

PRESENT SITUATION OF KAZAKH-MONGOLIAN COMMUNITY

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The name and identity “kazakh” emerged in the sixteenth century, when a Kazakh Khanate was founded in today’s Kazakhstan. The Kazakh aristocrats trace their origin directly to Chinggis Khan or his sons. In the sixteenth century, ethnic Kazakhs were historically divided into three clans or zhuzes: The senior zhuz, the middle zhuz, and the junior zhuz. Once under the rule of the Oirad Mongols in the seventeenth to eighteen centuries, some middle zhuz Kazakhs later moved into Jungaria.

The Kazakhs in Mongolia are mostly Abak-kerei and Naiman Kazakhs who settled in the Altai and Khovd regions, where they rented pasture from the lords of Mongolia during the 1860s according to Tarbagatai Protokol between Russia and Qing Dynasty. The nomads came to graze their sheep on the high mountain pastures during the summer, and spent the winter in Kazakhstan or Xinjiang province in China. After the Mongolian revolution in 1921, a permanent border was drawn by agreement between China, Russia and Mongolia, but the Kazakhs remained nomadic until the 1930s, crossing the border at their own will.¹

The word kazakh is said to mean ‘free warrior’ or ‘steppe roamer’. Kazakhs trace their roots to the fifteenth century, when rebellious kinsmen of an Uzbek Khan broke away and settled in present-day Kazakhstan. In Mongolia, more than in Kazakhstan, Kazakh women wear long dresses with stand-up collars, or brightly decorated velvet waistcoats and heavy jewelry. The men still wear baggy shirts and trousers, sleeveless jackets, wool or cotton robes, and a skullcap or a high, tasseled felt hat.²

In 1923 the Mongolian Kazakh population numbered 1,870 households and 11,220 people.³ Subsequently, many more have come to Mongolia from

¹ Paul Greenway, Robert Story and Gabriel Lafitte (1997), *Mongolia (Lonely Planet Publications)*, p.231.

² Nyambuu H.(1992) *Mongoliin Ugsaatnii Zuin Udirtgal: Bureldehuun Garbal Zui (An Introduction to the Ethnography of Mongolia: Ethnic Composition and Ethnogenesis) (Surah bichig Huuhdiin nom hebleliin gazar:Ulaanbaatar)*, p. 129

³ Jamsrano, Ts. ([1 934] 1979) *Darkhad, Khuvsugul nuuriin Uriankhai, Durvud, Khoton, Bayad, Uuld, Myangad, Zakhchin, Torguud, Khoshood, Tsakhar, Daringanga, Altain Uriankhai, Khasag, Khamnigan nariin garal undes baidliin uguulel.*

Xinjiang in China. In 1938, there were 4,300 households and 21,000 Kazakhs⁴. Between 1921 and 1940, the Kazakhs were first under the jurisdiction of Chandamani Uul aimag, then Khovd aimag. In 1940, however, in order to assist the Soviet activities in Xinjiang, a new aimag was founded out of Khovd aimag for the Khazakhs and the Altai Uranghais-Bayan-Ulgii.⁵ Geographically the landscape of the aimag is in the most mountainous zone of the Altai mountain range with 1200-4400 m. altitude. These mountains are permanently covered with glaciers and snow, while the valleys have a few green pastures which support about two million livestock, as well as bear, foxes and lynx. These valleys are dotted with small communities of nomadic families enjoying the short summer from mid-June to late August. The lower regions are mostly arid, rocky hills. Like Tibet, this aimag is almost totally devoid of trees, but the stark beauty of rock, ice and desert makes up for it. The territory of the aimag is 46 thousand square km. It is one of the most remote aimags of the country. The distance from Ulaanbaatar(the Capital) to the aimag center is 1636 km. It borders with China in the northwest and with Russia in the northeast. Between Mongolia and Kazakhstan it is 50 km. The land in between belongs to Russia.

In 1940 the aimag had 71 primary administrative units (m.Bag), 7063 households with a population of 33, 3 thousand. At that time about 40% of Bayan-Ulgii's population was Kazakh.

By 1990 its population had grown to 120,000 persons comprised of 14562 households, out of which 8556 persons were engaged in agriculture as cattle breeders or shepherds. The population of the aimag center is 30 thousand persons. After 1990 the Kazakh population decreased rapidly. According to the census of 1996, the population was 82,000. In the Aimag center there were only 21,600.

Around 10% of the Aimag population are indigenous Mongols (Urianhai, Dervet and Tuvas), who have inhabited the territory since ancient times. 90% of the total population is Kazakhs. This means native Mongols were a minority in Bayan-Ulgii. According to the population census, the Kazakh population of Mongolia increased dramatically, reaching 130,500, a large figure in a country of just about 2.1 million in 1989.

After the foundation of the Aimag there were not enough educated people. The Kazakh people did not speak Mongolian language very well. The Mongo-

⁴ Anonymous (1992) *Tuuhen Uzegdel: Hasagiin Ih Nuudel (A Historical Phenomenon: Kazakh Exodus) Tusgaar Togtnol 10-20 Aug.*

⁵ Minis, A. and Sarai, A.(1960) *BNMAU Bayan-Ulgii aimagiin Kazakh ard tumnii tuuhees(From the History of the Kazakh People in Bayan-Ulgii Province. Of the MPR) (The state Publishing House: Ulaanbaatar), p. 65.*

lian government invited teachers and administrative people from Soviet Kazakhstan, who spoke Kazakh, to teach them. All subjects in the Bayan-Ulgii school district were taught in Kazakh. Also newspaper, radio broadcasts and books were in Kazakh. They brought all textbooks from Soviet Kazakhstan. There were some Mongolian classes in the Kazakh schools. Until 1945, Mongols provided military aid to the Kazakh resistance Fighter Osman⁶, who fought for the independence of Eastern Turkestan from China. The Soviet Union also aided Osman's movement. But the Chinese recognition of Mongolian independence in 1946 put an end to this Osman's campaign. Subsequently, numerous Kazakh refugees went into Mongolia. The autonomous aimag managed to survive as a normal province despite this aborted attempt in Xinjiang.

Kazakhs speak a Turkic language with 42 Cyrillic letters, similar to Russian and a little different from Mongolian. Education has been a reflection of its Soviet Kazakhstan (Russian) roots. Since the 1990s they have also been using Arabic letters.

The Mongolian Kazakhs do well in maintaining their native Language, culture as well as their national traditions, customs and rites. Schooling is conducted in their national language. As for maintaining their national identity (language & Culture), the Mongolian Kazakhs have a far greater advantage over those Kazakhs of today's Kazakhstan. This was recently the conclusion of World Assembly of Kazakhs. Kazakhs generally adhere loosely to Sunni Muslim, but religion is not a major force because of the distance from the center of Islam, their nomadic lifestyle, and the suppression of the Muslim religion by Stalinism. But during the Socialist period Muslim was still strong among the Kazakhs. Some scholars (Thomas Oiler, for one) think, "The degree of Muslim-shamanism

Syncretism in the present day should be investigated, as well as the significance of shamanism in modern life. An attempt will be made to distinguish between shamanist beliefs and practices brought in with the Kazakh migration, those which developed later on Mongolian soil, and those which the Kazakhs adopted from neighboring peoples in Mongolia, especially Tuvans".⁷ Personally, I don't think that there is much connection between Kazakh and Mongolian

⁶ Benson Linda (1988), *Ocman BatunThe Kazakh's Golden Legand'* in Linda Benson and Ingvar Svanberg (eds), *The Kazakh of China: Essays on an Ethnic Minority* (University of Uppsala Press: Uppsala), pp. 41-88

⁷ Thomas Oiler (1997), *Muslim-Shamanism syncretism among Kazakh in Western Mongolia*. (Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN), 41

religious practices. This is because, Kazakhs and Mongols do not have good inter-relations; also they do not mix with each other, especially with Taverns. In Bayan-Ulgii aimag, Kazakh, Mongol and Tuvans do not marry each other very often. However, they are different in customs and religion; the Kazakhs are Sunni Muslims, while the Mongols are Buddhists.

After Bayan-Ulgii aimag was founded Kazakh people caused a lot of problems for the Mongols. In some areas there were not any Mongolian schools or classes, so some families' kids were not able to go to Mongolian school. They were forced to go to Kazakh schools to get an education. In remote rural areas where there are no schools, children are often brought to the aimag centers to stay in boarding schools, returning home only for a two week rest during winter and a three month holiday in summer. Even though Bayan-Ulgii was Mongolian territory it was an informal autonomous Kazakh province. Kazakh people did not like Mongols in Bayan-Ulgii aimag very much. To communicate the Mongols had to speak Kazakh. The Kazakhs took the best pastures. The Mongolian Revolutionary Party and the Government ignored these problems, because Bayan-Ulgii was Kazakh aimag and Kazakhs were their national majority. Native Mongols were their national minority. At that time the Mongolian Revolutionary Party and Government gave more opportunity to Kazakhs than Mongols to get what they wanted. In particular, the Kazakh people first got all leading positions and any other jobs. The government helped Kazakhs first if they were building housing. They also supplied consumer goods to the Kazakhs first. The Kazakh kids went to colleges first, etc.

The increasing Kazakh domination in Bayan-Ulgii brought a lot inconvenience to the native Mongols. Many of them have moved away. Their emigration from Bayan-Ulgii started in the 1960s, when the state farms were set up in central Mongolian provinces.⁸

Subsequent industrialization in Mongolia exerted a strong influence on the Kazakhs. Attracted to opportunities in coal industries in central Mongolia, many Kazakhs moved away from Bayan-Ulgii to Ulaanbaatar and nearby coal mines like Nalaikh. This population movement was as much an economic migration as a political design.

In the 1980s liberalization of Mongolian politics, there arose a demand among the Kazakhs to Kazakhicize Bayan-Ulgii. Following the example of Kazakhstan, where the Kazakhs were turning Russian place-names into Kazakh ones, in Bayan-Ulgii the Kazakhs started to do the same to Mongolian names. A

⁸ *Baatar Ts. Gantulga Ts. (1992) an Ethnosis of the Urianhais. (Bayan-Ulgii Press: Ulgii).*

Kazakh National Unity Movement was inaugurated in October 1990 in Bayan-Ulgii aimag, to promote Kazakh autonomy in Mongolia. Adoption of Kazakh as the local official language, and the appointment of a Kazakh to the post of vice-president of Mongolia.⁹

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gain of independence of Kazakhstan. In September 1992, “the Kazakh government convened a world-wide Qazaq qurultay, inviting representatives of the Kazakh Diaspora from all over the world to Almaty. On President Nazarbayev’s initiative, a Standing Committee was set up to accelerate the pace of Kazakhs’ migration from abroad to Kazakhstan....The highly publicized “Resolution of the Qurultay” appealed for all Kazakhs to unite under a single flag on the soil of Kazakhstan”.¹⁰ This call and the preferential treatment promised to the returning Kazakh Diaspora have stirred a zealous response from Kazakhs from Mongolia, China, Iran, and elsewhere.

The re-migration of Kazakhs began in 1991. The legal status of over 60 thousand Kazakhs (12.3 thousand left in 1991; 26.9 thousand in 1992; 14.7 thousand 1993; over 10 thousand from 1994 to 1998) have left Mongolia remained open. The question of migration of ethnic Kazakh citizens of Mongolia to Kazakhstan has been an important issue of discussion between the governments of Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Prime Minister Jasrai visited Kazakhstan between the end of September and early December of 1994. During his visit Jasrai was able to settle the issue of those citizens of Mongolia who voluntarily went to Kazakhstan. Kazakhs who had left Mongolia for Kazakhstan remained unsettled until the visit of Jasrai. Both sides concluded the Agreement regulating issues of voluntary immigration and job assignment by contract.¹¹ now both countries have concluded several agreements to facilitate the return of Kazakh Mongols to Kazakhstan which describe conditions for employment and housing. Mongolian citizens of Kazakh nationality migrated to Kazakhstan to work under skilled and unskilled labor contracts. Most of these Mongolian Kazakhs have started working as herdsmen in the rural areas of Kazakhstan. More importantly, the government of Kazakhstan is keen to call all Mongolian Kazakhs back to “the motherland” with a view to increase the number of ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. The beginning of 1990s, Kazakhs constituted only 39 percent of

⁹ Sanders, Alan J.K. (1996) *Historical Dictionary of Mongolia* (Scarecrow Press: Lanham, Md., and London), p. 113

¹⁰ Janabel, Jiger (1996), *When National Ambition Conflicts with Reality: Studies on Kazakhstans*, *Central Asian Survey*, 15/1; pp.5-21

¹¹ Summary of World broadcasts. FE/1526 October, 1992

the total population in Kazakhstan. The statement of S. Tereshchenko, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, leaves no doubt about his government's policy on this issue. He explained "there are about 35,000,000 Kazakhs in the world living outside their ethnic homeland, and the government is giving all possible help to each one who wishes to return to the land of his forefathers. In particular, all Mongolian Kazakhs living in our republic have been given help with provision of housing, acquisition of household goods and livestock and with receiving training and jobs. The Kazakhs who have come from Mongolia are now working mainly in animal husbandry and construction.¹² Now Kazakhs constitute 41.9 percent of the total population in Kazakhstan.¹³

A Treaty of Friendly Relation and Cooperation between Mongolia and Kazakhstan was signed In Ulaanbaatar in October 1993, when the President of Kazakhstan, N.Nazarbaev, visited Mongolia. At the bilateral level, political, economic, cultural and diplomatic ties have been strengthened. High-level visits between Mongolia and Kazakhstan have been taking on a regular character. Kazakhstan's deputy Prime Minister I.N.Tasmagametov visited Mongolia in July 1997. During his visit several agreements on science, education and cultural cooperation between the Mongolia and Kazakhstan were signed.

The President of Mongolia N. Bagabandi visited Kazakhstan in March 1998. During this visit, both sides discussed the issue of those citizens of Mongolia who voluntarily went to Kazakhstan. Their question of citizenship (naturalization) it is still processing.

Obviously the Kazakhstan government's policy is bound to encourage future migration of Mongolian Kazakhs. The Mongolian government is not adverse to this migration as it would be relieved of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions between Muslim Kazakhs and Buddhist Mongols. These tensions had assumed alarming proportions in the Bayan-Ulgii aimag where Mongolian Kazakhs constituted about 90 per cent of its population and they had eased out the minority Buddhists. Besides, the new Constitution of Mongolia, which guarantees equal rights and freedom to all its citizens irrespective of race, social origin, etc.

In the last several years since 1995, the number of those coming back home after the expiry of their labor contracts is also considerable. In addition to two thousand Kazakhs who are already back in Mongolia, ten thousand more

¹² *Ibid* FE/1746 July 21, 1993

¹³ Charles Undeland and Nicholas Plant (1994), *The Central Asian Republics Fragments of Empire Magnets of Welt* (The Asia Society Press: NY), p.31

are expected to go home, according to the newspaper ‘Zasgiin Medee’.¹⁴ According to a Kazakh who remained in Mongolia, all the Kazakh students from universities, colleges, and vocational schools in Ulaanbaatar and other central regions left for Kazakhstan. Most of them were carried away by nationalistic feeling, while some others had no choice but to follow their parents. All those Kazakhs living in such places as Khentii aimag, Nalaih mining town near-by Ulaanbaatar, Central and Selenge aimags and Darhan, Erdenet, and Ulaanbaatar cities. Scientists and intellectuals also left Mongolia.

It is important to note that most of those who left Mongolia were those who were scattered by the Mongolian government in various Mongolian provinces, including all young students and intellectuals who tended to be nationalistic. Some Kazakh intellectuals spread rumors that the Mongolian economy was crisis-ridden and would not revive in years to come, and they said that now that nationalism is reviving the Kazakhs, who were ‘slaves’ in Mongolia must leave the country immediately. These people masterminded and led the migration of the Kazakhs.

Changes in political practice have occurred along with the new democratic movement. Earlier, officials were more or less appointed by the central government in Ulaanbaatar, and the Mongols were politically dominant in Bayan-Ulgii. Now, however, the Mongols are being removed from almost all posts, and being replaced by Kazakhs. The Kazakhs are thus said to have staged a coup against the Mongols.

Whatever is happening over there, it seems that most Kazakhs are still willing to work within a Mongolian national framework. They are now fighting a successful battle to enjoy equal (if not superior) rights in Mongolia. There are three Mongolian Parliamentarians in the state I Hural, elected from the Kazakh nationality, and several ministers or high ranking personalities in the central administrations and institutions of the country, representing the Kazakh nationality. The standard of living for Mongols, who became a minority in the aimag, however, differs from that of Kazakhs.

The end of 1991 and beginning of 1992 saw some unrest in Bayan-Ulgii. Meetings and demonstrations were organized in direct relation to the ongoing discussion of the new Constitution. In particular, Kazakhs claimed that their historical tradition, mother tongue, and ethnic rights had not been fully guaranteed and protected in the draft Constitution. Throughout the session of the National Congress discussing the Constitution, Kazakh deputies repeatedly

¹⁴ Internet: E-mail News, October 22, 1997

urged the Congress to take the nationality question more seriously. They insisted that it be reflected in the Constitution as a guarantee of human rights. All this points to the existence of an uneasy Mongol-Kazakh relation in Mongolia. While the Kazakhs claim that they are discriminated against by the Mongols, the Mongols insist, rather, that they are the victims of the Kazakhs. Before 1990, in the one-man dictatorship period, it was said that there was no nationality question in Mongolia. The Kazakhs constituted only 6.8 percent of the total Mongolian population. This is not a substantial number, so it was thought that there was no nationality problem in Mongolia. This is a rather one-sided view. Within the last seventy years, the Kazakhs received more favorable treatment than the Mongols. For example, more houses were constructed for them; the Party and Government satisfied them to a greater degree.¹⁵

According to the statistics for 1996 the number of persons unemployed was 6653 and in the center of the aimag lived 21.6 thousand persons. The Aimag has 33 general educational schools, where some 13200 children studied their native languages. Also there is in Bayan-Ulgii a Mongol-Turkish advanced training school with teaching in English. Bayan-Ulgii has a theatre drama of

Kazakh nationality and a College of Teachers and cultural workers. There are also some private schools.

Recently an International Air Service was opened in the aimag where-by a twice a week Kazakhstan Air Line flies between Almaty and Ulgii. There is also an active barter trade with China and Russia. Within the aimag there are some 15 state enterprises, 11 holding companies, where state property is dominant, 266 other types of economic units, and 84 private enterprises-totaling 376 economic units in the aimag.¹⁶

Ulgii, the center of the aimag, is a Kazakh city which happens to be in Mongolia. You can certainly feel that you are in a Muslim-influenced Central Asian region, rather than in Mongolia; many places have squat toilets; in the city, there are more signs in Arabic and Kazakh Cyrillic than in Mongolian script.

Bayan-Ulgii's economic condition is as bad as other aimags. Privatization is still going on. That is why the Kazakhs' life is as hard as the Mongols'.

In conclusion why Mongolian Kazakhs are moving to Kazakhstan is because the Kazakhstan President invited the Kazakhs from all over the world back to Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs' territory is a historically real fact. Also it is Kazakhs nationalist tendency to regain their former ethnic vitality. If they did not fully use this historical chance, there wouldn't be another such chance. Because now

¹⁵ *Uradyn E. Bulag (1998), Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia (Clarendon Press.*

¹⁶ *Zasgiin Gazriin Medee, March 21, 1996*

Kazakhstan's ethnic Kazakhs are 41.9% and on the economic front, similar problems are witnessed with Mongolia. For the last few years the number of Kazakhs moving to Kazakhstan has greatly diminished. Bayan-Ulgii aimag will be a Kazakh community in the future. But the Kazakhs' re-emigration problem to Kazakhstan is still an open question. As long as Kazakhs are in Mongolia there will be national problems. Kazakhs are citizens of Mongolia and if they have any national problem they can be settled by law.