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**CHUVASH DIASPORA OF KAZAKHSTAN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE XX – THE FIRST
QUARTER OF THE XXI CENTURIES:
FORMATION, REMIGRATION PROCESSES, CURRENT STATE**

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Abstract

The relevance of the problem being investigated is due to the steady tendency of reduction the number of Chuvash in the territory of modern Kazakhstan. The purpose of the article is to consider the process of formation of the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period, and to study the causes of its decrease in modern conditions, primarily due to re-emigration. The leading approach to the study of this problem is a comprehensive analysis of published sources and field material. The article uses methods of quantitative analysis, cartographic method, oral-historical method. The main result was an analysis of the dynamics of the number of Chuvash people in Kazakhstan. The materials of the article may be useful for ethnographers, sociologists, and other scientists as a reserve for further study of the processes occurring within the national diasporas in the territory of states that were formerly a part of the USSR.

Keywords

Migration – Diaspora – Traditions – Modernity – Remigration processes

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Introduction

An important feature of the demographic situation within unitary states that were formerly a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereinafter referred to as the USSR) is the presence on their territories of many ethnic groups and national diasporas. Many of them were formed in the Soviet period due to production and economic and other ties between the Union republics. After the collapse of the USSR and the transformation of the latter into independent states, the state of these diasporas could not remain unchanged. The scientific study of both the general condition and particular problems of national diasporas in the post-Soviet states is an important component of a comprehensive study of the ethno-demographic situation in a significant part of the Eurasian space occupied by the republics of the former USSR. The purpose of this research is to study the current state of such diasporas with a specific example. The territorial scope of the article covers the Republic of Kazakhstan, one of the most multinational states in the post-Soviet area.

Representatives of more than one hundred nations live in Kazakhstan, including the Chuvashes, who now occupy the fifth place among the peoples of the Russian Federation. However, until now, the social and ethnic history of the Chuvash people outside of Russia has been little studied. One of the exceptions is the book published in 2016 by the professor of the University of Vienna A. Kapeller, which presents a concise, but substantial summary of all the past stages of the Chuvash people: from ethnogenesis to the formation of national statehood in the 1920s¹. In his study, the author noted that a characteristic feature of this story from the 18th to 19th centuries was the migration of part of the Chuvash population from their traditional places of residence (the Middle Volga) to more remote regions of Russia, including the Urals and Siberia². In the Soviet era, the range of migration of representatives of the Chuvash ethnic group expanded significantly, including the influence of state policy. In the 1950s, during the virgin lands campaign in Kazakhstan, the representatives of both Chuvashia and other constituent entities of the Russian Federation began to migrate within the latter³. According to the 1989 All-Union Census, the number of people living in Kazakhstan and identifying with the Chuvash ethnic group amounted to 22,305 people. But from the very first years after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, in sovereign Kazakhstan, a permanent decrease in the number of Chuvash began to occur, which was caused, first of all, by their re-emigration to their small homeland in the Russian Federation. According to the results of the last national (universal) census of the population of Kazakhstan in 2009, the number of Chuvash people was 7.3 thousand people (proportion 0.05%)⁴. As of January 1, 2018, there were only 4,107 of Chuvash people (the proportion 0.04%). This article, the chronological framework of which covers the 1990s - 2018, is devoted to studying the state of the population and reasons for the reduction of the Chuvash diaspora in the territory of modern Kazakhstan. The relevance of such a study is due to the fact that the current state of the Chuvash outside the Russian Federation has not been specifically studied in either Russian or foreign literature. It is thought that the research methodology and conclusions presented in it can be used to study the current state of national diasporas in other states located in the vast post-Soviet area.

¹ A. Kappeler, Chuvashi. Narod v teni istorii: monografiya (Cheboksary: ChKI RUK, 2019).

² A. Kappeler, Chuvashi. Narod v teni istorii... 80-83.

³ E. A. Yagafova, Chuvashskaya diaspora na postsovetском prostranstve (Samara: PGSGA, 2013), 108.

⁴ T. Zh. Zhumasultanov, "Sotsial'no-etnicheskaya struktura naseleniya sovremennogo Kazakhstana", *Ekonomika i Statistika*, Vol: 4 (2012): 99.

Note that the scientific literature, both in Russian and in other languages, on the announced problem is practically absent. The exception is the monograph by E.A. Yagafova, in which the process of reducing the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan was only ascertained, but was not studied in detail⁵. Meanwhile, the study of the aspects of this phenomenon, first of all, its stages, causes and dynamics can give quite demanded results. Firstly, factual data will be presented, a comparative analysis of which will make it possible to predict the number of Chuvash in Kazakhstan for the coming years. Secondly, the scientifically based identification of the causes of re-emigration, as the main factor in changing the number of the Chuvash diaspora in modern Kazakhstan, should contribute to the development of a system of interethnic and sociocultural relations between Russia and Kazakhstan. Thirdly, the revealed data can be used to study the dynamics of the number and general condition of the Chuvash diasporas in other states located in the post-Soviet Eurasian area. The relevance of this study is stipulated by the reception of the declared results.

A preliminary study of the problem and the historiography of the issue made it possible to formulate the following hypothesis. The main factors of the stratification of the Chuvash diaspora in modern Kazakhstan and the re-emigration of its representatives are: 1) developing in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the dominant influence of the Kazakhs, its language, culture, habits on the administrative and social policies in the country, as well as on similar national components of the national diasporas, which in the Soviet period had different conditions of their existence; 2) the difference in living standards at the place of residence in Kazakhstan and the place of residence of relatives and friends in Russia. Thus, the dynamics of the number of Chuvash people depends on improving the living standards in Kazakhstan, as well as the measures of the Kazakh authorities to smooth out the negative impact of these national trends on the Chuvash and other national diasporas.

During the study, the following tasks were solved: 1) identification of the reasons for the mass migration of the Chuvash to Kazakhstan in the Soviet years; 2) determination of the nature and degree of mutual influence of the national, political, socio-cultural and economic situation in post-Soviet Kazakhstan on the degree of comfort of the Chuvash living in it; 3) study of the degree of influence of the national policy of the Russian Federation on the migration of the Chuvash population from Kazakhstan; 4) the identification of other factors other than emigration, additional factors affecting the dynamics and number of Chuvash in Kazakhstan; 5) forecasting trends in the migration of Chuvashes to Russia in the next 5 years.

As a basic approach to the study of the problem, we used certain provisions of the theory of nationalism⁶, socialization⁷, as well as the concept of “social organization of cultural differences” F. Bart. Our study confirms the author’s thought that an ethnic group occupying a territory with varying environmental conditions will exhibit a regional diversity of institutionalized external behavior that does not reflect differences in cultural orientation⁸.

In this article, the authors use the term “diaspora”, which is widely used in the scientific literature. Diaspora is a part nation (Ethnic group), that lives outside its country of

⁵ E. A. Yagafova, Chuvashskaya diaspora na...

⁶ E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); E. Hobsbawm, Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁷ F. Barth, “The analysis of culture in complex societies”, Ethnos, Vol: 54 num no. 3–4 (1989): 120–142.

⁸ F. Bart, ed., Etnicheskiye gruppy i sotsial’nyye granitsy: Sotsial’naya organizatsiya kul’turnykh razlichiy. (Moscow: Novoe izdatelstvo, 2006), 14.

origin, forms cohesive and stable ethnic groups in the country of residence Social institution and has to maintain and develop its identity and community. The previous historiography of the problem was analyzed in detail. First of all, we note the work of Professor E.A. Yagafova, which examined the state of the Chuvash diaspora in neighbouring countries (Belarus, Estonia). The author thoroughly studied the degree of intensity of the diaspora's connection with the ethnic environment in the region of residence and with Chuvashia, examined the influence of public institutions on the life of Chuvash people in diaspora, and explained the determination of the degree to which Chuvash ethnic groups correspond to the content of the definition of "classical diaspora"⁹. The works devoted to the study of the state of other diasporas in Kazakhstan are analyzed. Such works also include research by scientists of the Republic of Tatarstan T. A. Titova, Z. A. Makhmutov, T. R. Bariev for German and Tatarian population of Kazakhstan¹⁰. The analysis of nationally mixed marriages is of particular interest to researchers. These works contain rich field material, collected mainly in the north of Kazakhstan, where most of the studied ethnic groups live. These works, written under the guidance of Professor T.A. Titova, are new because there were no predecessors that used their own field material. The work is based primarily on participant observation. Another important conceptual work on the last issue is the work of the scientist of the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi A. B. Kalysh¹¹, which addresses the issue of family-marriage relations in mono-and multi-ethnic regions of Kazakhstan. Analysis of open data was carried out on the basis of the widespread use of statistical data obtained during the census in 2009. Since the last census a decade has passed, new data are needed for a more objective analysis of the age and sex composition of the population.

Methods

This work is based on the principle of historicism - the methodological basis of the dialectical interpretation of all historical processes. The object of study - the Chuvash diaspora of Kazakhstan is considered, taking into account all its successive changes. When developing the stated problems, the following methods were used:

- general scientific – historical and logical, method of ascending from concrete to abstract, methods of analysis and synthesis, etc.
- specific imperical – participant observation (for studying the Chuvash diaspora “from within” in everyday life). Verbal information was mainly obtained by interviewing respondents on a pre-prepared questionnaire, as well as during the conversation. Before leaving for the Republic of Kazakhstan, the authors formed a database of 20 respondents - Chuvashes living in Kazakhstan. The selection was carried out by representatives of the Chuvash Social and Cultural Center (Pavlodar, Kazakhstan). 12 respondents of them were interviewed (8 people could not be accepted for objective reasons). We used quantitative (mathematical)

⁹ E.A. Yagafova, Chuvashskaya diaspora na...

¹⁰ Z.A. Makhmutov, “K voprosu ob etnicheskoy identichnosti tatar Kazakhstana” in *Etnologicheskoye issledovaniya v Tatarstane*, issue V, ed. G.F. Gabdrakhmanova, D.M. Iskhakov, and L.V. Sagitova (Kazan: Publishing House “YAZ”; Sh. Marjani Institute of History of AN RT, 2011), 255–266; T.A. Titova and Z.A. Makhmutov, “Tatarskoye naseleniye Severnogo Kazakhstana” in *Sovremennyye etnosotsiologicheskoye issledovaniya v Respublike Tatarstan* [Modern ethnosociological studies in the Republic of Kazakhstan Kazan], ed. R.N. Musina and L.V. Sagitova (Kazan: Institute of History of AN RT, 2008), 291–303; T.A. Titova and T.R. Bariev, “K voprosu ob etnicheskoy identichnosti nemetskogo naseleniya Severnogo Kazakhstana” in *Etnologicheskoye issledovaniya v Tatarstane*, issue IV (Institute of History of AN RT, 2010), 250–254.

¹¹ A.B. Kalysh, *Sem'ya i brak v sovremennom Kazakhstane: monografiya* (Almaty: Arys, 2013).

methods for processing field, isolated statistical materials. The cartographic method was used to consider the dynamics of the number of Chuvash by region. Thus, a body of texts arose for discursive analysis. During the study, 12 respondents over 60-80 years old were interviewed, mainly from the Pavlodar region, who arrived in the 50-60s. XX century during the virgin lands campaign (9 people - the city of Pavlodar, 3 people - the city of Alma-Ata). Among respondents: 4 people with higher education, the rest with secondary specialized and general education; 2 people - resigned military servants, 10 people - workers of various specialties.

Results

Virgin lands campaign in 1954-1960 initiated an increase in migration flows from Chuvashia and other constituent entities of the Russian Federation to Kazakhstan and other eastern regions of the USSR, where this campaign took place. Most of the respondents indicated that during this period the Chuvash youth agreed to go to Kazakhstan on Komsomol trips in the hope of seeing new places and getting a passport. To a large extent, this was facilitated by the de-Stalinization of the Soviet state policy towards collective farms, which began to be implemented after 1953. Young natives of Chuvash villages came to Kazakhstan, during the virgin lands campaign, and then remained to live in a new place, started families. In addition to Chuvashia, during the virgin lands campaign, Chuvashes from other regions of the USSR came to Kazakhstan. For example, in the city of Alma-Ata (now Almaty) the Chuvashes came from the Krasnoyarsk Territory, the Kemerovo Region and other regions of Siberia. In the following decades of the Soviet period, the majority of Chuvashes who came to Kazakhstan from Russia still identified themselves as representatives of their national ethnic group, and attributed their children to the latter. Middle-aged respondents born in Kazakhstan confirmed the information that they received from their parents.

So, the Chuvash diaspora was formed in the second half of the XX century in the Kazakh SSR due to migration and natural growth. The main places of its concentration were Karaganda, Kostanai, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan and Aktobe regions.

Surveys of the oldest (80 years old) respondents showed that during the Soviet period, representatives of the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan, especially those who lived in rural areas, continued to maintain their national traditions - performed traditional ceremonies at weddings or funerals, prepared dishes of the national Chuvash cuisine - baked *Khuplu* pies, boiled *Shurpe* soup, etc. Most of the respondents who lived in the Soviet era noted tolerant relations between representatives of national diasporas and Kazakhs, which was manifested in friendly communication at work, a friendly neighborhood, and the conclusion of interethnic marriages.

But after the transformation of Kazakhstan into a sovereign state in 1992, the situation changed dramatically (Table 1). According to respondents, the part of representatives of the leading elites and part of the Kazakh population began to exert influence on the life of the Chuvash and other diasporas. All this, combined with other social and economic factors (increased interethnic competition in the labor markets, the formation of the staff of the state apparatus and leading sectors of the economy mainly from Kazakhs, narrowing the scope of the Russian language, a general decrease in living standards) and contributed to a sharp reduction in the number of the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan in the 1990s, primarily due to the re-emigration of its representatives, both to Chuvashia and to other constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the situation with interethnic relations within Kazakhstan has noticeably improved, in which both the policy of the country's top leadership and the activities of public institutions, primarily the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, played a significant role.

Data from the migration service of the Chuvash Republic¹² indicate that in the 2000s - the first half of the 2010s (Table 1) re-emigration to the republic from Kazakhstan decreased by 21 times. From June to December 2014, 299 resettlement applications were received by the said department, 8 of which were from Kazakhstan.

Years*	2003	2005	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (Jan-Jun)
Number of people	83	24	30	8	3	9	6	0	0	2

Note: * – on the 1st January

Table 1

The number of forcibly displaced people and refugees in the Chuvash Republic from the Republic of Kazakhstan

But information on the five above-mentioned regions of Kazakhstan indicates that the number of the Chuvash diaspora in it continued to decline in the 2000-2010¹³. From 2006 to 2018, the number of Chuvash decreased from 6454 people up to 4107 people, i.e. by 2347 people, or 36.4% (Table 2).

Regions	Years									
	2006	2008	2010	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Atkobe	52	48	67	59	52	46	41	48	40	41
Magaranda	491	406	012	964	883	833	781	745	693	666
Atkantanay	554	504	100	073	012	94	70	44	36	13
Atkavlodar	68	47	28	16	75	56	48	36	20	06
North Kazakhstan	089	055	23	08	63	52	48	20	91	81

¹² Territorial authority of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Chuvash Republic, "The number of internally displaced persons and refugees," ChuvashStat, 2019, <http://www.chuvash.gks.ru>.

¹³ Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Migration of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2008, 2010, 2012. 2013. 2014; Population by individual ethnic groups; Natural movement of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan for January-September 2014," KazStat, Demography, 2014, <http://www.stat.gov.kz>.

Regions	Years									
	2006	2008	2010	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	454	260	930	820	585	481	388	293	180	107

Note: Population are presented by individual ethnic groups

Table 2

Chuvash population dynamics in the Republic of Kazakhstan by regions

A survey of respondents shows that representatives of the Chuvash diaspora, primarily young people, continue to re-emigrate to the Russian Federation. The higher education is in great demand among the Chuvash population. It is noteworthy that there is an opinion among the respondents that the level of education in the Russian Federation is better. Many Chuvash seek to send their children and grandchildren to get the higher education in the cities of the Russian Federation (Omsk, Barnaul, Novosibirsk, etc.). Parents wish their children to stay in Russia after graduating. At the same time, the Chuvash Republic is not becoming more attractive for re-emigrants from Kazakhstan.

Another reason for the reduction in the number of Chuvashes living in Kazakhstan is inter-ethnic marriages, during which one of the married parties begins to identify with the nationality of the other married couple. The last nationality also includes children born in this marriage.

According to the population census of Kazakhstan¹⁴, in 2009 the largest number of people calling themselves as Chuvash (1304 people) belong to the age group of 50-59 years, i.e. they were born between 1950-1959 and either came to Kazakhstan as young children with their Chuvash parents during the virgin lands campaign, or were born shortly after their fathers and mothers first settled on Kazakh soil. Surveys of such people show that they know about Chuvashia, many of them even were there. When asked what emotions arise when they hear news about Chuvashia, informants note that the heart shrinks, shouting: "My motherland! Motherland!", "I tremble when I hear about the Chuvashes", "Oh, my brothers", "Come here, they show Chuvashia!" But, unfortunately, due to their age, such people cannot serve as a sustainable source of natural reproduction and contribution to the number of the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan.

In order to maintain a stable number and subsequent natural reproduction of this diaspora, it is necessary to create conditions that would be favorable for the living and activities of its young representatives. Otherwise, after several decades, the number of representatives of the Chuvash ethnic group in Kazakhstan may come to nothing.

Conclusion

In previous scientific works, the history of the formation of the Chuvash diaspora in Soviet Kazakhstan and the problem of its collapse in the modern Republic of Kazakhstan have already been touched. The authors focused more on the materials of the latest census conducted in Kazakhstan in 2009. This article aimed to supplement the previously obtained general results on the stated topic, isolating and studying of the most important problem of reducing the number of the Chuvash diaspora in modern Kazakhstan. With such a study, field research materials were put in first place as a source of information, and statistics had a second role.

¹⁴ A. Smailova, ed., Results of the 2009 National population census of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Analytical report (Astana: The Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011).

Accurate work on the collection and processing of field material, its representativeness gave fairly complete information about the reasons for the formation of the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan in the Soviet era and the reduction in its number at present primarily due to re-emigration, which confirms the above hypothesis. The regulated distribution of labor resources during the Soviet period largely contributed to the formation of national diasporas in the Kazakh SSR. First of all, due to the state-organized migration of labor reserves to its lands from other union republics. The collapse of the USSR, the disappearance of the union control center of national republics that became sovereign states, led to the emergence of negative trends that affected the number of the Chuvash diaspora in modern Kazakhstan.

It can be argued that the content of the article supplements and extends the results of previous studies on the Chuvash diaspora in Kazakhstan. The methods of collecting and analyzing the information used in the article can be used to study the state of national diasporas not only in the Republic of Kazakhstan, but also in other states among the republics of the former USSR.

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