930s. Pastoral nomads became settled and their culture was transformed into the new, "Soviet" culture. This part of history is significant as it shows the gradual steps of how the Soviet Union transformed the culture of Kazakhs and acquired total control over the region. After this period, Kazakhs became gradually more "Soviet" and acquired new cultural traits. The harshness of the policies and the high death toll is also important to mention, as the current returnees view these negative aspects of history as one of the determinants of their opposition to the Soviet culture.

### 2.2. Emigration of refugees or *"otkochevniki"*

Emigration from the country was not a voluntary choice, but one of the available options to survive. As the famine and epidemics spread over the Kazakh SSR, it led to the massive exodus of the people. Kazakhs began to flee in the wake of the first years of collectivization, but as the situation got worse, the emigration became more apparent. By 1931, the massive starvation caused insurrections and much of the population of Kazakh nomads fled the country[124]. A severe shortage of basic goods such as tea, sugar, and even clothes, contributed to the movement[125]. People firstly left villages and farms and moved to cities, and then fled the country[126]. The cattlemen who fled the country and became refugees were given a special term *"otkochevniki*" (from "nomad", or "kochevnik"[127]). During my interviews, two respondents shared the traumatic experience of their family's emigration in the 1930s. Amina, from China (more detailed see Table 1), portrayed the story of how her grandmother with relatives fled the



[123] Ibid, 99.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid, 132.
[126] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 170.
[127] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *The Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981): 133, https://doi.org/10.2307/129204.

state during the years of repressions. One of their close relatives (grandmother's father) was an imam at one of the mosques at that time. As the religion became forbidden at that time, he was going to be arrested for being an imam. Her father decided to take family and all the belongings, and they crossed the Kazakh-Chinese border. Later, his little brother (who did not emigrate and stayed in Kazakhstan) was put in the prison instead of him and died there. And, currently, many of Amina's relatives reside in China. Another story was shared by Aissulu from Mongolia (more detailed see Table 1), who portrayed her grandparents' emigration. The main reason for their departure was the livestock acquisition performed by Soviet authorities. Aissulu mentioned that all belongings apart from the livestock were also taken away from her grandparents, and there was nothing left for them. That is why they decided to escape and crossed the border to Mongolia. These accounts are narrating the examples of massive exodus, which happened in the 1930s. Although the data might show under-reported numbers, it demonstrates that in 1930-1931 over a million people, as well as 78,000 families in 1932 and 31,000 families in 1933 fled the territory[128]. The Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) records show that in 1931, around 1,700,000 Kazakhs left the country[129]. Mainly, they crossed the borders to Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan and Russia. Around 40,000 people fled to Ural and Siberia regions[130]. As many refugees were frightened by the possible forced return, they travelled further to central Russia and northern Siberia[131]. But one of the main destinations was China. By 1931, the estimations demonstrate that nearly 165,000 people fled the republic to China[132]. In 1932, nearly 100,000 people moved from



[128] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 170.
[129] Ohayon, "The Kazakh Famine: The Beginnings of Sedentarization," 5.
[130] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 171.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid, 170.

Almaty to Chinese borders[133]. However, it is assumed by many scholars that the Soviet authorities under-reported the actual number of the death toll as well as the emigration numbers[134]. Therefore, the actual number of refugees could have been bigger.

The massive exodus of people led to further problems. Many refugees could not find jobs in the new settlements, because the former nomads were not used to industrial work[135]. Many Russian factories did not hire them, based on the fact, that Kazakhs were of a different race and ethnicity[136]. Moreover, the ethnic tensions were followed by thefts and violence. The racist nature of tensions demonstrates another problem, which refugees face apart from the starvation and emigration. The flows of emigration demonstrate how the Kazakh population was established abroad. This particular historical period is of great significance because it shows that emigration happened before the "Sovietization" of the population, and this leads to the differences between ethnic return migrants and the host Kazakh population. The history of the movements depicts not only how the migration occurred, but also provides implications for the existing challenges of returnees' adaptation. Because many of the population fled in the 1930s, their descendants are currently speaking Kazakh language and use the Arabic alphabet as it was used before Soviet expansion[137]. However, as the Soviet Union introduced Cyrillic script and Russian language, currently it is used on the official level, which creates problems for returnees and leads to exclusion of them in the workspace communication.



[133] Ibid, 168.
[134] Ohayon, "The Kazakh Famine: The Beginnings of Sedentarization."
[135] Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 172.
[136] Ibid.
[137] "Kazakh Alphabet: Past, Present and Future," *Edge : Kazakhstan* (blog), April 4, 2018, https://www.edgekz.com/kazakh-alphabet-past-present-and-future/.

### 2.3. The current population of diaspora abroad

During the 20th century a huge number of Kazakhs emigrated from the Kazakh SSR and established the diasporic communities in the new territories. The descendants of those, who emigrated, currently live in these regions and constitute a large Kazakh population abroad. Concerning the official data on the number of Kazakhs abroad, there are nearly five million individuals live outside Kazakhstan, and in more than 40 states[138]. According to UNDP statistics the biggest diaspora groups live in Uzbekistan (1.5 million), China (1.5 million), Russia (1 million), Turkmenistan (100,000), Mongolia (80,000), and Kyrgyzstan (45,000)[139]. Also, there is a big number of ethnic populations residing in Turkey (100,000), Iran, Afghanistan, and Germany. During the independence of Kazakhstan, the number of those who left the country has been varying from year to year. In the years between 1991 and 2004, more than 3 million people left the country, among which there were ethnic Russians, Germans, Poles, Kazakhs, and other ethnic groups[140]. This led to the significant population decrease in the country. Also, this data shows that there is a high number of ethnic populations residing outside Kazakhstan. This demonstrates the dispersion of ethnic community and might explain the aim of the policy of return, targeting at the population increase.

The community of Kazakhs abroad are divided into the diaspora groups and irredenta communities. In order to discuss the features of these divisions, the terms should be defined. Irredenta is the ethnic community that inhabits the historically own territory, but as an outcome



[138] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," UNDP in Kazakhstan, 8, accessed October 29, 2019, https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/library/inclusivedevelopment/status-of-oralmans-in-kazakhstan--overview.html.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.

of the conquests of these areas is currently under the foreign rule[141]. In the Kazakh case, much of the population became irredenta when the borders were demarcated in 1925, as the mountains Altai prefectures (mainly Xinjiang province) became the Chinese territory[142]. Mendikulova suggests that Kazakhs are both diaspora and irredenta in China, Russia, and Uzbekistan[143]. For instance, the provinces of Kurgan, Astrakhan, Volgograd, Omsk, and Chelyabinsk were integrated in the Russian territory as the outcome of the colonial subjugation[144]. Considering another form of communities abroad, there are main features that scholars identify as essential for the community to become a diaspora. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, William Safran defines diaspora as the "expatriate minority communities", that are scattered to at least two locations, presume the collective solidarity, preserve a memory of the ethnic homeland and see it as a place for return[145]. Safran identifies Turkish, Armenian, Palestinian, and Jewish communities as diasporas[146]. By looking at this definition, the importance of the dispersion, solidarity, and connection with the historic homeland becomes visible. Other scholars also mention these features. Brubaker suggests that the term 'diaspora' has proliferated and is used not only in academia but also in the broader polity[147]. Consequently, he proposes the main criteria for the 'diaspora', which include homeland orientation, dispersion, and boundary maintenance[148]. Considering the Kazakh communities abroad, the diaspora of Kazakhs could be found in China, Turkey, Germany, Mongolia, Russia, Iran, and other states.



[141] Gulnara Mendikulova, "The Diaspora Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Regional Routes, Regional Roots? Cross-Border. Patterns of Human Mobility in Eurasia*, n.d., 77.
[142] "Analysis: China's New Security Concern – The Kazakhs," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, accessed May 2, 2020, https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-kazakhstan-china-deteriorating-relations-uyghurs/28665937.html.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Mendikulova, "The Diaspora Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan," 78.
[145] Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 86.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997.
[148] Ibid, 6.

Why is the discussion of the diaspora of Kazakhs significant? By applying the main features of the diaspora to the Kazakh communities, their relation to the historic homeland could be demonstrated. I argue that the diaspora of Kazakhs abroad tries to maintain the traditions, and preserve the language and customs as the sacred attributes of their ethnic identity. However, as many members of diaspora emigrated during the 1930s, they did not experience the transformation of identity that was followed by the forced "Sovietization". This makes them perceive ethnic identity different from the Kazakhs, who have been residing in Kazakhstan after the 1930s. Mendikulova demonstrates that the Kazakh diaspora in the West countries maintains ethnic identity by teaching children the Kazakh language, fostering mono-ethnic marriages, celebrating the traditional festivities such as Nauryz, and by communicating mainly with the members of the diaspora[149]. Being very conservative, many members of the diaspora highlight the importance of the Kazakh language, and generally, they do not have a good knowledge of Russian. For instance, the member of Kazakh American Association claims: "As one of the main elements of national identity, the Kazakh language is very important to me. In order to preserve our language among those abroad, I usually speak Kazakh with my compatriot friends daily"[150]. This claim is persistent among diaspora communities in Mongolia, China, Iran, Turkey, and other states.

Among the scarce resources about Kazakh diaspora abroad, there are three documentaries about Kazakhs in Mongolia, Turkey, and Iran called "Nomads", which were filmed in 2019 by a Kazakh filmmaker Kanat Beisekeyev. By analyzing the documentaries, similar trends among diaspora societies could be identified. The documentaries demonstrate the



[149] Mendikulova, "The Diaspora Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan," 79.
[150] Kamila Zhumabayeva in People on 22 September 2015, "Kazakh Diaspora Chooses Unique Ways to Maintain Identity," *The Astana Times* (blog), September 22, 2015, https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/kazakh-diaspora-chooses-unique-ways-to-maintain-identity/.

narratives of the national identity of the diaspora groups in these countries. Reflecting on the content of the three documentaries, they reveal some common traits of all three diaspora groups. In all the countries, the diasporic groups are integrated and communicate tightly, live together in one place, and remember how they settled in these host communities[151]. Reminiscent about the historical past, they also show a clear orientation towards the homeland. All of them think about moving at some point or another, but do not plan to move in the nearest future. Also, the producer showed the particular symbolic pictures, such as the national dresses, the Kazakh flag, the Kazakh music on the background, which creates the general trend of attachment to the homeland[152]. According to the documentary medium, the current Kazakh diaspora preserves ethnic nationhood and has a strong attachment to the historic homeland. Although the documentaries might not represent the unbiased and objective view, it complements the existing literature about Kazakh diaspora and shows the similar argument as in the existing literature.

To sum up, this chapter demonstrates the reasons for the emigration of Kazakhs during the 1930s, and the effects of the Soviet policies of collectivization and "sedentarization". The increase of the Russian and Slavic population in the Kazakh SSR and the huge numbers of deaths as a result of the severe famine led to the strong decrease of the Kazakh population. These events led to the forced transformation of Kazakh identity, which became "Soviet" and "Russified". The descendants of the emigrants currently form the Kazakh diaspora communities and try to preserve the national traditions, language, and ethnic identity. I argue that because the emigration happened before the forced "Sovietization" of the society, currently diaspora communities are more conservative in treating the Kazakh traditions, and do not regard Russian



[151] "Iran Qazaqtary | Казахи в Иране - YouTube," accessed December 10, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnz9bf9Kyd4&t=3s.
[152] "The Kazakhs of Mongolia: EAGLE HUNTERS (English Subtitles) - YouTube," accessed December 10, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_48K5I5XleQ.

language and Soviet culture as inherent to their identity. However, many members of the diaspora are determined in their goal to return to the historic homeland and view it as the way of maintaining the ethnic and national identity in the future.

## Chapter 3. The overview of Kazakhstani return migration policy

Previous chapters focused on the history of emigration from Kazakhstan, and the current problems with nation-building processes in the state. The following two chapters (3 and 4) will analyze the qualitative data and describe the challenges of the state-initiated policy of return migration. In this chapter, the discourse analysis will be used to investigate the existing policy documents as well as some official statements about *Oralmans.* The chapter will also make an overview of the return migration policy in Kazakhstan, and then will demonstrate the analysis of the implementation of the policy. The detailed examination of the policy helps to figure out the reasons for the alienation of returnees, and the main differences between the host society and migrants.

### 3.1. The aims of the policy

Kazakhstan has been pursuing the ethnic return migration policy starting from the independence of the country in 1991. The government has been dynamic in searching ties with ethnic diasporic communities and established the corresponding ethnic return migration policy to this end. What is this policy about? On 18 November 1991 (a month before gaining independence), Kazakhstan adopted the resolution "On the Procedures and Conditions of the Relocation to Kazakh SSR for Persons of Kazakh Ethnicity from Other Republics and Abroad Willing to Work in Rural Areas"[153]. This resolution pursued the immigration of ethnic Kazakhs to a homeland and also aimed at regulating the establishment of Kazakh villages and farm complex, which was in a crisis at that time[154]. This law was transformed into Article 1 of the



[153] Bonnenfant, "Constructing the Homeland."
[154] "The Issues of Oralmans' Integration into Modern Kazakhstani Society," accessed December 8, 2019, https://articlekz.com/en/article/19107.

Law on Immigration issued in 1992. This Article granted the constitutional right for ethnic Kazakhs to return to the 'historic homeland'[155].

As Joppke claims, the main rationale for ethnic favoritism in immigration could be attributed to the manifestation of the shared cultural-historical unity, smooth assimilation, and protection from foreign mistreatment[156]. The policy of ethnic return migration in Kazakhstan has been pursuing different goals. First of all, after the dissolution of the USSR, ethnic Russians and Germans in Kazakhstan started leaving the country and seeking a return to their homelands[157]. This led to a decrease in the population of Kazakhstan. Starting from the independence of the country, between 1991 and 2004 more than 3 million people left the country[158]. Consequently, there was a need in people for an increase in demography. The second reason is to provide historical justice for those who were oppressed by the Soviet government and were repressed, put under circumstances of famine, and needed to leave the country because of the circumstances. Because of the historical past and trauma, the government might have decided to provoke the justice and welcome ethnic Kazakhs to the country as it had been their homeland for many centuries. The similar ethnic immigration discourse was presented in Germany, where the German Law of Return was constituted as the remedy for the outcomes of war and focused on the ethnic Germans in Soviet republics[159]. Yet, the ethnic immigration policy in Kazakhstan is aimed not only at those, who fled the country during the Soviet repressions but on all the ethnic Kazakhs who have left the country at some point or another. It

---

[155] Cerny, Astrid. "Going where the grass is greener: China Kazaks and the Oralman immigration policy in Kazakhstan." 223.
[156] Christian Joppke, "Exclusion in the Liberal State: The Case of Immigration and Citizenship Policy," *European Journal of Social Theory*, July 24, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431005049327.
[157] "Kazakhstan's Returnees Frustrated by Cold Shoulders."
[158] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 8.
[159] Christian Joppke and Zeev Rosenhek, "Contesting Ethnic Immigration: Germany and Israel Compared," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 43, no. 3 (2002): 303.

could also be attributed to maintaining the national identity of the state and foster stability in the country[160]. Besides, one of the goals of this policy is the development of villages and agricultural areas, which are said to be rudimentary and underdeveloped in Kazakhstan[161]. After gaining independence, state aspired to maintain the strong sentimental relations with diaspora communities abroad, and attempted to create the repatriation program to demonstrate that Kazakhstan is the ethnic homeland for all the Kazakhs worldwide[162]. Therefore, there are many various reasons for the government to adopt the return migration policy aimed at ethnic 'compatriots' which include nation-building, maintenance of historical justice, economic contributions to the homeland, and population increase. Apart from the aims, there should also be benefits for the government in seeking this policy. The benefits of getting more ethnic populations include the increase in the workforce, development of the rural areas, the building of ethno-national identity, and economic development of the country. Therefore, both the goals and benefits reveal why the government pursues this policy and welcomes ethnic return migrants. The ideological reasons based on fostering national identity by welcoming ethnic compatriots are also present in the cases of ethnic return migration to Israel, where the government pursued the return of Jews to their historic homeland from the 20th century[163].

### 3.2. Implementation of ethnic return migration policy

As part of the Law on Immigration issued in 1992, the government also created a specific immigration quota, which varied from year to year and was monitored by the special organ. For monitoring the processes of return migration, the government established an annual



[160] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 9.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Mendikulova, "The Diaspora Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan."
[163] Toren, "Return Migration to Israel."

immigration quota system, dispensing *Oralmans* to one of 14 regions[164]. This immigration quota for returnees identifies a number of returnee families, who are accepted annually for emigration and are granted the benefits correspondent to Law on Migration[165]. Annually, the immigration quota is changed depending on the number of populations, economic factors and conditions of governmental budget[166]. At the beginning of independence, the quota was allocated for nearly 60,000 people annually[167]. However, it was decreasing and in 2001 consisted of only around 3,600 people[168]. The decrease in the quota may be explained also by the partial fulfillment of it by percentages, which shows that the whole fulfillment was not fully achieved. After 2001, the quota started again to increase and in 2005 it included 15,000 families[169]. This data shows how the quota transformed, and these changes could be attributed to the economic conditions in Kazakhstan. However, not only the number of quotas manages the flow of repatriates, as there are many families of *Oralmans* who come and who are not included in the quota[170].

What is also important, is the social and political influence of public unrest in 2011 on the policy of immigration. The growing socio-economic imbalance between workers in Kazakhstan, and especially in the region of Mangystau (western part of Kazakhstan), provoked social unrest in 2012. In one of the oil-producing cities of the region called Zhanaozen, there



[164] "Special report on ethnic Kazakhs and the struggle to return," The New Humanitarian, September 2, 2003, http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/189817.
[165] "Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 13 December 1997 No. 204-1 on Population Migration (Amendment 2002) – Kidsempowerment," accessed December 8, 2019, https://kidsempowerment.org/law-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-13-december-1997-no-204-1-on-population-migration-amendment-2002.
[166] "The Issues of Oralmans' Integration into Modern Kazakhstani Society."
[167] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora," 335.
[168] Ibid.
[169] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 9.
[170] "The Issues of Oralmans' Integration into Modern Kazakhstani Society."

were high wage discrepancies between the local employees and the foreign specialists[171]. The disparity in the remuneration of labor among local and foreign workers the social tensions led to the appearance of massive protests[172]. On Kazakhstan's Independence Day, the 16th of December there were the tensions between police, striking local oil specialists, and foreign labor workers in the city of Zhanaozen, which led to the death of at least 14 civilians[173]. According to Satpayev, nearly a quarter of 12,000 striking oil workers constituted ethnic return migrants, *Oralmans*[174]. Some scholars argue that the Zhanaozen crisis became a "catalyst for re-examining the policy towards *Oralmans* and generated the public debate about *Oralmans*"[175]. Following this event, in spring 2012, the annual quota allocation was suspended by the government. Therefore, the Zhanaozen social unrest demonstrates social inequality and the government's strategy of policy transformation. Although the quota dispersion was later resumed on an annual basis, the quota numbers became lower from year to year.

To assess the success of the policy, the benefits of it, and the number of those who actually returned should be described. The legal basis of governmental aid to *Oralmans* is grounded on the Law on Population Migration, which was adopted in 1997[176]. These benefits require the specific sum of the governmental annual budget which is varied from year to year. The support for *Oralmans* includes the provision of employment, assistance in entering schools, pension disbursement, social aid and social security, adjourned military service, and other kinds of

[171] Dossym Satpayev and Tolganay Umbetaliyeva, "The Protests in Zhanaozen and the Kazakh Oil Sector: Conflicting Interests in a Rentier State," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 125 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.03.005.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Elena Kolesova, and Evangelia Papoutsaki. "The Zhanaozen Crisis and Oralmans' Place in The (Re) Construction of The Kazakh National Identity." *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 19 (2017): 47.
[174] Satpayev and Umbetaliyeva, "The Protests in Zhanaozen and the Kazakh Oil Sector," 125.
[175] Kolesova, and Papoutsaki. ""The Zhanaozen Crisis and Oralmans' Place in The (Re) Construction of The Kazakh National Identity."
[176] "Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 13 December 1997 No. 204-1 on Population Migration (Amendment 2002) – Kids empowerment."

endorsement[177]. According to the data from the electronic government website, the returnees who get the status of *Oralman*, are provided with "free integration and adaptation courses", legal support, teaching Russian and state languages, arrangement with translational services, and other kinds of assistance[178]. This state-initiated practice of providing support for ethnic immigrants is corresponding to the Israeli policy of return migration. In the Israeli case, the main provisions for repatriates also include housing, business loans, tax relief, and other facilities[179]. Notwithstanding, while in Israeli case the provisions and special terms are clearly defined, in the Kazakhstani case there are no further strict guidelines of how the provisions are implemented. There are no further details about how the courses are held and how the language courses work practically. More importantly, there is no mention of how and if *Oralmans* should be informed about this kind of support. During the interviews, none of my respondents knew about these types of support. They were aware only of the financial and educational support provided for *Oralmans*. Many returnees agree that in practice nobody helped and they were not given all the promised financial assistance or housing[180]. Thus, it is not certain how exactly the facilities are advertised and fulfilled in practice. Regarding the assistance with employment, mainly *Oralmans* are given the low-qualified and unskilled job, such as the spheres of agriculture and construction development[181]. By regarding this in the context of the global return migration cases, a similar trend could be found in the policy of Japanese return migration.

---

[177] Natsuko, O. K. A. "A note on ethnic return migration policy in Kazakhstan: changing priorities and a growing dilemma." *Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization* (2013): 1-13.
[178] "Repatriate in Kazakhstan: Help, Privileges, Adaptation | Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan," accessed May 18, 2020, https://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/for_foreigners/oralman_rk.
[179] Toren, "Return Migration to Israel," 43.
[180] "«Nobody is waiting for us here»: The life of Oralman in Kazakhstan" (Нас Здесь Никто Не Ждет»: Как Живут Оралманы в Казахстане) The Village Казахстан, October 27, 2017, https://www.the-village.kz/village/people/people/447-oralmany.
[181] Mansiya Sadyrova and Amitov Sultankozha. *Processes of migration and social adaptation of Oralmans in Kazakhstan*. (*Миграционные процессы в Казахстане и социальная адаптация оралманов. Социологический анализ).* Sociological analysis. Litres, (2017): 2.

Nikkeijin, Japanese descendants who live abroad, are recruited mainly for the unskilled jobs after they immigrate to Japan[182]. More importantly, the Law on Immigration does not define the consequences of the legal status of *Oralman* in the labor legislation. There is no special legal regime for *Oralmans* seeking to find a job, therefore *Oralmans* need to receive a special license[183]. Hence, unskilled labor in the face of *Oralmans* constitutes a very unsafe and vulnerable community. A similar situation happened with Chinese co-ethnic migrants in Singapore, where Chinese nationals occupy low-paying work[184].

Therefore, the main features of the policy include the quota allocations and the extensive support for *Oralmans* after their immigration. However, the quota allocation strongly depends on the social and economic situation in Kazakhstan and the state can make changes according to the social climate in the country. More importantly, the fulfillment of promised help is also not extensively described in the policy documents and there are many complaints from *Oralmans* about the poor implementation of this part. Nevertheless, despite the hardships and challenges, the level of return migration has been high. There was a large influx of returnees for many years since independence, and the estimated number of ethnic return migrants in 2005 was nearly 500,000 people[185]. In 2015, the number of *Oralmans* became approximately 1 million, which made up 5,5% of the whole population of the country[186]. For the whole period of the immigration starting from 1991 until 2020, nearly 1,057,280 ethnic Kazakhs moved to



[182] Takeyuki Tsuda, "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 48, no. 1 (1999): 2, https://doi.org/10.1086/452444.
[183] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview."
[184] Liang Morita, "A Comparison of Co-Ethnic Migrants in Japan and Singapore," ed. Jamie Halsall, *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (May 30, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1189386.
[185] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 13.
[186] "Nearly 1 Million Kazakhs Have Resettled In Kazakhstan Since 1991," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-ethnic-kazakhs-oralman-return-uzbekistan-turkmenistan-china/26796879.html.

the state and acquired the status of *Oralman*[187]. Hence, despite the decreasing numbers of quota allocation and no proper guidelines about acquiring certain facilities, ethnic immigration policy is attracting many ethnic Kazakhs from around the world.

### 3.3. Challenges on the institutional level

The qualitative method that I use in this chapter is the discourse analysis of the public policy and public statements about *Oralmans*. The discourse analysis method is useful for my study because it could uncover the social and political rhetoric behind the creation and implementation of ethnic return migration policy in Kazakhstan. The chapter focuses on the analysis of the aims of the policy proposed by the government and the political context of the policy. It will include the analysis of the hardships of getting the citizenship status. Also, the state officials' (Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and Timur Kulibayev) discourses and statements would be analyzed in the light of its influence on the term *Oralman*. Consequently, the discourse would be shaped around the main idea – '*Oralman* as a problematic category' within the ethnic return migration policy.

To assess the effectiveness of the policy implementation, the details on the ways of getting the status of *Oralman* should be analyzed. Although the current legislation embraces and encourages the ethnic return migration to Kazakhstan, there are various challenges of those who want to acquire citizenship with an *Oralman* status. Firstly, the Law on Migration adopted in 1993 stated that returnees could acquire citizenship without renouncing current one – thus, allowed dual citizenship for repatriates[188]. However, two years later (in 1995), the Law was

[187] "More than 17,6 thousand Oralmans immigrated to Kazakhstan in 2019". ("Более 17,6 Тыс. Оралманов Прибыли в Казахстан в 2019"). www.forbes.kz, January 23, 2020, https://forbes.kz/news/2020/01/23/newsid_217371.

[188] Natsuko, O. K. A. "A note on ethnic return migration policy in Kazakhstan: changing priorities and a growing dilemma." *Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization* (2013): 10.

changed and dual citizenship was again forbidden for all[189]. Nevertheless, the policy stated certainly that all repatriates who return to the ancestral homeland could be granted citizenship status[190]. Therefore, the purpose is to grant *Oralmans* the fully-fledged membership in Kazakhstan. But the processes of inclusion into the quota network, acquiring residence permits, and registration for citizenship are usually complex and are operated by different state organs[191]. Consequently, the bureaucracy and complex legal processes of every state organ and the high levels of corruption undermine the smooth procedure of acquiring citizenship and integration into society.

Firstly, to acquire citizenship, returnees should register in the state office, and for registration, they need to have permanent residency[192]. This is economically impossible for many of *Oralmans,* because to possess a permanent residency, they should buy property[193]. Also, the lack of bilateral agreements between Kazakhstan and host countries plays a significant role, as a renouncement of foreign citizenship requires many procedures – and makes the naturalization procedure in Kazakhstan harder to accomplish[194]. Furthermore, to acquire citizenship, *Oralman* should demonstrate identity documents for him/herself and all the family members[195]. There were also instances when individuals became stateless, as dual citizenship became forbidden in 1995, they renounced their previous citizenship but did not acquire Kazakhstani citizenship at the end[196]. For instance, from nearly 60,000 Kazakhs who came from

[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 11.
[192] "Special report on ethnic Kazakhs and the struggle to return."
[193] Ibid.
[194] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora," 333.
[195] Bokayev, B et al, 2012. Ethnolinguistic Identification and Adaptation of Repatriates in Polycultural Kazakhstan, Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 11 (5), 336
[196] Cerny, Astrid. "Going where the grass is greener: China Kazaks and the Oralman immigration policy in Kazakhstan." *Pastoralism* 1, no. 2 (2010): 223

Mongolia in 1998, only 859 acquired citizenship status[197]. Another issue that creates issues for returnees is that the Law on Migration prescribes that after getting the citizenship, the status of *Oralman* is officially ended[198]. More precisely, according to Article 25 of the Law on Migration:

"Termination of the status of an Oralman. The status of an Oralman is terminated:

1) after receiving by the Oralman the citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

2) in case of cancellation of a permit for permanent residence in the Republic of Kazakhstan;

3) after one year from the date of receipt of *Oralman* status"[199]

Hence, this means that returnees are given only one year to accomplish all legal procedures and acquire residence permits and then citizenship. Also, after receiving citizenship, they are not granted all the benefits of the status of *Oralman* anymore. For instance, at the beginning of 2019, around 15,000 returnees could not get citizenship status, because of the termination of the status of *Oralman*[200]. Therefore, there are many various problems of acquiring citizenship status for *Oralmans* in this realm.

While it is hard to get citizenship for *Oralmans*, the socio-economic situation in the country also might create difficulties for them. The social unrest in Zhanaozen which happened in 2011 and was briefly described above, plays an important role in the policy changes. The connection between the social unrest and *Oralmans* was articulated by Timur Kulibayev, who is the



[197] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora."
[198] "Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 13 December 1997 No. 204-1 on Population Migration (Amendment 2002) – Kidsempowerment."
[199] Ibid.
[200] "The homeland return" ("Возвращение Родины"). April 15, 2020, https://kzaif.kz/politic/vozvrashchenie_rodiny.

businessman and the son-in-law of the first President, Nursultan Nazarbayev[201]. Kulibayev openly blamed *Oralmans* from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan for plotting the unrest:

"In their countries, they were on the sidelines. Therefore, they are very monolithic, unified, and always put forward their requirements competently, skillfully. If they go on strike, they go on strike very competently. It was necessary to limit the move to Zhanaozen a long time ago"[202].

This statement shows the scapegoat strategy applied by the public figures, which led to extremely negative attitudes towards *Oralmans* among local society. Even if *Oralmans* were participating in the strikes, there is no evidence that it was plotted exactly and only by ethnic return migrants. This event influenced the decrease in the quota for 2012 to half (from 20,000 to 10,000 households) and even triggered the total termination of the quota for *Oralmans* in the spring of 2012[203]. This suspension demonstrates the state's social and economic hardships in immigration assistance. Later, the system of quota provision for *Oralmans* was resumed, and in recent years, the regional quota was established. In 2018, the quota started to be assigned for the number of individuals, not families[204]. Consequently, in 2018 the immigration quota was made for 2185 individuals, while in 2019 the number was 2031, and in 2020 the quota was appointed for 1378 *Oralmans*[205]. These numbers demonstrate that the state has been cutting the

[201] "Kazakhstan: Words Mean Everything in Ethnic Kazakh Debate," Eurasianet, accessed December 8, 2019, https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-words-mean-everything-in-ethnic-kazakh-debate.
[202] "Oralmans demand Timur Kulibayev's apologies". ("Оралманы требуют извинений от Тимура Кулибаева"). Azattyq Radio, accessed May 22, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/timur_kulibaev_oil_workers_strike_oralmans_kazakh_repatriates/24348862.html.
[203] Natsuko Oka, "A Note on Ethnic Return Migration Policy in Kazakhstan: Changing Priorities and a Growing Dilemma," n.d., 9.
[204] "Individual quota remuneration was suggested in Kazakhstan". ("Выдавать Региональные Квоты На Каждого Оралмана, а Не На Семьи Предложили в Казахстане"). March 28, 2018, https://informburo.kz/novosti/vydavat-regionalnye-kvoty-na-kazhdogo-oralmana-a-ne-na-semi-predlozhili-v-kazahstane.html.
[205] "The Oralman quota was reduced in Kazakhstan". ("В Казахстане сокращена квота приема оралманов"). rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz, January 27, 2020, https://rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz/society/4610-v-kazakhstane-sokrashchena-kvota-priema-oralmanov.

budget for financial assistance for ethnic return migrants. In addition, in 2019, the first president of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev, made a critical statement about *Oralmans*:

"They ask the government for more money. You should work. If people do not work, there will be no money in the treasury of the state, then what should the state give? If the state performs its tasks and assists, they tell "no, not enough, we need more."" [206].

This statement demonstrates *Oralmans* mainly from the negative side and labels them as the ones who only complain to the government. The recent years' allocation of quota for *Oralmans* as well as these kinds of statements by state officials show the overall unwillingness to support migrants. Moreover, the public unrest in Zhanaozen and Kulibayev's statement added to the overall hostility and created so-called *"Oralmanophobia"*. Serikzhan Mambetalin, politician and a public figure, shared his opinion and stated that the government has cast aside *Oralmans*' integration and became reluctant in the migrant issues and help:

"The state welcomed our fellow compatriots at the beginning of independence, but now it (state) has simply left them to their own matters, and practically does not wish dealing with them anymore."[207].

Hence, after the public statements of Nazarbayev and Kulibayev, it becomes apparent that the state is no longer willing to welcome *Oralmans*, even though the public policy remains active officially.

Besides, not only the state is unwilling to support *Oralmans*, but also the public discontent shows how the general public treats returning migrants. Similar to the case of the co-



[206] "About Nazarbayev's critique for Oralmans". ("Матери и оралманы — о критике Назарбаева в их адрес". Радио Азаттык, accessed May 23, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-reaction-to-nazarbaev-speech/30123865.html.
[207] "Is there an "Oralmanophobia" in Kazakhstan?". "Существует ли в Казахстане «оралманофобия»?". Azattyq Radio, accessed May 23, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/repatriate_diskrimination_kulibayev_janaozen_phobia_migration/24356665.html.

ethnic migrants in Singapore, local Kazakhs generally reject *Oralmans* because of the privileges offered to them. While many returnees suffer and cannot acquire residency, employment, and citizenship status offered by the government, the public disregards this and still perceive them as undignified for this assistance. When the locals acknowledge the social support that is provided for *Oralmans*, the discontent based on the fact that they pay taxes and do not receive much assistance from the government appears among the public[208]. Hence, the public discussion made it clear that, overall, repatriates are not warmly welcomed by a local society, which creates another challenge within the policy of immigration.

After the social unrest and public figures' criticism, the term acquired the negative perception. The term *Oralman* is currently widely discussed in the government and there are propositions to eliminate it. The current President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed and wrote a Tweet that the word *Oralman* meaning 'returnee' should be replaced with the word *Qandas*, which translates from the Kazakh language as "individual of the same blood"[209]. The proposition was made in 2019, and certain measures were taken for the gradual change of the term. Recently, on the 30th of April 2020, the Kazakh senate repealed the term *Oralman* and is planning to replace it with *Qandas*[210]. Kazakh language, the term *Oralman* means the one who returns[211]. This label is meant to indicate ethnic Kazakhs who migrate to Kazakhstan from abroad[212]. According to the definition of the Law on Migration, *Oralman* – is the ethnic Kazakh, who at the period of obtaining independence of Kazakhstan, resided abroad,



[208] Mansiya Sadyrova and Amitov Sultankozha. *Processes of migration and social adaptation of Oralmans in Kazakhstan*. (*Миграционные процессы в Казахстане и социальная адаптация оралманов. Социологический анализ).*
[209] "Kazakh Senate Abolishes Term Oralman," accessed May 19, 2020, https://en.fergana.news/news/117662/.
[210] Ibid.
[211] "Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview," 5.
[212] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora."

and came to Kazakhstan to acquire residence or citizenship[213]. The data from the official laws illustrates the significance of the policy to the government in terms of attracting people to the aim of developing rural areas and increasing the population number. According to the information from the electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan website: "The very concept of *Oralman* (translated to Kazakh means "returned") is unique because in world practice it is unknown"[214]. Considering the terms used in other countries, the Russian state uses the term *'forced migrants'*, or '*refugees*', while in Israel the term *'aliyah'* or *'immigrant'* is used[215]. Hence, the attachment to the special word is quite important in the way of labeling this group of people as distinct from other migrants.

The government works on changing 'returnee' to the 'fellow tribesmen'. This transformation reflects the existence of a negative association with the last term, and more importantly, the state's acknowledgement of these associations. Hence, the change of the official term is a very considerable step to eliminate the negative stigma. I claim that *Oralman* became a problematic category within the policy building, and the reasons for this include extremely negative attitudes, the scapegoat strategies used by the state officials to blame return migrants in making the bloody social unrest in 2011, and the existent stigma and labeling utilized by both local people and public figures. The new term is welcomed by both the state and return migrants and is aimed to decrease the negative experience of return migrants and to create a 'new' identity for them. However, it is still uncertain how the term would become popularized in society.



[213] Bokayev, B et al, 2012. Ethnolinguistic Identification and Adaptation of Repatriates in Polycultural Kazakhstan, Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 11 (5), 340
[214] "Repatriate in Kazakhstan: Help, Privileges, Adaptation | Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan."
[215] Rainer Munz and Rainer Ohliger, *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Russia in Comparative Perspective* (Routledge, 2004), 155.

To conclude, this chapter provides an overview of the ethnic return migration policy and its implementation in Kazakhstan. The policy's goals are set and clear and promote the historical justice for ethnic Kazakhs who suffered from past events, as well as advertise the patriotic and ethnic affinity for the increase of demography levels. Notwithstanding, even if goals are very deterministic, the implementation of the policy is very inconsistent and unpredictable. Zhanaozen crisis demonstrated the scapegoat strategy acquired by public figures, such as Timur Kulibayev, which led to *"Oralmanophobia"* among local society. In recent years, the quota allocation for *Oralmans* started decreasing year by year and the public statements of Nursultan Nazarbayev add up to the overall unwillingness of the state to support *Oralmans*. Moreover, the measures of support for returnees are presented as a huge list of facilities, which they are promised to get if they immigrate to Kazakhstan. But in reality, many return migrants suffer from the poor implementation and lack of authorities to assist them after their immigration. Discrimination, negative attitudes bordering with hostility, and other challenges make returnees alienated and poorly integrated with society. All these factors might create further difficulties with *Oralmans'* self-identification, which would be discussed in the next chapter. Economic, social, and psychological aspects of the integration and adaptation problems make the idea of immigrating to Kazakhstan doubtful.

## Chapter 4. *Oralmans'* construction of identity

The qualitative methods were chosen because there are no many qualitative investigations about ethnic return migration in Kazakhstan currently. Overall, the policy aiming at welcoming the titular ethnic group in Kazakhstan, which is a multi-ethnic country, has provoked a substantial debate about the interpretation of national identity. This chapter will analyze semi-structured in-depth interviews and investigate the identity issues and the self-identification of *Oralmans*. After transcribing the interviews, I have identified the most significant issues and divided the chapter according to the topics. First of all, to see how the public policy works in practice, the perspective of *Oralmans* about ethnic immigration and their experiences would be discussed. Afterwards, the language barrier and discrimination followed by this will be discussed. This will be proceeded by consideration of how language frames the identity of *Oralmans.* Findings from interviews about national feeling and the level of national solidarity will be followed by the analysis of the identity dilemma. Therefore, the differences among *Oralmans* from China, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan will be articulated in the light of the main findings from interviews.

### Methodology

*Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews*

After analyzing the official discourses, the focus will be shifted from institutional to the personal level. In the following two chapters (3 and 4) I will provide the analysis of the qualitative data I have gathered by conducting 10 interviews with *Oralmans*. As during the current global health crisis, it was impossible to make planned travel for fieldwork, I conducted online interviews with *Oralmans* via Skype and messenger. I recruited potential respondents by engaging with personal contacts, and then the snowball method was utilized. The data was collected during March-May of 2020. The target sample for the interviews is middle-

class *Oralmans* who are educated (graduated from high school or university). Around nearly 25 contacted individuals, 12 gave an initial consent, but only 10 of them participated in the interviews. Besides, the time-zone difference was quite a challenge for setting up a convenient time for participants, but I tried to conform to interviewees' preferences and be flexible. Among other inconveniences, there was a poor connection sometimes, but I was able to conduct all interviews without any substantial problems. The interviews were semi-structured, online, and each lasted from 50 minutes to nearly one and a half hours. Among the participants, there are 6 females and 4 males (see Table 1). The majority of respondents are from China (5), and others are from Turkmenistan (2), Uzbekistan (2), and Mongolia (1) (more detailed see Table 1). Considering the age of respondents, most of them are in their 20s (8), and others are in their 30s and 50s (2) (more detailed see Table 1). The interview questions were based on the interview guide that I had developed earlier. The interview guide included the topics of return migration policy and immigration to Kazakhstan, language skills, the integration of *Oralmans*, and the internal solidarity among *Oralmans*. As the interviews were semi-structured, the main themes and questions were followed by individual and personal questions related to the participant. Considering the structure of interviews, firstly I asked biographical questions related to personal information as well as to immigration to Kazakhstan and then went to language and identity-related questions. All the translations and quotations that are present in the analysis section were translated and transcribed by me. All participants provided valuable insights and shared their experience of being in the status of *Oralman*. For the anonymity reasons, in the analysis part, I will not provide the real names of the participants and will use the fake names instead.



*Table 1. List of respondents of the semi-structured online interviews*

| # | Participant | Gender | Age | Country of origin | Native Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aissulu | female | 20 | Mongolia | Kazakh/Russian |
| 2 | Galiya | female | 22 | China | Chinese |
| 3 | Sulu | female | 22 | China | Chinese/Kazakh |
| 4 | Temirlan | male | 55+ | China | Chinese/Kazakh |
| 5 | Amina | female | 25 | China | Chinese |
| 6 | Kamila | female | 23 | China | Chinese |
| 7 | Arman | male | 24 | Turkmenistan | Kazakh/Russian |
| 8 | Zhassulan | male | 33 | Turkmenistan | Kazakh/Russian |
| 9 | Kuandyk | male | 23 | Uzbekistan | Kazakh/Russian |
| 10 | Shyryn | female | 21 | Uzbekistan | Kazakh/Russian |

### 4.1. Ethnic return migration in practice

To compare the institutional goals and the aims of returnees for settling in Kazakhstan, I will analyze the information I acquired from the semi-structured online interviews. Firstly, almost all interviewees mentioned the economic reasons for immigrating to Kazakhstan. Almost all respondents commented on the huge specter of possibilities and perspectives in the spheres of education and employment, and they compared the system of education in Kazakhstan with the level of education in their countries of origin (Mongolia, Turkmenistan). Likewise, all respondents added that one of the reasons for moving to Kazakhstan was the maintenance of national feeling and so-called 'homeland orientation'. Either they individually or their families (parents commonly) decided to migrate because of the ethnic ties and shared history and culture with Kazakhs.

> "There was no strong national or ethnic identity in Soviet times. But currently, it is important to live with your ethnic group and my parents decided to move for the future of children." (Shyryn, from Uzbekistan).

> "If I continue my path in China, my descendants will lose their identity, and I should give my children in the future the opportunity that my parents gave me" (Galiya, from China).

Therefore, patriotic and nationalistic feelings were prevailing among the reasons to move. Respondents from China also referred to the enforced expansion of Chinese culture and language among minorities in China, which triggered them to move to the ethnic homeland and to preserve the language and culture. Also, half of them connected their immigration to the unstable economic and political situation in China. Therefore, the different reasons for immigration were identified by the respondents, and mainly it could be connected to economic and ethnic factors. By contrasting the goals of the government and the returnees, there are several common aims, connected to ethnic and national feelings. From both perspectives, they also considered economic goals. Co-ethnic preferences for both materialistic and symbolic goals are used by both state and returnees. However, while the state implied demographic reasons, for immigrants this was not a valid reason to move. The sustainability of different regions apart from the large cities is one of the aims of the government, but for many *Oralmans*, this is an opportunity to pursue material goals and get a better education and employment in Kazakhstan.

To assess the success of the policy practice, the experience of *Oralman* immigration should be analyzed. According to the data from interviews, the majority of respondents experienced problems with the documentation processes after settling in Kazakhstan. Among the existing difficulties, respondents mentioned the scarce availability of the documents in the Kazakh language, as almost all documents were in Russian. All agreed that without knowledge of Russian, it was nearly impossible to get the required documents. During my interviews, none of the respondents knew about the language and integration courses, as well as about the provision of translational services.

> "When I was applying for citizenship, many documents were only in Russian and without translation to Kazakh. When I asked for help, people were shocked that I did not know Russian. I was struggling with the documents." (Sulu, from China).

Eight out of ten participants mentioned the problems with getting either visa, green card, and citizenship document, or with acquiring the housing and financial facilities. Furthermore, many participants faced linguistic discrimination from state workers, which in some instances was followed by aggressive behavior towards return migrants. The negative experience with the governmental officials made them reluctant to concern about other facilities, as they expected that they would not get them or would get the poor response or poor implementation on the institutional level. More importantly, because of the initial problems with the documents and the process of acquiring citizenship, many of respondents told that they did not want to make further applications for additional benefits. The second most common challenge was the high level of corruption among the officials.

> "The immigrants from China have the label that they don't understand Russian. Another label is that we are richer that immigrants from other countries. So, state workers claim that we can be easily corrupted and ask money for the documents that are supposed to be free. Migration officials already know the similarities and differences in backgrounds of the migrants and treat them correspondingly." (Galiya, from China).

Seven out of ten participants argued that the migration officials performed their work only when her family gave them a certain amount of money. And not only immigrants from China experienced this, as respondent from Uzbekistan, Shyryn, claimed that the system in Kazakhstan is not perfect and there is a high level of bureaucracy. Shyryn stated that her family was always asked to provide documents from one or another agency, which was illogical and inconsistent. When she and her family settled in Kazakhstan, they were promised housing, but

waited ten years to get the actual accommodation. Another respondent, Sulu, waited for the citizenship status for 4 years. Consequently, poor implementation in terms of untimely execution is one of the persistent problems.

Hence, there is a contrast between the portrayal of measures of support for *Oralmans* from the governmental side and the actual *Oralman* experience with getting these facilities. All interviewees complained that the data on the official websites about the policy is not clearly described, and there are many questions about the implementation of the offered integration services for *Oralmans*. Only one respondent did not complain about policy implementation and got adequate financial assistance promptly. Several respondents did not face challenges, but they immigrated to Kazakhstan without the government's assistance and did not apply for the benefits. Mainly, those interviewees who applied either for housing or financial assistance experienced a huge delay and acquired those facilities after several years (up to 10). The high level of corruption among state workers is quite widespread not only in the immigration sector but among all governmental sectors in Kazakhstan. Therefore, corruption is not exclusively the problem of *Oralmans*. However, the way state workers' attitudes towards *Oralmans* is described as rude, aggressive, and having discriminatory behavior. Linguistic discrimination is also a very common problem in *Oralmans*' communication with state employees. These difficulties lead to problems with adaptation and integration into society.

Another feature of the policy that we discussed with the interviewees, is the official term of ethnic return migrants. Many returnees claim that there is the abrogating stigma persistent with this term and that *Oralmans* are stigmatized for their whole life[216]. The majority of my



[216] "Kazakhstan: the debates around ethnic Kazakhs emerged because of the one term". (Казахстан: Споры Вокруг Этнических Казахов Разгорелись Из-За Одного Слова) accessed May 19, 2020, https://russian.eurasianet.org/

respondents agreed with this claim and shared their own experiences. Even when I recruited potential interviewees and made posts on social media, many respondents viewed the mention of this term negatively. Later, I changed the term from *Oralman* to *Qandas* in my posts.

> "If people call me *Oralman*, it is not comfortable for me, it feels like discrimination" (Temirlan, from China).

The stigmatization has different roots, which include stereotypes about the goal of the return, the little trust of the host society to the government, and other reasons. The stereotypes about the goal of return involve the belief that *Oralmans* come to Kazakhstan only for economic and material benefits from the government. Also, the host society is mainly highly dissatisfied with the government and blames *Oralmans*, by claiming that they get financial assistance from the government and then move back to the country of their origin[217]. Four of my respondents even were told by their relatives to hide their origin. When Aissulu moved to Kazakhstan from Mongolia and entered school, she told one classmate that she is an *Oralman.* After that, the classmate started mocking and blackmailing her and asked to do his home works so that he could keep the secret about her origin. The stigma about backwardness is very widespread among the local population, and even the public figures had such kinds of claims. The former chairman of the migration agency, Khabylsayat Abishev, called *Oralmans* "illiterate" during one of his interviews[218].



[217] Oka, "A Note on Ethnic Return Migration Policy in Kazakhstan: Changing Priorities and a Growing Dilemma," 8.
[218] Azattyq Radio. "Is there an "Oralmanophobia" in Kazakhstan?" Accessed May 23, 2020. https://rus.azattyq.org/a/repatriate_diskrimination_kulibayev_janaozen_phobia_migration/24356665.html.

In fact, the majority of interviewees claimed that they prefer the new term *Qandas* much better than *Oralman*. Seven out of ten interviewees suggested that *Oralman* is an incorrect term because some Kazakhs composed the irredenta community, and they do not actually "return" to the historic homeland, they always lived there, but the border demarcations made the territory (Altay mountains) fall under a foreign rule. Some respondents also believe that they will be given an opportunity to construct a new identity based on the new term.

> "Qandas is better and sounds more friendly and welcoming. The new term may help us to get rid of the past labels. It would give us a new identity" (Galiya, from China).

Thus, a clear majority of respondents have a positive perception of the change of the term, although there are three respondents who told that they do not care about the term, and one, who claimed that the new term would not solve the labeling and stigmatization problem. Even if it is still uncertain how the new term would be implemented and used, the meaning of the new version is correct and represents the possibility of the improvement on the institutional side.

### 4.2. Attitudes towards Kazakh language and the language barrier

The language issue is central to the discussion of *Oralmans*' identity. As it was already discussed in the first chapter, the Russian language is more widespread among local people in Kazakhstan and is more commonly used in societal settings. Both linguistic and ethnic composition is of great significance in the consideration of a nation-building policy, as an ethnic composition is very diverse and the Russian language is more pervasive in Kazakhstan. According to data from my interviews, all respondents mentioned language issues and pointed to problems connected to language. Even when taking into consideration the number of interviews in Russian, Kazakh, and English, the linguistic issues come out straightly. Before conducting interviews, I asked the participants' preferences for language. While all were

comfortable with Kazakh, one respondent chose English (she stated that it would be easier for my analysis of the results, and she could speak fluently both Kazakh and English), two respondents chose Russian, and seven decided to have an interview in Kazakh. It is also crucial to mention that those, who chose Russian, immigrated from Turkmenistan and from Mongolia. Almost all of those who chose Kazakh, four are from China, one from Turkmenistan and two from Uzbekistan. Thus, the majority of respondents favored the Kazakh language.

Beginning with respondents' background and knowledge of languages, the main tendency is that respondents have bilingual or even trilingual proficiency. Interestingly, there is a division into the Chinese/Kazakh/English proficiency and Kazakh/Russian/English proficiency among respondents (more detailed see Table 1). While all participants are fluent in Kazakh and have basic knowledge of English, the difference is in the knowledge of Russian and Chinese languages. Considering the choice of native language, only one respondent mentioned Russian as native (Arman, from Turkmenistan), five mentioned Chinese and four chose Kazakh (more detailed see Table 1). Therefore, the problems related to language are different in its levels because of the variety of language proficiency among respondents.

«We have our language, why should we speak another one? » (Temirlan, from China).

The language hierarchy in Kazakhstan positions the Russian as a modern and civilized language, because of the Soviet past. Therefore, *Oralmans* experienced problems connected to this hierarchy. Firstly, the problem of communication and the inability to integrate because of the different perceptions of language appears to be the main finding of the interviews. The majority of respondents acknowledged that because of the scarce knowledge of the Russian language, they sometimes are not able to go shopping or communicate with people. This statement was somehow implicated in all interviews, which shows that participants do not understand the tendency to speak Russian. Also, before immigrating, two respondents, Amina and Kamila, learned Kazakh and specifically had a goal of increasing the level of Kazakh. But

after immigrating they became dissatisfied, as, in reality, almost all speak Russian. The expectation and reality did not merge in their opinions. Because of that, many of my respondents suffered from a lack of integration and could not communicate easily with society. Struggles with communication while doing groceries and going to public places were most problematic for them. Galiya (from China) mentioned that because of her inability to speak Russian, it was problematic to her even to go and buy ice cream, and she needed to learn how to say "*мороженое*" (eng. "ice cream") before going to buy it. Galiya recalled her school learning experience and claimed that Kazakhstani educational system is quite different from Chinese. When she entered a school in Kazakhstan, teachers expected daily participation in the class, which was a new experience for Galiya, and it was challenging for her to answer in front of the class without knowing language properly. Another interviewee, Temirlan, also identified some difficulties in daily life communication, and complexities with doing groceries, shopping, and having basic conversations in public spaces. Interestingly, Temirlan knows many languages, such as English, French, German, but he does not want to learn Russian on purpose. He recalled Soviet times and stated that Kazakhs were dominated and discriminated by the Soviet state, and for him, speaking the Russian language means "to obey Russian rules" and "to be still dominated by Russian culture". Similarly, the corresponding implications were present in the interview findings with four other respondents who immigrated from China (Kamila, Galiya, Sulu, Amina). They have friends of different backgrounds, but mainly it is easier for them to communicate with *Oralmans* or with those who speak Kazakh/Chinese. They told that when students or acquaintances do not understand Kazakh, they start speaking with them in English. Therefore, the choice of language is clear here and implicates that they do not speak Russian not only because they lack appropriate knowledge, but also, they intentionally do not want to learn it. Furthermore, it is important to notice that other interviewees did not have the

same responses and, while preferring the Kazakh language over Russian, they still have the ability to speak Russian and learn it to socialize and integrate with others.

Other consequences of the language barrier include the persistent stigma of backwardness and negative social attitudes. All interviewees shared their experience of integrating into society and the majority confirmed that they felt bias towards them from the host society. All respondents confirmed that the Kazakh language, even with the official status in the country, is not used often in daily life communication. Also, interviewees pointed out that speaking Kazakh in society is viewed by people as "inappropriate", or demonstrates that a person doesn't know Russian, and, thus, he/she is different from the host society.

> "When I explain people that I don't understand Russian, they stare at me for a moment, and then I hear some words as "Chinese *Oralman*", which makes me feel uncomfortable."
>
> "This is the Kazakh mentality: they respect foreigners more than ethnic immigrants and people of the same ethnicity" (Temirlan, from China).

Consequently, Temirlan claimed that *Oralmans* are labeled mainly as backward, and society expects them to be illiterate or uneducated. Moreover, Temirlan stated that when he switches to English, people do not expect it and stop their discriminatory behavior. Another respondent, Galiya, also suggested that Kazakhstani society perceives people who do not know Russian well, as backward and have quite stereotypical views towards them. This labeling could be connected to the stereotypes that only people from rural areas do not speak Russian, as in the villages people usually communicate only in Kazakh. The connection between the concepts of modernity and civilization is tightly connected with the knowledge of the Russian language. Another participant, Sulu, said that many local people were very confused and shocked when they acknowledged her country of origin. This demonstrates that based on the language factor, host society views *Oralmans* as alien, different, and as an immigrant society. Hence, this stigmatization of *Oralmans* makes them feel unaccepted and five respondents told that they

communicate and make friends mainly with other returnees. On the contrary, mainly respondents who have a good command of Russian had fewer complaints about stigmatization and discrimination.

### 4.3. "Us" and "Them" or group dichotomization

Tajfel's social identity theory demonstrates that social categorization leads to the group division[219]. Groups define an individual's position in society, and one of the main findings from the interviews is the presence of in-group and out-group dichotomization. One of the main dimensions that I noticed during interviews, is the overall tendency of *Oralmans* to identify themselves contrary to "others" or local Kazakhs. Although not all interviewees followed this discourse, the majority of respondents maintained this division into two different groups. According to the findings, the main discourses about the juxtaposition include *Oralmans*' perception of Kazakh culture and traditions, as well as national solidarity and identity.

*Oralmans* have a different system of beliefs and ideology, which according to Smith, might make them alienated from the one "nation-group"[220]. When I asked respondents about their perception of ethnicity, culture and traditions, the answers were positioned around the attributes or features that should be incorporated into their understanding of a Kazakh ethnicity or nationality. Many respondents agreed on the statement that there is no certain ideology related to national identity in Kazakhstan. Majority of participants identified several problems of a modern Kazakhstani society.



[219] Henri Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour:," *Information (International Social Science Council)*, September 3, 2016, 5, https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204.
[220] Anthony D. Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 72, no. 3 (1996): 453, https://doi.org/10.2307/2625550.

Temirlan was very passionate about stating his own opinion about Kazakh culture and traditions. He finds it very important to cherish traditions, and he claims that modern society in Kazakhstan does not celebrate Nauryz and Kurban Aid festivities properly, and does not put much attention to Kazakh historical traditions. Differences in culture, in his opinion, could also be attributed to returnees' countries of origin. For instance, he shared the influence of Chinese culture on *Oralmans'* identity. He mentioned that most Kazakhs in China are still living there, and only about ¼ immigrated to Kazakhstan. He fears that Chinese culture will be more expansive in the near future and gave an example of his daughter, who lives in Beijing and does not have any attachment to the historic homeland, and do not care about ancestors and ethnicity. After immigrating to Kazakhstan, he noticed that locals do not share a strong sense of sacredness of traditions, which should be changed. Shyryn, a participant from Uzbekistan, claimed that she and her family praise Kazakh cultural heritage, and preserve the knowledge of Kazakh.

> "Kazakhstani citizens should know how to speak Kazakh, because it is our cultural heritage". (Shyryn, from Uzbekistan).

> "Soviet Union was dissolved and now we are an independent country with our own culture. Why are people still practicing the Soviet culture and prioritizing Russian?" (Kamila, from China).

Several interviewees stated that Kazakh SSR was the most Soviet state among Central Asian Soviet Republics. By this, they implied that because of the intense "Sovietization" in the past, modern Kazakhstan lacks a strong national identity agenda, and mostly Kazakhstani citizens are practicing the Soviet Kazakh culture rather than a pristine version of pre-Soviet nomad culture.

> "Even if we are ethnically all Kazakh, we have different cultural backgrounds. We think very differently, and mostly local Kazakhs have a Soviet background,

> and are very Russified, not restricted to only Kazakh traditions." (Sulu, from China).
>
> "My sister and I are the third generation of children who grew up in China. But at the same time, none of the family forgot their roots." (Kamila, from China).

According to Antony Smith, the shared belief systems are of a great importance in the consideration of the national identity of a group[221]. Notwithstanding, interviewees did not identify sharp differences among culture and traditions of *Oralmans* and local society. The main trend is that participants think that locals do not properly celebrate religious and national festivities, and do not involve much in the preservation of ethnic culture. Furthermore, some respondents (Kuandyk, Zhassulan, Shyryn) mentioned that both *Oralman* and local society is not homogeneous and the cultural and ethnical evaluations depend on the individual him/herself. But all interviewees stated that modern Kazakh society has Soviet features, which should be transformed.

> "Our ancestors worked a lot to acquire our vast territory and we should not betray our ancestors. I am not nationalist, but this is just my opinion." (Temirlan, from China).

This statement implies overall *Oralmans*' perception about national identity, and shows that they are mainly dissatisfied with the modern framework of Kazakhstani identity. For instance, Amina believes that Kazakhs should not become integrated too much into the Western culture, and should maintain and stick to their own history and culture. Majority of my respondents agreed that their families and friends feel different from local Kazakhs. Notwithstanding, many of them clarified that they feel connection with more traditional Kazakhs, and feel alienated

[221] Ibid.

from more Russified Kazakhs. The reasons for this alienation might include the discriminatory behavior of Russified Kazakhs. Because of the language barrier and discrimination, many *Oralmans* cannot become properly educated, and therefore, put themselves in a lower position. Consequently, some respondents mentioned the identity differences of *Oralmans* from local Kazakhs.

> "For us the main problem is not the housing and money, but discrimination. We do not feel that they are in Kazakhstan, in their historic homeland". (Kamila, from China).

In addition, some respondents highlighted the identity differences among *Oralmans* from China and local Kazakhs. They suggested that the way they think is completely dissimilar. For instance, Galiya added that even understanding of jokes is different among these two groups. She distinguished Russian and Chinese mentality and systems of belief, which influenced both groups. Therefore, it is quite important to mention that cultural differences might be a consequence of a life in a country of origin.

Both social identity and self-categorization theories by Tajfel and Turner assume the intra-subgroup identification and network embeddedness as the attributes of ingroup favoritism[222]. Self-identification with a group leads to intergroup social comparisons and intergroup differentiations[223]. It is also important that fundamental group beliefs influence the demarcation of boundaries with out-groups, according to Bar-Tal[224]. Theoretically, national in-

[222] Tajfel, H., Turner, J.C., Austin, W.G. and Worchel, S., 1979. An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational identity: A reader*, *56*, p.65.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Daniel Bar-Tal, "Group Beliefs as an Expression of Social Identity," in *Social Identity: International Perspectives* (Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, 1998), 93–113, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446279205.n7.

group identification can be a predictor of the weak intergroup relations[225]. *Oralmans* are very integrated with each other, but are alien to the local society. Interestingly, those interviewees, who mentioned that they do not know or do not participate in any of *Oralman* club or network, and do not communicate solely and tightly with other *Oralmans,* did not experience much problems in the integration process after immigration. More importantly, these interviewees experienced less discrimination and were not so strongly opposed to the usage of Russian language and modernizing the society. Therefore, as I noticed in my findings, the more integrated *Oralmans* are within own community, the more alienated they are from the out-groups.

Another juxtaposition which creates "Us" and "Them" could be explained by the internalized prejudice among *Oralmans*. The categorization by the host society and the state influenced the self-identification of the returnees Firstly, because of the appearance of negative connotations related to the term in the 1990s, many *Oralmans* still expect society to treat them negatively. Galiya, for instance, shared her opinion about the prejudice towards *Oralmans*. She believes that many people blame *Oralmans* for their "past mistakes", and as she later explains, many *Oralmans* in the 1990s immigrated and gained all the benefits, and later returned to their countries of origin. Thus, locals started blaming them for using the state's financial assistance and claimed that they should not be privileged over the locals. In addition, internalized prejudice includes the persistent view that *Oralmans* escaped in 1930s, when Kazakhs were suffering, and now they are returning when the country got independence. Several respondents mentioned that they expect to be treated as traitors, and to be labeled because of the past history.



[225] Ulrich Wagner, Oliver Christ, and Wilhelm Heitmeyer, "Anti-Immigration Bias," in *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010), 361–76, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446200919.

> "People have different thoughts about us, they think that we receive facilities and financial assistance, steal land, money and jobs of other Kazakhstanis." (Aissulu, from Mongolia).

> "Nobody is waiting for us here." (Arman, from Turkmenistan).

Internalized prejudice plays a significant role in the alienation from the local society. Many interviewees are aware of the persistent stigma and prejudice displayed towards *Oralmans* and perceive it negatively, even without encountering it. Some interviewees needed to justify their position and to prove that they should not be blamed for anything. Consequently, both cultural and traditional views as well as varying levels of antipathy towards Soviet past, and internalized prejudice constitute the general division between "Us" and "Them".

### 4.4. Identity dilemma

Brubaker, Smith, and Kohn identify ethnic and civic kinds of nationhood. According to my findings, the *Oralman* identity is distinguished around these two models, and is generally centered and embedded in language and nationalism sentiment. The majority of respondents connected their understanding of identity to Kazakh language and contrasted it with the concept of Russified Kazakhs and Russian language. The answers related to this topic have an implication about their perception of modern Kazakh society. Interestingly, many participants argued that they try to save the common roots and a pure Kazakh identity, and have an emotional attachment to the language of the ethnic belonging. For them, if the language will perish and will become unused by the society, the Kazakh cultural heritage would be also ruined. Some participants have quite negative attitudes towards Russian language and Soviet culture, and openly oppose its propagation. This could be linked to the traumatic experience of their families' emigration in the 1930s.

> "Kazakhs are very clever, and I love them. They only have a linguistic problem, and I hope it will be solved in the near future" (Temirlan, from China).

Several respondents connected self-identification to ethnic affinity, and their answers demonstrate quite patriotic feelings and ethnic solidarity. In addition, some of them did not show the tolerance for the Russian language and culture, and identify local Kazakhs, who are integrated into the Soviet culture and communicate in Russian, as not 'true' or genuine Kazakhs. Therefore, the strong attitude towards language and primordial view on ethnicity are present in the findings.

Cooper and Brubaker highlight main features of 'identity' that could be demonstrated as: the 'sameness' among members of the group or the 'collective phenomenon', a basic condition of an individual that should be valued and distinguished, as well as the shared self-awareness or "groupness"[226]. Interestingly, around a half of respondents had identified themselves contrary to the 'sameness' of local Kazakhs. Although they also accentuated the role of ethnicity in their self-identification, the main emphasis was on respondents' inability to properly define their perception of identity. Many of them agreed that they have mixed feelings towards evaluating their own identity.

> "I cannot certainly say that I could identify myself as a Kazakh with the same meaning of "Kazakhness" defined by the local Kazakhs. I am surely Kazakh, but for me the meaning is quite different. I feel myself differently in some ways. At the same time, I am not a completely foreign individual." (Galiya, from China).

[226]Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 7.

> "People perceive *Oralmans* as alien and as foreign individuals. Even if it is my historic homeland, I feel myself as distinct from others." (Amina, from China).

The formation of hybrid identity among immigrants is extensively discussed by scholars, and hybridity is often connected to the social integration processes[227]. As Bardhan argues, the dichotomization between "Us" and "Them" leads to the possibility of the creation of unstable entity "in-between" worlds[228]. Around half of the respondents claimed that even if ethnically they are Kazakh and not foreign, they have mixed feelings towards self-identification and do not place it neither in the category of "Kazakh" nor "foreign". Mostly, the interviewees implied some sort of juxtaposition of identities and contrasted the culture and national mentality of their country of origin with the Kazakhstani one. In addition, some respondents said that they cannot completely identify themselves with one country or nation.

> "In Kazakh and Chinese cultures everything is different, even eating habits, the daily routines, and I am still influenced by Chinese philosophy and the way of life. We have different ways of thinking and mentality with locals. However, I am not a Chinese and do not plan to return there." (Kamila, from China).

These responses show that interviewees wish to identify themselves as Kazakh, but they point out that there are different understandings of "Kazakhness" and their sense of belonging depends on various reasons. One participant, Sulu, stated that her sense of belonging depends on the society's treatment of *Oralmans*. For her and many other interviewees, language is one the markers of identity and because of that, they are perceived as alien in the society. After all,



[227] Gloria Nziba Pindi, "Hybridity and Identity Performance in Diasporic Context: An Autoethnographic Journey of the Self Across Cultures:," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, October 25, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708617735636.
[228] Ibid.

the linguistic issue is central to the identification of *Oralmans* as well as to the appearance of discrimination and prejudice towards them. Therefore, the process of identity construction for *Oralmans* could be articulated through converging the distinct cultural values and different perception of language. According to Bardhan and Bhabha, this process leads to the creation of a third space, which could possibly create a new form of identity[229].

More importantly, some respondents highlighted the civic rather than ethnic self-identification. As Brubaker suggests, the leaders of Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states are utilizing the civic inclusiveness and tolerance in the ideology[230]. The civic-ethnic opposition was clearly present in the responses of Shyryn, Kuandyk, Arman, and Zhassulan. They claimed that for them, nationhood and identity should be centered around common citizenship. For instance, according to Zhassulan, those who share a Kazakh set of values, speak Kazakh and respect traditions and culture, should be called "Kazakhs". A civic nation should not depend on ethnicity, and should consist of the shared values and perceptions of tradition and culture. He identifies himself as a "Kazakh", but distinct from his local ethnic brothers, and he gives an example of Mandoki Istvan Kongur, who was in his opinion a "true Kazakh", because he knew Kazakh perfectly, and cherished Kazakh traditions, but was not ethnically Kazakh. Zhassulan also gave examples of two famous Kazakhstani figures, Denis Ten and Genadiy Golovkin, who identify themselves as Kazakh, but Denis was a part of a Korean minority and Genadiy is a part of Russo-Korean minority in Kazakhstan. But also, Zhassulan claimed that many locals do not share the same sense of appreciation of Kazakh language, customs, traditions. Another respondent, Kuandyk, also supported this statement and mentioned that national identity should be based on nationality and citizenship, and he identifies himself as a Kazakhstani, not Kazakh.

---

[229] Ibid.
[230] Brubaker, Rogers. "Civic'and 'ethnic'nationalism." *Ethnicity without groups* (2004): 134.

Thus, his self-identification is grounded on citizenship rather than ethnicity. Reviewing these responses, one could say that the state's ideology which presents language of civic nationhood is quite successful.

### 4.5. *Oralmans* as heterogeneous community

The answers about identity and differences between *Oralmans* and locals were significantly elaborated by interviewees. First of all, as it was already mentioned, *Oralmans* constitute a large group consisting of people with different backgrounds and coming from different countries. Therefore, it is difficult to identify common trends of their sense of belonging and relation to the self-identification. As *Oralmans* do not compose a homogeneous group, the answers about identity were also different. However, by analyzing the findings from interviews, it could be seen that among *Oralmans* who immigrated from the same country, the answers were quite similar and followed the similar discourse.

Considering the internal unity, according to the interview findings, *Oralmans* seem to have close communication and maintain connection through participation in many different gatherings. These networks are also divided by the territorial aspect – country of origin. Respondents from China all acknowledged the existence of such networks and participate in it. For instance, Galiya even created one group at her university.

> "We almost know all Kazakhs from China, and we share useful information and news with the fresh immigrants" (Amina, from China).

According to my findings, *Oralmans* from other countries do not closely communicate and create the networks. While respondents from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were either unaware of such networks or were not involved in it. Therefore, the *Oralman* society is not homogeneous and even though they are very integrated with each other, they label the chain of networks depending on their country of origin. According to the interview findings, *Oralmans*

from China have more differences in immigration and settlement experience than *Oralmans* from Post-Soviet states. All interviewees from China faced varying levels of prejudice and were stigmatized after immigration, while according to respondents from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the process of immigration was smoother and without many substantial hardships. For instance, both Arman and Zhassulan (respondents from Turkmenistan) claimed that they did not experience discrimination and stigma and that the main challenges included the financial assistance and documentation process.

> "I think that *Oralmans* experience many challenges. I know many people who have a certain bias towards us. But I was lucky enough, and did not have much negative experience related to this." (Arman, from Turkmenistan).

The familiarity with the Soviet times and shared Soviet history influence perception of *Oralman* identity. The respondents from Uzbekistan (Kuandyk, Shyryn), mentioned that their perception of identity is focused on nationality, and according to their answers, they faced a fewer level of prejudice and stigma than *Oralmans* from China. One participant from Mongolia mentioned the problematic integration and the stigma of backwardness. Aissulu pointed out that because of the negative experience she was feeling alienated from society, but when she learned Russian, her life became better. Interestingly, the responses of *Oralmans* from China demonstrate the issues of identity dilemma and ethnic belonging in the different light. All interviewees from China admitted that they faced prejudice and labeling, related not only to language but also to their country of origin. Stereotypical views from the local society marked *Oralmans* from China as a non-preferable group in the country. The integration into society was much harder for them, contrasting to other *Oralman* experiences. Some interviewees also pointed out that they have a fear of the cultural and ethnic diffusion in the future and fear of losing their own Kazakh identity. All interviewees showed negativity towards Russian-speakers and those who do not preserve the culture and traditional celebrations. While

social inequality is present among the whole *Oralman* community, the identity dilemma is more problematic among *Oralmans* from China. There could be varying explanations for these differences. As many respondents from China mentioned that there is a high Chinese expansion happening and spreading towards minorities in China, they might have fears of losing their own identity and that's why they try to maintain the very traditional way of life. This could ground the cultural differences between groups. Consequently, the reason for the higher level of prejudice and discrimination might be based on the Kazakhstani-Chinese border issues. Recently, there were many instances of ethnic Uighurs immigrating to Kazakhstan by the repatriation program and presenting themselves as of Kazakh origin[231]. And after acknowledging this, officials deported Uighurs back. This might have triggered the appearance of intolerance or stigma towards Kazakhs from China. More importantly, *Oralmans* from Post-Soviet states share a similar Soviet history with the local Kazakhs and might have a more complementary mentality, which does not follow the strong identity dilemma after immigration.



[231] "Between a hammer and an anvil". ("Между молотом и наковальней") openDemocracy, accessed June 3, 2020, https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/mezhdu-molotom-i-nakovalney/.

## Conclusion

The thesis has aimed to look at the Kazakhstani policy of returning ethnic populace and to research how the immigration policy has been working starting from the independence of the country. The findings demonstrate the clash of *Oralmans'* more vigilant and conservative national identity perceptions with local images of identity, that evolved organically as a result of Sovietization. The social differences, cultural hybridity, and consequences of prejudice and discrimination lead to the identity hybridization of *Oralmans.*

On the institutional level, *Oralmans* face such difficulties, as getting the residence status and are limited to a one-year time period, after which all the benefits of this status will expire. Many of them cannot acquire citizenship and also face difficulties with interaction, because of the lack of the knowledge of Russian language. As scholars argue, the state's approach to co-ethnic non-nationals demonstrates its boundaries of the nation[232]. While the policy aims to increase the Kazakhstani population and develop rural areas of the country, it should be developed and changed so that the number of difficulties the *Oralmans* face would diminish. The qualitative data demonstrates that the host society views returnees mainly as the immigrants and as a threat because they acquire housing, employment, and other facilities from the government.

On the societal level, ethnic return migration entails other problematic discourses, including ethno-national ones. The concepts of national identity, as well as intergroup relations between local society and *Oralmans,* constitute the dilemma of personality. *Oralmans* construct their identity around Kazakh culture, traditions, and language. For my interviewees, the ethno-



[232] John D. Skrentny et al., "Defining Nations in Asia and Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Return Migration Policy," *International Migration Review* 41, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 795, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00100.x.

national identity is essentially constructed around Kazakh language and its 'sacredness'. They treat native language like a sacred tradition that should be saved and have negative feelings about the general tendency of the host society to speak Russian in public spaces. The shared ethnicity in this case is not sufficient for returnees to integrate into society. "Real and true Kazakh should know and speak Kazakh" – this statement is the focus of all discussions about identity. Also, they have a struggle of being stigmatized as the ones who are privileged over locals. Thus, these factors make return migrants become alienated and perceived as an out-group in Kazakhstan.

*Oralmans* claim that they have more pure and pristine understanding of ethno-national identity. They differentiate themselves from the Soviet culture and past and claim that independent Kazakhstan should build a strong national identity discourse. All interviewees confirmed that they have a different system of beliefs and ideologies, based on the different understandings of and attitude to the Kazakh culture, language, and traditions.

Neither *Oralmans* nor locals constitute a homogeneous community and might have different conceptualizations. As per my findings, *Oralmans* from China have a different experience and more radical views than *Oralmans* from the post-Soviet states. They have a more negative attitude towards the Russian language and internalized prejudice. However, all interviewees put high importance to the preservation of more pristine Kazakh identity. Therefore, after immigration to Kazakhstan, they acquired some sort of hybrid identity as a response to discrimination, prejudice, and different perception of language and culture. Also, my findings demonstrate that the more integrated *Oralmans* are in their networks, the more alienated they become from the host society. The heterogeneity of *Oralmans* assumes that the sense of belongingness varies among different categories of returnees, and the countries of origin should be regarded.

This conclusion is drawn upon the qualitative investigation of discourse and interview analysis. The number of conducted interviews and the background of the respondents create limitations for my research. As long as I had only one interviewee from Mongolia, it is hard to draw conclusions about the *Oralmans* from Mongolia. On the contrary, as the largest number of respondents are *Oralmans* from China, these findings demonstrate more considerable insight. Further research needs to be done to articulate the internal differences and their influence on the emergence of hybrid identity.

This work fits in the realm of existing studies and creates the heterogeneous context for the study of *Oralmans.* My findings indicate that there are other possible directions for studying *Oralmans*' identity. The further research might address such categories, as education level and socio-economic status of different *Oralmans*, which could in turn be connected to the sense of belongingness and self-identification. Based on this and other existing works about *Oralmans*, it could be said that *Oralmans* do not fit in the specific categories, but are involved in the composite categories of self-identification. Additional research could be done to see the similarities and differences in Central Asian context of ethnic return migration.

This thesis has aimed at contributing to the study of Central Asian nationhood and the corpus of the ethnic return migration. The influence of the Soviet past is still present in the modern Kazakhstani discourses of nation-building, linguistic policies, and, ethnic immigration. The study of *Oralmans* could contribute to the overall understanding of the concepts of ethnicity, national feeling, and prejudice, that is tightly connected to the field of immigration.

**Bibliography**


"About Nazarbayev's critique for Oralmans". ("Матери и оралманы — о критике Назарбаева в их адрес". Azattyq Radio, accessed May 23, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-reaction-to-nazarbaev-speech/30123865.html.

Altynay, Kadyraliyeva, Zholdubayeva Azhar, Gabitov Tursun, and Alimzhanova Aliya. "Kazakhstan's Experience in the Enhancement of the Intercultural Dialogue in a Multicultural Society." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, (August 14, 2014): 912–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.526.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

Bar-Tal, Daniel. "Group Beliefs as an Expression of Social Identity." In *Social Identity: International Perspectives*, 93–113. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, 1998. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446279205.n7.

"Between a hammer and an anvil". ("Между молотом и наковальней") openDemocracy, accessed June 3, 2020, https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/mezhdu-molotom-i-nakovalney/.

Bokayev, B et al, 2012. Ethnolinguistic Identification and Adaptation of Repatriates in Polycultural Kazakhstan, Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 11 (5), 336

Bonnenfant, Isik Kuscu. "Constructing the Homeland: Kazakhstan's Discourse and Policies Surrounding Its Ethnic Return-Migration Policy." *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 31–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2012.650004.

Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity without Groups." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 163–89.

———. "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997.

Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. "Beyond 'Identity.'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

Burkhanov, Aziz. "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions." *Cornell International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 1.

Cameron, Sarah. *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*. Cornell University Press, 2018. www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt21h4vb7.

———. "The Kazakh Famine of 1930-33: Current Research and New Directions." *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 10, 2016): 117–32. https://doi.org/10.21226/T2T59X.

Cerny, Astrid. "Going where the grass is greener: China Kazaks and the Oralman immigration policy in Kazakhstan." *Pastoralism* 1, no. 2 (2010): 218-247.

Cohen, Rina, and Gerald Gold. "Constructing Ethnicity: Myth of Return and Modes of Exclusion among Israelis in Toronto." *International Migration* 35, no. 3 (1997): 373–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00018.

"Collectivization in Kazakhstan · Kazakhstan during the Formation of the Totalitarian System · Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union · History of Kazakhstan · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal." Accessed May 1, 2020. https://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/294.

Diener, Alexander C. "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora: Settlement Planning and the Oralman Dilemma." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (2005): 327–48.

Dovidio, John F., Miles Hewstone, Peter Glick, and Victoria M. Esses. *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*. SAGE, 2010.

Fierman, William. “Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools.” *The Russian Review* 65, no. 1 (2006): 98–116.
Fittante, Daniel. “Connection without Engagement: Paradoxes of North American Armenian Return Migration.” *DIASPORA*, July 21, 2017. https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.19.2-3.147.
Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Cornell University Press, 2008.
Higgins, Andrew. “Kazakhstan Cheers New Alphabet, Except for All Those Apostrophes.” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2018, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/15/world/asia/kazakhstan-alphabet-nursultan-nazarbayev.html.
Isaacs, Rico, and Abel Polese. “Between ‘Imagined’ and ‘Real’ Nation-Building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia.” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 371–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1029044.
“Iran Qazaqtary | Казахи в Иране - YouTube.” Accessed December 10, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnz9bf9Kyd4&t=3s.
Is there an “Oralmanophobia” in Kazakhstan?”. “Существует ли в Казахстане «оралманофобия»?”. Azattyq Radio, accessed May 23, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/repatriate_diskrimination_kulibayev_janaozen_phobia_migration/24356665.html.
Joppke, Christian. “Exclusion in the Liberal State: The Case of Immigration and Citizenship Policy.” *European Journal of Social Theory*, July 24, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431005049327.
Joppke, Christian, and Zeev Rosenhek. “Contesting Ethnic Immigration: Germany and Israel Compared.” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 43, no. 3 (2002): 301–35.
“Individual quota remuneration was suggested in Kazakhstan”. (“Выдавать Региональные Квоты На Каждого Оралмана, а Не На Семьи Предложили в Казахстане”). March 28, 2018, https://informburo.kz/novosti/vydavat-regionalnye-kvoty-na-kazhdogo-oralmana-a-ne-na-semi-predlozhili-v-kazahstane.html.
Edge: Kazakhstan. “Kazakh Alphabet: Past, Present and Future,” April 4, 2018. https://www.edgekz.com/kazakh-alphabet-past-present-and-future/.
Eurasianet. “Kazakhstan: Words Mean Everything in Ethnic Kazakh Debate.” Accessed December 8, 2019. https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-words-mean-everything-in-ethnic-kazakh-debate.
———. “Kazakhstan’s Returnees Frustrated by Cold Shoulders.” Accessed December 8, 2019. https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstans-returnees-frustrated-by-cold-shoulders.
“Kazakh Senate Abolishes Term Oralman.” Accessed May 19, 2020. https://en.fergana.news/news/117662/.
“Kazakhstan to Switch from Cyrillic to Latin Alphabet.” Accessed April 19, 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/kazakhstan-switch-cyrillic-latin-alphabet-171028013156380.html.
Kolesova Elena, and Evangelia Papoutsaki. "The Zhanaozen Crisis and Oralmans’ Place in The (Re) Construction of The Kazakh National Identity." *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 19 (2017): 47.
Kadyraliyeva Altynay et al., “Kazakhstan’s Experience in the Enhancement of the Intercultural Dialogue in a Multicultural Society,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3rd Cyprus International Conference on Educational Research, CY-ICER 2014, 30 January – 1 February 2014, Lefkosa, North Cyprus, 143 (August 14, 2014): 914, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.526.

"Kazakhstan: the debates around ethnic Kazakhs emerged because of the one term". (Казахстан: Споры Вокруг Этнических Казахов Разгорелись Из-За Одного Слова) accessed May 19, 2020, https://russian.eurasianet.org/

Kindler, Robert. *Stalin's Nomads: Power and Famine in Kazakhstan*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.

Kymlicka, Will. *Individual Rights and Collective Rights*. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford University Press. Accessed April 19, 2020. https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0198290918.001.0001/acprof-9780198290919-chapter-3.

"Language Policy in Kazakhstan · Publications · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal." Accessed April 19, 2020. https://e-history.kz/en/publications/view/3053.

"Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 13 December 1997 No. 204-1 on Population Migration (Amendment 2002) – Kidsempowerment." Accessed December 8, 2019. https://kidsempowerment.org/law-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-13-december-1997-no-204-1-on-population-migration-amendment-2002.

Lee, Chaimun. "Languages and Ethnic Politics in Central Asia: The Case of Kazakhstan." *Journal of International and Area Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 101–16.

Lissak, Moshe. "The Demographic-Social Revolution in Israel in the 1950s: The Absorption of the Great *Aliyah*." *Journal of Israeli History* 22, no. 2 (October 2003): 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13531040312331287624.

Livi-Bacci, Massimo. "On the Human Costs of Collectivization in the Soviet Union." *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 4 (1993): 743–66. https://doi.org/10.2307/2938412.

Marat, Erica. *The Politics of Police Reform: Society Against the State in Post-Soviet Countries*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Melich, Jiri S. and Aigul Adibayeva. "Nation-Building and Cultural Policy in Kazakhstan," 2014.

Mendikulova, Gulnara. "The Diaspora Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan." *Regional Routes, Regional Roots? Cross-Border. Patterns of Human Mobility in Eurasia*, n.d., 77–84.

Mkrtchyan, Narek. "New Language Policy of Kazakhstan: A Project of Kazakhization?" *Contemporary Eurasia* 6, no. 1 (March 10, 2017): 106–19.

Morita, Liang. "A Comparison of Co-Ethnic Migrants in Japan and Singapore." Edited by Jamie Halsall. *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (May 30, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1189386.

"More than 17,6 thousand Oralmans immigrated to Kazakhstan in 2019". ("Более 17,6 Тыс. Оралманов Прибыли в Казахстан в 2019"). www.forbes.kz, January 23, 2020, https://forbes.kz/news/2020/01/23/newsid_217371.

Munz, Rainer, and Rainer Ohliger. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Russia in Comparative Perspective*. Routledge, 2004.

"National Identity Issues in Kazakhstan · Publications · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal." Accessed April 18, 2020. https://ehistory.kz/en/publications/view/national_identity_issues_in_kazakhstan__4803.

"'Nobody is waiting for us here": The life of Oralman in Kazakhstan" (Нас Здесь Никто Не Ждет»: Как Живут Оралманы в Казахстане) The Village Казахстан, October 27, 2017, https://www.the-village.kz/village/people/people/447-oralmany.

Nurtazina, Nazira, and Tomohiko//Foreword Uyama. "Great Famine of 1931-1933 in Kazakhstan: A Contemporary's Reminiscences." *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 32 (2012): 105–29.

Ohayon, Isabelle. “The Kazakh Famine: The Beginnings of Sedentarization,” n.d., 17.
Oka, Natsuko. “A Note on Ethnic Return Migration Policy in Kazakhstan: Changing Priorities and a Growing Dilemma,” n.d., 20.
Olcott, Martha Brill. “The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan.” *The Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981): 122–42. https://doi.org/10.2307/129204.
“Oralmans demand Timur Kulibayev’s apologies”. (“Оралманы требуют извинений от Тимура Кулибаева”). Azattyq Radio, accessed May 22, 2020, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/timur_kulibaev_oil_workers_strike_oralmans_kazakh_repatriates/24348862.html.
Pavlenko, Aneta. *Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries*. Multilingual Matters, 2008.
“Peasant Exile to Kazakhstan · Kazakhstan during the Formation of the Totalitarian System · Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union · History of Kazakhstan · ‘Kazakhstan History’ Portal.” Accessed April 30, 2020. https://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/peasant_exile_to_kazakhstan__1657.
Pianciola, Niccolò. “Famine in the Steppe: The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934.” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2004): 137–92.
———. “The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (2001): 237–51.
Pindi, Gloria Nziba. “Hybridity and Identity Performance in Diasporic Context: An Autoethnographic Journey of the Self Across Cultures:” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, October 25, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708617735636.
RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. “Analysis: China’s New Security Concern – The Kazakhs.” Accessed May 2, 2020. https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-kazakhstan-china-deteriorating-relations-uyghurs/28665937.html.
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. “Nearly 1 Million Kazakhs Have Resettled In Kazakhstan Since 1991.” Accessed December 8, 2019. https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-ethnic-kazakhs-oralman-return-uzbekistan-turkmenistan-china/26796879.html.
Rees, Kristoffer Michael, and Nora Webb Williams. “Explaining Kazakhstani Identity: Supraethnic Identity, Ethnicity, Language, and Citizenship.” *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (September 2017): 815–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1288204.
“Repatriate in Kazakhstan: Help, Privileges, Adaptation | Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.” Accessed May 18, 2020. https://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/for_foreigners/oralman_rk.
Sadyrova Mansiya and Amitov Sultankozha. *Processes of migration and social adaptation of Oralmans in Kazakhstan*. (*Миграционные процессы в Казахстане и социальная адаптация оралманов. Социологический анализ).* Sociological analysis. Litres, (2017): 2.
Safran, William. “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return.” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99. https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.1991.0004.
Satpayev, Dossym, and Tolganay Umbetaliyeva. “The Protests in Zhanaozen and the Kazakh Oil Sector: Conflicting Interests in a Rentier State.” *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 122–29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.03.005.
September 2015, Zhazira Dyussembekova in Nur-Sultan on 30. “Astana Street Names Provide Historical Guide for Residents.” *The Astana Times* (blog), September 30, 2015. https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/astana-street-names-provide-historical-guide-for-residents/.
Skrentny, John D., Stephanie Chan, Jon Fox, and Denis Kim. “Defining Nations in Asia and Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Return Migration Policy.” *International*

*Migration Review* 41, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 793–825. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00100.x.
Smagulova, Juldyz. “Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use.” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3–4 (July 1, 2008): 440–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798.
Smith, Anthony D. “Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism.” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445–58. https://doi.org/10.2307/2625550.
Syzdykbayeva, Rizagul. “The Role of Language Policies in Developing Plurilingual Identities in Kazakhstan,” 2016, 6.
The New Humanitarian. “Special report on ethnic Kazakhs and the struggle to return,” September 2, 2003. http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/189817.
“The Kazakhs of Mongolia: Eagle Hunters (English Subtitles) - YouTube.” Accessed December 10, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_48K5I5XleQ.
“The Oralman quota was reduced in Kazakhstan”. (“В Казахстане сокращена квота приема ораlманов”). rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz, January 27, 2020, https://rus.azattyq-ruhy.kz/society/4610-v-kazakhstane-sokrashchena-kvota-priema-oralmanov.
Tajfel, H., Turner, J.C., Austin, W.G. and Worchel, S., 1979. An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational identity: A reader*, *56*, p.65.
Tajfel, Henri. “Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour”.
Akorda.kz. “The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan — Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.” Accessed April 19, 2020. http://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/constitution.
“The Issues of Oralmans’ Integration into Modern Kazakhstani Society.” Accessed December 8, 2019. https://articlekz.com/en/article/19107.
Toren, Nina. “Return Migration to Israel.” *The International Migration Review* 12, no. 1 (1978): 39–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/2545627.
Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 48, no. 1 (1999): 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1086/452444.
———. “Ethnic Return Migration and the Nation-State: Encouraging the Diaspora to Return ‘Home.’” *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 4 (2010): 616–36. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2010.00444.x.
Tsuda, Takeyuki, and Harper-Schmidt Instructor. “Migration and Alienation: Japanese-Brazilian Return Migrants and the Search for Homeland Abroad,” n.d., 44.
UNDP in Kazakhstan. “Status of Oralmans in Kazakhstan. Overview.” Accessed October 29, 2019. https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/library/inclusivedevelopment/status-of-oralmans-in-kazakhstan--overview.html.
Wagner, Ulrich, Oliver Christ, and Wilhelm Heitmeyer. “Anti-Immigration Bias.” In *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, 361–76. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446200919.
Zhumabayeva, Kamila. “Kazakh Diaspora Chooses Unique Ways to Maintain Identity.” *The Astana Times* (blog), September 22, 2015. https://astanatimes.com/2015/09/kazakh-diaspora-chooses-unique-ways-to-maintain-identity/.