ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AND IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG XINJIANG KAZAKHS IN KAZAKHSTAN

by

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Abstract

When shared ethnicity is not enough for co-ethnic migrants to adapt and integrate into the co-ethnic society, considerations of different post-migration adaptation methods and identity formation among Kazakh 'repatriates' of different origins are essential. The thesis focuses on the adaptation strategies and identity formation of Xinjiang Kazakhs. It examines how the social/cultural capital gained in China helps Xinjiang Kazakhs find jobs in local Kazakh society and form their identity. I implement the survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. As an insider, I also use the semi-autoethnography method partly supplement the main results. The main finding indicates that, for Xinjiang Kazakhs, Chinese language skills, social networks, and knowledge gained from China or related to Chinese culture, as their unique cultural and social capital, help them adapt to local Kazakhstan society and help them to find a job. The secondary finding shows that Xinjiang Kazakhs have a hybrid identity; their perceptions of their homeland are torn between their birthplace in China and their living place in Kazakhstan. While some still struggle with feeling 'in-between,' many of them create the 'third' space, defining themselves as 'global citizens.'

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0. Introduction

For the past several decades, Kazakh people have always been outside of 'Kazakhstan.' The migration of 'Kazakhs abroad' in different times and spaces contributes to the historical roots of the Kazakh migrations. From the Oirat War to the eastward migration during the Soviet era and famine caused by this, to the westward flow of Kazakh people from Xinjiang to Soviet Kazakhstan, Kazakh nomads have not stopped the pace of migration. From the 18th century to the present, following the roots of the Kazakh migration movements, the creation of Kazakh settlement and resettlement reveals a diverse history. Those different shared memories of the migration path of Kazakh people are an integral part of their visions of the homeland. However, these fluctuating movements and physical distance created by the territorialization of nation-states formed 'relative distance' (Diener 2005a: 468) between two Kazakh communities on the Soviet-Chinese border. It resulted in the 'Russified' Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and the 'Sinicized' Kazakhs in China. This isolation or distance was not erased by the call of the 'Oralman Policy,' encouraging Kazakhs abroad to 'return' back to their 'ancestral motherland' after the independence of Kazakhstan.

China's Kazakh community built their life in Xinjiang for generations. While the social and economic concerns 'pushed' many Kazakhs from where they had lived, they were 'drawn' by a desire to 'return' to 'their genuine homelands,' where they believed they belonged and aspired to find their origins to make socioeconomic advancement (Brubaker 1994: 47-9). These co-ethnic migrants also have different concerns and pressure in both origin and host countries because of the 'double

exclusion’ and stigmatization of dominant groups in both societies (Fokkema 2011: 383; King and Kılınc 2014: 132). In the 'ancestral land,' local community also questioned co-ethnic migrants' identity, and they were turned into ethnic minorities or reverse diasporas (Voutira 2006: 379). Under this changing process, Kazakhs from Xinjiang also struggle to define themselves and find their ‘place’ in ‘Kazakh homeland’ (Diener 2007: 461).

I am a member of ‘Kazakhs abroad,’ and I also locate my family story in part of Kazakh migration history. I was born in a small town near the China-Kazakhstan border. My grandfather's family emigrated to Soviet Kazakhstan in 1962. He returned to his hometown in 1963 with no one in his family. Almost 40 years later, my grandfather was finally reunited with his brothers in 2002 after the Chinese-Russian border reopened. Following the route of the Kazakh migration, I came to Astana in 2018, a place made in my imagination for the Kazakh nation and the land where people live with the same ethnicity and blood as my grandfather and me. However, when I returned to Astana after three years, I felt like being a foreigner in the 'ancestral homeland' when I could not speak Russian and asked others to talk to Kazakh. I could not get rid of the feeling of ‘being a minority,’ an ‘oralman’ Kazakh from China. I contacted other Xinjiang Kazakhs and visited various places opened by them. What they are doing challenges my understanding of the stigmatized label of ‘oralman,’ and I am impressed by their effort.

Co-ethnic 'return' migration (King and Melvin 1999; Pratsinakis 2021; Seol and Skrentny 2009; Tsuda 2010; Zeveleva 2014) is a relatively new social scientific investigation of growing significance in this globalized world intersecting with ethnicity, citizenship, and nationalism. Considerable research has already been devoted to the ethnic 'return/repatriation' program in Kazakhstan (Amangul 2012;

Cerny 2010; Oka 2013) and the integration/adaptation difficulties of Kazakh ‘returnee/repatriates’ in local Kazakh society (Diener 2005b; Bokayev et al. 2012; Kuşçu 2014; United Nations Development Programme Kazakhstan 2006, 2019; Valieva et al. 2019). However, there is still a significant gap in the body of work on Kazakh 'repatriation', which ignores the different post-migration adaptation methods and identity formation among Kazakh 'repatriates' of different origins.

My research contributes to filling this gap by arguing that Xinjiang Kazakh ‘repatriates’ adapt to Kazakhstani society by specifically utilizing the social and cultural capital gained from their time in China, such as the dominant language skills spoken in their countries of origin, cross-cultural awareness, and transnational social networks; and Xinjiang Kazakh ‘repatriates’ forming their ethnic, national, and global identity in a hybrid environment. The thesis builds on those studies that perceive the social and cultural capital acquired from the country of origin has influenced the 'return' migrants' adaptation and integration in their 'ancestral homeland' (Bauder 2005; Grasmuck and Hinze 2016; King and Christou 2010; Mingboupha 2019; Potter and Phillips 2006; Remennick 2012; Song 2014). My discussion of identity formation also builds on hybrid identity studies among ethnic 'return' migrants (Diener 2005a; Jašina-Schäfer 2019; Kuscu 2015; Mingboupha 2019). Thus, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the transnational networks of globalization and the fluidity of identity formation within nationalism by highlighting the importance of how social and cultural capital carried from the country of origin play a pivotal role in determining the social adaptation and identity formation of co-ethnic migrants in their host society.

0.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Theory of Capital (Social and Cultural Capital)

According to Bourdieu (1986: 16), there are three primary forms in which capital can appear such as social, cultural, and economic capital. Based on his definition, social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986: 21). It is considered an investment in various forms such as information, aid, and financial assistance that may be repaid in the future. The application of a common name, such as the name of a family, class, ethnicity, a school, and party, are all social networks that are guaranteed by society (Bourdieu 1986: 21). The degree of social capital is relative to the number of other types of capital. Social capital is linked to the mobility of the social network and economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986: 21).

The network of ties results from strategies including reciprocal recognition and acknowledgment of relationships, creating long-term exchange and communication practices (Bourdieu 1986: 22). Furthermore, those social connections will be beneficial in the future. It is essential to build up social capital to engage in all resources. Coleman (1988: 100) also emphasizes that social capital is created through changes in interpersonal relationships that encourage activity. Likewise, a group with high levels of trustworthiness and trust is able to do far more than a group without similar levels of reliability and trust (Coleman 1988: 100). Moreover, for a Kazakh from China, social capital is considered their social relations in China, especially with friend circle and acquaintance network in China and family ties both in China and

Kazakhstan. In order to maintain these social networks and ties, building mutual trust is also a crucial step for Kazakhs from China.

In Bourdieu's (1986) theory, the qualification or degree of people's cultural competency is referred to as cultural capital. He differentiates between three forms of cultural capital: embodied cultural capital, which refers to human attributes, objectified cultural capital, which relates to cultural goods; and institutionalized cultural capital, which refers to academic credentials (Bourdieu 1986: 17). Cultural capital is considered to be crucial for their work positioning. According to Coleman (1988: 101), cultural capital is less tangible and embodied in an individual's skills and knowledge. The cultural capital that Kazakhs from China gained during their pre-migration life in China can be converted into social capital later in their post-migration life in Kazakhstan. In this research, for Xinjiang Kazakhs, forms of cultural capital refer to their Chinese language skills, Chinese cultural knowledge and practice, educational qualifications, and work experience. According to Bourdieu (1986), the effects of having social and cultural capital are always attributable to economic capital. Xinjiang Kazakhs convert their social networks, academic degree, Chinese language skills, and understanding of Chinese cultural norms into their financial income. Overall, for Kazakhs from China, it is not only the legal qualifications of ethnic return migrants but also their social webs and cultural skills that prepare them for their integration and adaptation to Kazakhstan society.

'In-between' Space, Hybridity, and the 'Third' Space

Bhabha (1994) claims that culture does not exist in isolation but interacts and overlaps in a hybrid world, the 'third' space of enunciation. This is relevant in

comprehending the cultural identities of migrants living in the diaspora's transnational, geopolitical, and cultural environments. In ethnic ‘return’ migration, his conceptualization of ‘in-between’ space, hybridity, and the ‘third’ space could explain the diasporic cultural identity of Kazakh ‘repatriates’ between the cultural environment of China and Kazakhstan (Bhabha 1994: 37; see also Bhandari 2020: 79, 81). According to Bhabha (1994:7), the interaction between diverse cultures results in the birth of a new culture from the in-between area, one that is not about the past or the present but rather a sense of the newly produced form of cultural transformation and interchange (Bhabha 1994:7; see also Bhandari 2020: 82). In the research, after migrating to Kazakhstan, Kazakhs from China face cultural 'in-betweenness' in a hybrid arena during the transformation and interactions of cultural practices between what they carried from Xinjiang and what they encountered in their historical 'homeland' Kazakhstan.

Bhabha (1994: 159) claims that hybridity; “is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity which manifests the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.” Cultures do not exist in isolation but rather in ongoing interaction and dynamic circulation. Culture is a shifting process that occurs in time and space, and he highlights the interactional and fluidity of cultural hybridity, which he refers to as the “Third Space of Enunciation” (Bhabha 1994: 34). Cultural contacts in divergent and uncertain areas are referred to as the 'third' space, where cultural identities can "be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 1994: 37; see also Bhandari 2020: 85). In the 'third' space, Kazakhs from China are undergoing exposure to both the original and host cultures, resulting in a hybrid in their lives, which also leads to their fluctuating and changing identities.

0.2 Findings

The main finding indicates that, for Kazakhs from China, Chinese language skills, social networks, and knowledge gained from China or related to Chinese culture, as their unique cultural and social capital, help them adapt to local Kazakhstan society and help them to find a job. Specifically, transnational ties promote their cross-border business. Their Chinese language abilities and common Chinese culture contribute to maintaining this social network and trust. Language skills and cultural understanding help them connect with local and Chinese businesses. Kazakhs from China are flexible in their business practices. Their practical knowledge converts to financial gain and allows them to extend their social networks in the local community.

The secondary finding is about the hybridity and fluidity of identity construction amongst Kazakhs from China in Kazakhstan. Interview data shows that Kazakhs from China had a hybrid identity that they felt 'in-between,' or 'neither here nor there.' Respondents' identity formation is not static but a changing process. Respondents' identity formation is influenced by their pre-migration education and transnational experience. 'Homeland' is an 'in-between' space for them between their birthplace in Xinjiang and 'ancestral motherland' in Kazakhstan. Most of them also create the 'third' space and try to locate their mixed identity in an uncertain globalized world, and they define themselves as "global citizens" to balance their Chinese and Kazakh identities. Further, respondents' opinions toward the ethnic label 'kandas' are also diverse, but one commonality is respondents' desire to be part of the Kazakh community in Kazakhstan.

0.3 Data Collection

I conducted the semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires from December 2021 to January 2022. The data collection process included online surveys and online and offline interviews with Kazakhs from China who migrated to Kazakhstan. Also, as an insider, the semi-autoethnography method partly supplemented the main results with my personal background and feelings on the issues in this study.

I used the snowball method to reach out to potential interviewees. Most of the interviews were conducted via Zoom meetings. I interviewed 15 people who are Kazakhs from China in Kazakhstan, and my criteria were based on the diversity of their jobs. In order to make sure the participants come from various backgrounds and professions, I tried to include people from different fields of work, such as restaurant owners, clinic owners, professors, and people in cross-border business or foreign companies. Besides, I received fifty-three responses to questionnaires.

0.4 Organization of the Chapters

This thesis includes six chapters. Chapter one reviews literature about ethnic return migration as a global phenomenon and ethnic return migration to Kazakhstan. Chapter two explains the research problems, research questions, hypotheses, and methodology. Chapter three is the history of Kazakh migration. It starts with an ethnography of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang and the settlement and resettlement of Kazakh migration from the 18th century to the Soviet era. The migration after the independence of Kazakhstan and the 'oralman program' is the central part of the

discussion, and this chapter ends with the adaptation strategies of Kazakhs from China during the migration.

Chapters four and five are data analysis and discussion under the thesis topics: adaptation strategies and identity formation. Chapter four focuses on the different adaptation strategies of Kazakhs from China in Kazakhstan society, related to their social and cultural capital acquired from China. Chapter five pays attention to their hybrid and changing identities. The conclusion summarizes the main results, limitations, and further studies of the research.

Chapter 1: Global Ethnic ‘Return’ Migration and Kazakhstan

This chapter mainly discusses the literature on ethnic 'return' migration at the global and country levels. Specifically, in the first section, studies on global ethnic return migration mainly focus on migration dilemmas and the sociocultural integration of migrants. In the second section, researchers focus on Kazakh ethnic 'return' migration and adaptation problems of co-ethnic migrants in local Kazakhstani society.

1.1 Ethnic Return Migration as a Global Phenomenon

This section summarizes the mismatch between the state's identification of global co-ethnic migrants and the identity challenges they encounter in society, such as the 'otherness,' 'hierarchy,' and issues caused by ethnic labels amongst co-ethnic 'return' migrants in Greek, Korea, and Japan. Also, the pieces of literature talk about the sociocultural adaptation of the co-ethnic migrants in host countries; and the role of their social and cultural capital acquired from the country of origin.

Looking at co-ethnic migration as a global phenomenon, we can see the different patterns of ethnic return policies, such as the economic benefit-based system in Japan and the ethnonational justification-based system in Europe. Also, it is clear that co-ethnic 'return' migrants feel rejected and find it challenging to integrate into the local society (Tsuda 2010: 634), including ethnic return migrants' downward socioeconomic mobility ('subaltern position'), disillusionment, discrimination/alienation as an ethnic minority, alien cultural distinctions gained from

living abroad for generations, and the formation of separate identities (Bauder 2005; Fox 2003; Joppke 2005; Pratsinakis 2021; Seol and Skrentny 2009; Song 2009; Tsuda 2003; 2010; Varjonen et al. 2013; von Koppenfels 2009; Voutira 2006; Wallem 2017). Tsuda (2010: 634) argued that ethnic return migrants were welcomed as they conform to racialized notions of ethnonational identification and belonging based on the assumption that people of similar racial heritage would be culturally closer as members of a larger ethnic nation beyond state boundaries. Therefore, co-ethnic migrants' easier assimilability into the host society was expected. Ethnic return migrants, however, have upset ethnonational ideas based on anticipated racial and cultural correlations since they have been far more culturally distant than predicted (Tsuda 2010: 634). Tsuda (2010) looked at Japan's case, where the government has brought second-and third-generation Japanese Brazilians back to the country in response to a scarcity of low-skill workers. However, since they have not socially integrated and assimilated into Japanese society as predicted, the Japanese Brazilians have not solved Japan's migration challenges. As a consequence, ethnic return migrants are subject to restrictions in Japan (as well as other ethnic nation-states) (Tsuda 2010: 619).

Pratsinakis (2021) also argued that despite the fact that Greeks from the former Soviet Union (FSU) left Russia as Greeks, they realized their cultural differences from local Greeks who questioned their Greekness after settling in their ethnic motherland, and the Pontic identity was chosen to express their sense of otherness in Greece while still allowing them to be accepted into the Greek nation. Ponticness denotes their cultural separation from both their imagined homeland and the local population (Pratsinakis 2021: 509). Moreover, ethnic labels for co-ethnic migrants are not just labels but also a kind of container. Ethnic labels have specific

meanings that appeal to or alienate different migrant groups, as well as define migrant groups' capacity to claim their rights and obtain national acceptance (Pratsinakis 2021: 497). At the same time, Pratsinakis (2021: 499-500) argued that neither the poor communication between co-ethnic migrants and local communities nor the establishment of separate identities among co-ethnic migrants could be blamed on cultural differences. As for Joseonjok, or ethnic Korean Chinese citizens coming to South Korea, Seol and Skrentny (2009) showed two dimensions of the 'hierarchical nationhood' – legal and social. On a legal level, the Korean government considers Joseonjok foreigners, allowing them access primarily to low-wage occupations and excluding them from social welfare, but still favoring them over other foreigners. Also, Local Korean people's negative attitudes about Joseonjok foreign laborers and data on reported discrimination experiences prove the social dimension of hierarchical nationhood (Seol and Skrentny 2009: 147). Co-ethnic migrants are treated as second-class citizens in Korea, similar to ethnic return migrants in other countries (Seol and Skrentny 2009: 148). Public discussion in a number of states implies that nations can be hierarchical and graded in previously unknown ways, and co-nationality can be acknowledged, but absolute equality cannot (Seol and Skrentny 2009: 149).

Studies also showed that some of the 'alien cultural differences' could sometimes serve as social/cultural capital for return migrants and play a crucial role in the integration and career advancement of co-ethnic migrants in their post-migration life. Specifically, the social network and kinship ties, language skills, and knowledge gained in pre- 'return' migration are crucial. Grasmuck and Hinze (2016) investigated how second-generation Turks from Germany and America migrate to Turkey to use a variety of cultural capital to get a worldwide economic and cultural advantage. Potter

and Phillips (2006) investigated the second generation of Barbadians from the UK who utilized the social and cultural capital gained in the UK when they migrated to Barbados. Also, the knowledge and English language proficiency of the second generation Korean American 'returnees' (Song 2014) and Greek-American 'returnees' (King and Christou 2010) are essential when they 'return' back to their ancestral land. But, as for Russian-Israeli immigrant families, Remennick's (2012) study about the link between parents' social mobility and offsprings' integration demonstrates that co-ethnic migrants' upward mobility and adaptation to host society can be severely affected by the origin and host cultures. Remennick's work (2004: 431-6) also shows that sociocultural adaptation of the migrants in host countries, in general, may be related to some factors, such as dominant language proficiency, knowledge of the host culture, and social capital, and acculturative attitudes.

In summary, despite the common ancestry and assumed cultural affinity with the host country, ethnic return migrants have not socially integrated into mainstream society as predicted. For co-ethnic 'return' migrants, cultural differences with local co-ethnic groups and the mismatch of the state's identification of migrants with the identity problems they face in society are essential issues discussed by scholars. In addition to that, scholars also find out those 'alien cultural differences,' or social and cultural capital accumulated in the nation of origin is critical for co-ethnic migrants' post-migration integration and job progress. In this thesis, I also focus on how Xinjiang Kazakhs' 'alien cultural differences' help them to adapt and make career advancements.

1.2 Ethnic Return Migration to Kazakhstan

This part of the literature includes related policies and limitations of the 'oralman' program, criticism of the ethnic label 'oralman,' and discussion of 'homeland' and hybrid identity as well. Scholars claimed that there are two fundamental goals of Kazakhstan's migration policy. One is the encouragement of an ethnically based nation-building initiative by supporting the 'return' of co-ethnics residing abroad. Another one is the increase of its population, especially the formation of a labor force that is best suited for the state's economic development (Cerny 2010: 241; Oka 2013: 1). Also, Kuşçu (2014) explored the public debates over the country's ethnic return migration policy, and he pointed to the demographic significance of 'oralman,' as well as their contribution to Kazakh culture and language (Kuşçu 2014: 183, 185). At the same time, Alexander C Diener (2005b) investigated Kazakhstan's involvement in initiating 'return migration' and its insufficiency in offering suitable channels for repatriates' integration into the local society. Even Kazakh' return migrants' who arrive in Kazakhstan in compliance with migration regulations and quotas have been 'othered' by the "oralman" label (Diener 2005b: 341). Diener (2005b) argued that the core dilemma of classifying in-migrants as 'oralmandar' is perhaps the most significant legislative failure in Kazakhstan's administration of the Kazakh diaspora's 'return migration' (Diener 2005b: 334). Also, integration/adaptation difficulties are the main literature trend about Kazakh migration to Kazakhstan. Ethnic Kazakh migrants arriving from outside the CIS countries frequently struggle with social integration issues, including Russian language difficulties, housing shortage, unemployment, the difficulty in obtaining Kazakhstan citizenship, the issue of 'oralman's integration and the community's reaction to them, and problems relating to policy implementation by the authorities (Bokayev 2013; Diener 2005a; Diener 2005b; Diener 2009;

Ilimkhanova et al. 2014; Kuşçu 2014; Sancak 2007; Sazanova 2021; United Nations Development Programme Kazakhstan 2006; Valieva et al. 2019).

The central discussion about the ethnic 'return' migration is about 'othering' and criticism of the ethnic label 'oralman.' Encountering prejudice or discrimination and the consequences of co-ethnic animosity are serious obstacles (Diener 2005a: 474; Sazanova 2021: ii). In addition to the legacy of the Soviet nationalities policy (Kuşçu 2014: 191), Baurzhan Bokayev (2013: 790) also showed in his research that the key issue is the ethnic Kazakh repatriates' hopes and the reality of their lives when they return to their ethnic 'motherland.' Also, he found that the media frequently contributes to the 'othering' problems by portraying repatriates and the migration process in general in an unfavorable light. This media discourse leads to public stereotypes of 'oralman's lifestyles, isolation toward them, and a communication gap between locals and these newcomers (Bokayev 2013:799). Moreover, according to Diener (2005b), ethnic Kazakh migrants have been 'othered' through a lack of inclusion in the state's employment, privatization, and naturalization processes. They have also been 'othered' by their sense of what Kazakhs 'should be,' in contrast to the reality of what many Kazakhs within Kazakhstan have become following decades of Russification. They have even been 'othered' by their own hybridity, cultivated through years of residence within and interaction with their former host societies (Diener 2005b: 341). Overall, the dichotomy of 'us and them' (Sazanova 2021: ii) or 'insider-outsider' (Bokayev 2013: 796; Jašina-Schäfer 2019: 114) exist between local Kazakhs and their co-ethnic migrants.

Bokayev et al. (2012: 333) focused on the integration of repatriates into Kazakhstani society, as well as difficulties of social, cultural, and linguistic

adjustment, which are critical aspects of maintaining a stable society. Their research also indicated that the difficult process of ethnic Kazakhs' self-identity formation is a crucial part of their sociolinguistic integration into local Kazakh society (Bokayev et al. 2012: 333). Besides, for ethnic Kazakh migrants, the Kazakh language is more than just a means of communication; it also has significant cultural and affiliation meaning (Bokayev et al. 2012: 342). At the same time, it is interesting that the notion of 'homeland' and 'self-identification' are constantly changing among co-ethnic Kazakhs. Kuscu (2015) focused on ethnic Kazakhs who live in Turkey and Europe and the formulation and reformulation processes of their identities and loyalties toward different host countries. He noted that even the 'homeland,' a vital part of diasporic identity, can shift over time; this demonstrated that diasporic identity, like other identities, is fluid and cannot be considered a singular thing (Kuscu 2015: 393). Regarding self-identification and a sense of belonging, Jašina-Schäfer (2019: 98) argued that place is not only an environment in which self- and community identification develops, but it is also an integral aspect of identity construction, which is always a formation process. In the co-ethnic migration process, 'historical homeland'/ 'motherland' is one of the essential concepts discussed by scholars (Diener 2005a; Jašina-Schäfer 2019; Kuscu 2015; Mingboupha 2019). As for ethnic Kazakhs, their attitude and sense of belonging to the so-called ‘historical homeland,’ Kazakhstan, is an important point influencing their identity formation process. Diener (2005a: 465) focused on the barriers to Kazakhs from Mongolia assimilating into Kazakhstani society and asked whether this process should be referred to as ‘repatriation’ or ‘patriation.’ Diener (2005a: 446) claimed that, in Kazakhstan, they feel more ‘placeless’ and ‘strange’ than when they live ‘abroad.’ ‘Diasporic existence’ is not placeless, and even during migration to a ‘historical homeland’ as a member of

a/the titular community, self-identity reformation is essential. These groups usually have hybridized worldviews and self-concepts with those of their former ‘host societies.’ Due to social and cultural differences, they may not have enough in common with the titular population of the ‘ancestral homeland’ to ease their adjustment to new residences. Their identities were also hybridized due to prejudice and discrimination (Diener 2005a: 446; Sazanova 2021: 73; Jašina-Schäfer 2019: 114).

To sum up, literature about ethnic ‘return’ migration to Kazakhstan introduced ‘return’ migration policy and various general challenges that Kazak ‘returnees’ face. Integration/adaptation difficulties are the primary trend in the literature, including their poor knowledge of Russian, unemployment, local's prejudices and misunderstandings, corruption, etc. The problem of the ethnic label 'oralman' is also a crucial point that ethnic Kazakh migrants have been 'othered' through a lack of inclusion in the employment, privatization, naturalization processes, and by local's perception of what Kazakhs 'should be.' Moreover, their hybridity, developed during years of residence within and contact with their former host culture, has also 'othered' them (Diener 2005b: 341). In addition, integration difficulties stimulated identity crisis among the group, which is another trend involving ethnic distance, identity hybridity, and ‘we and they’ or ‘us and them’ dichotomy between local Kazakhs and ethnic Kazakh migrants.

1.3 Summary

In summary, dominant language competency, understanding of the host culture, and social and cultural capital gained from the country of origin influence migrants' sociocultural adaptation and career advancement in their new country. As for co-ethnic migrants, for example, former Soviet Union Greeks, ethnic Korean Chinese, Japanese Brazilians, and Russian Israelis, their co-nationality in their kin state could be recognized, but full equality in local society could not. In addition, there are different opinions on the effectiveness of co-ethnic migration policy in several countries, especially the case of Kazakhstan (Diener 2005a: 465).

Scholars claimed that Kazakhstan's migration policy, specifically the ‘oralman’ program, has two fundamental goals: encouraging an ethnically based nation-building initiative by supporting the migration of co-ethnics living abroad and increasing the country's population, particularly the formation of a labor force better suited to the country's economic development. However, this migration policy generated many social and economic consequences, for instance, the issues of housing, employment, language, citizenship, as well as prejudice from local communities. And scholars also criticized how the ‘oralman’ program ‘othered’ ethnic Kazakhs by labeling them ‘oralman.’ Furthermore, due to social and cultural differences, they may not have enough in common with the titular inhabitants of the ‘ancestral homeland’ to make the transition to new residences easier, and their identification may have been hybridized as a result of the prejudice and discrimination they underwent. They feel more ‘being isolated’ and ‘foreign’ in Kazakhstan than when they reside ‘abroad.’

Also, their sense of both 'homeland' and 'self-identification' are in a perpetual state of flux and transformation.

We have to admit that Kazakhstan faces a severe issue regarding the social integration of Kazakhs from abroad. While some have integrated into the local society and begun new jobs, the majority have faced considerable challenges in areas such as housing, work, and child education. Despite publicly professed — and politically acceptable — support for the Kazakh nation's unity, locals do not always welcome their ethnic neighbors (Oka 2013: 5). Moreover, the issues that migrants face vary based on their professional capabilities, education level, host language acquisition, family network, personal relationships, arrival time, and other aspects (Oka 2013: 12). Besides, these groups often have hybridized worldviews and self-identification, and they may not have so much in commonality with the locals from their 'historic homeland' to help them adjust to new surroundings (Diener 2005a: 465). Therefore, the complex process of ethnic Kazakh self-identification is a key part of their sociocultural 'penetration' into the local Kazakhstani community (Bokayev et al. 2012: 333).

However, existing literature lacks attention to specifically Kazakhs from China who work in different industries in Kazakhstan, how they adapt to local society, their competitive advantages to make a living in local society, and their identity constructions. For instance, if we look at global co-ethnic migration cases, for example, second-generation Turkish from America and Germany (Grasmuck and Hinze 2016), Koreans from America (Song 2014), Greeks from America (King and Christou 2010), Israeli from Russia (Remennick 2012), Germans from Eastern Europe (Bauder 2005), and Barbadians from the UK (Potter and Phillips 2006), they

use social and cultural capital acquired from the country of origin and make a living when they ‘return’ back to their kin state. Also, during the integration and adaptation process of these co-ethnic migrants, their hybrid identity and feeling of ‘in-between’ are discussed by scholars. Thus, looking at the above research, during the integration and adaptation process, global co-ethnic migrant groups try to find a way to live in their host society according to their unique cultural background, language skills, and social capital. During this process, they also re-evaluate their self-identity, perception of ‘homeland,’ and so on. However, literature on Kazakh co-ethnic 'return' migrants lacks studies on their special adaptation strategies and re-evaluation of their identity.

In addition, 'oralman' as the label of ethnic Kazakh migrants in Kazakhstan has been changed officially to the term ‘kandas,’ which has only recently come into use. There is no relevant research on ethnic Kazakh migrants’ views on this new term. How do people think of it, and do they choose or develop their self-identification label on their own, as in the case of the ‘Soviet Greek’ migrants (Pratsinakis 2021). Moreover, some scholars discussed co-ethnic migration as an insider, such as Japanese American ethnologist Takeyuki Tsuda, who studies Japanese Americans and Japanese Brazilians, and Russian-Israeli sociologist Larissa Remennick, who studies Russian-Israeli migrants. However, when it comes to studies of ethnic Kazakh migrants, most of the research is done by Kazakhstan-born Kazakhstani scholars or foreign researchers. There is a lack of insider perspective and research on this topic. Therefore, as a Kazakh from China, I hope to provide an insider perspective on the adaptation strategies and identity formation among Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 2: Research Design

2.1 Research Problem

According to the literature, there is a high unemployment rate among Kazakh ‘repatriates’ and they have difficulties fitting into the local society. At the same time, from my observation, there are Kazakhs from China who found their niches running their business and providing community services. During my communication with these people, I noticed their Chinese language skills, Kazakh-Chinese bilingual skills, knowledge, and social network they gained in China played an essential role in their adaptation and integration process of post-migration life.

For the community of Kazakhs from China in Kazakhstan, especially in Almaty and Astana, even though the community does not locate themselves in one place, such as so-called 'China towns,' and they are scattered throughout the city, the types of services they provided can be compared to complete community service. These places are named 'Chinese supermarkets' and 'Chinese clinics,' and so on. The large Shanghai shopping mall located on the outskirts of Astana is also an example. Many wholesale stores import products from China, such as clothing, household goods, study and work supplies, food, and toys.

2.2 Terminology Clarification and Scope of Research Group

In the study of co-ethnic Kazakh migrants to Kazakhstan, most scholars use such terms as e*thnic return migration, repatriation, returnee*, *repatriates*, *ethnic Kazakh,* or *return migrants* with or without quotation marks. However, "[n]ot all ethnic Kazakhs currently residing beyond the borders of the contemporary territory of Kazakhstan are former refugees (or their descendants) who fled homeland to avoid political turmoil, repression, and famine under the Tsarist or Soviet regime. There are also Kazakhs who had lived on their land outside of the current borders of Kazakhstan for generations, long before Soviet times" (Oka 2013: 4). In the case of Kazakhs from China, I employ Oka's (2013) terminology of the 'return' of co-ethnic migrants with quotation marks for 'return/repatriate' in this study. Besides, I define China as their country of origin and Kazakhstan as their host country.

This study explores how Xinjiang Kazakhs adapt to local society and form their identity. The study focuses on the influence of social/cultural capital gained from China on their post-migration life in Kazakhstan. Therefore, I focused on 'high-skilled' 'repatriates' in various industries of society to learn about their jobs and their competitive advantages in society as Kazakhs from China, specifically, the role of Chinese language skills, social networks, or knowledge gained in China in their adaptation, career advancement, and self-identification process.

2.3 Research Questions

This study will highlight the competitive advantages of Kazakhs from China, their adaptation strategies, and identity construction. I hope to address these questions: How do Xinjiang Kazakhs adapt to Kazakhstan's local society? If their social/cultural capital gained in China is essential for career advancement as well as adaptation and integration into local society, how are they used? How do Xinjiang Kazakhs form their identity?

2.4 Hypothesis

For Kazakhs from China, it is not only the legal qualifications of ethnic return migrants but also their social webs and cultural skills that prepare them for their adaptation to Kazakhstan society. The conception of social and cultural capital defined by Bourdieu (1986) appears applicable to address migrant resources (see also Wolfeil 2013: 263). The study assumes that, for Kazakhs from China, Chinese language skills, social networks, and knowledge gained from China, as their unique cultural and social capital, can help them adapt to local Kazakhstan society and help them find jobs. Chinese language skills, cultural understanding, and diplomas from Chinese universities may help their post-migration engagement in Kazakhstan society. As for the identity of Kazakhs from China, this study assumes that they have a hybrid identity and that their identity formation is a changing process (Dubuisson and Genina 2011: 482). In addition to their post-migration life in Kazakhstan and their new

connections with their 'ancestral homeland,' they also had pre-migration life in China, such as childhood memories and emotional connections with the place they were born. All these changes through time and space may also influence their identity construction.

2.5 Methodology

In this study, I used the survey and semi-structured interview, with the strengths of each used to respond to the research questions. This thesis aims to investigate the experiences of Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan society. For Kazakhs from China, the practical way of generating data about their living skills and identity formation is interviewing combined with a survey questionnaire. Other scholars have also used this approach to explore Kazakh ‘repatriates’ in Kazakhstan (Diener 2005a; Illimkhanova et al. 2014; Valieva et al. 2019). Thus, my study will contextualize information and take a macro picture of adaptation strategies and identity formation of Kazakhs from China.

Autoethnography is a new qualitative research method that enables the author to write in a highly individualized way to articulate insider knowledge of cultural experience (Wall 2006; Adams et al. 2017). Insider knowledge does not imply that an autoethnography can communicate more exact or honest knowledge than outsiders, but rather that storytellers tell their experiences and stories in unique ways and focus on aspects that outsiders may not notice (Adams et al. 2017: 3). As a Kazakh student from Xinjiang, I feel close to my participants. Considering many historical and cultural factors and my personal experience in Kazakhstan, I perceive myself as an insider in this study. Using the semi-autoethnography method, I relate the main results

from the research with my personal stories and feelings and ‘being with’ my participants, Xinjiang Kazakhs. More broadly, I offer insights into cultural problems such as hybrid identity or the sense of belonging among ethnic ‘return’ migrants in a kin-state society that might infuse daily interactions.

2.5.1 Recruitment and Sample

Large sample sizes selected at random are frequently used in quantitative survey approaches. In contrast, qualitative research usually focuses on actual samples, even one case purposefully chosen (Patton 2015: 1). In this study, for both interviews and surveys, the sampling is based on access to social media and potentially a snowball sample with word of mouth and sharing of survey links that interviewees recommend to other possible subjects (Sbalchiero 2018: 1, 2). I used advertisements on social media and the snowball method through their resources to reach out to other potential interviewees for the recruitment.

I posted a message on my social media account, which included the introduction of my research project, the procedures of the interviews and survey, the link to the survey questionnaire, and my email and phone number. Also, I sent recruitment messages to different chat groups made up of a community of Kazakhs from China, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and other social media apps. I expanded the population covered by my questionnaire through the network of the current potential participants contacted in the chat group and introduced through acquaintances. I also tried to reach out to people who do not use social media.

First, I contacted Xinjiang Kazakhs I had already known and asked them to help me reach out to more potential participants. To prevent bias in my data, for interviews,

I tried to avoid recruiting people who are from my surroundings or friends to participate in my research and instead reach out to a broader range of people through them. In addition, whether it was the recruitment of survey or interview participants, I tried to include people from various backgrounds and professions, such as restaurant owners, clinic owners, and people in business or education. After I contacted potential participants, I asked for their permission.

After obtaining their consent, I used the snowball method to reach out to other potential interviewees through their resources. I also considered age distribution and gender balance when choosing interview subjects. Because of the pandemic, online or offline interview formats depended on participants' preferences. Most of the interviews were Zoom meetings. I recorded our conversations by video or audio recordings with their permission. The main group of interviewees is Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. Most of them reside in Astana and Almaty. There were seven females and eight males among the respondents. They are all over the age of eighteen. I will summarize respondent information from the survey questionnaires in the data collection and analysis section.

2.5.2 Researcher position

Insider status facilitates trust or rapport within a community established on shared background or values (Salmons 2012: 17). As a student researcher, I have an insider position in this study. Since all my informants are Kazakhs from Xinjiang, we share the same cultural and linguistic background. Also, we share the memory of Xinjiang where we grew up. I am also a newcomer to Kazakhstan. These experiences are another point that connects me with my respondents, enabling us to understand

each other easily and create a relaxing atmosphere throughout the interview. Therefore, my insider perspectives influenced data collection positively. There were no significant difficulties in building trust with the respondents or comprehending their responses.

2.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted the semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires from December 2021 to January 2022. The data collection process included online surveys and online and offline interviews with Kazakhs from China who migrated to Kazakhstan.

For the online survey, the introduction of my thesis project and the informed consent are listed at the beginning of the questionnaire to ask whether they would like to participate in the survey. The request to ask participants whether they are willing to continue the interview is also listed at the end of the questionnaire with my email address and phone number. The questionnaire includes eighteen essential questions in four languages (Mandarin, Kazakh, English, and Russian). The poll involved Kazakhs from China, and the survey touched upon the following topics: social-demographic characteristics; the level of proficiency in languages and social contacts; the choice of the language for access to the information; work experience related to China; attitudes to ethnic labels, places, and degree of adaptation, and additional questions. I received fifty-three responses to questionnaires. Thirty-nine respondents chose Chinese language survey questions. Twelve people chose English questions for the rest of the group; only two chose Kazakh questions. No one chose Russian questions.

Diagram 1

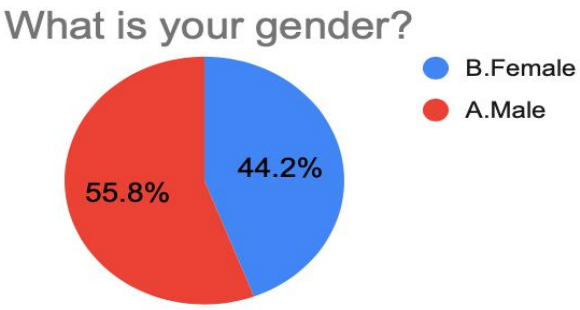


Diagram 2

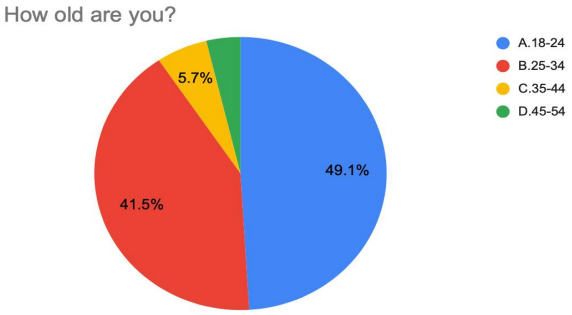
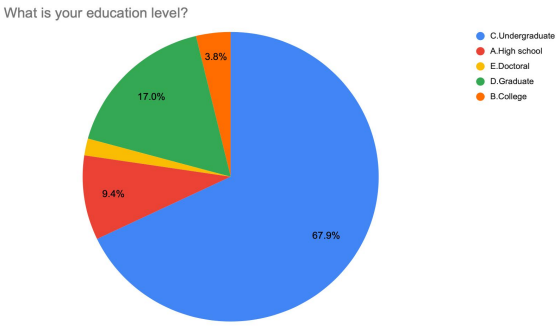


Diagram 3



Specifically, there are twenty-nine male respondents and twenty-three female respondents (Diagram 1). Twenty-six respondents are 18-24, and twenty-two is 25-34. Only three respondents are 35-44 years old, and two are 45-54 (Diagram 2). More than half of my respondents (around 68%) have a bachelor's degree. 17% of respondents have a master's degree, and 9.4% finished high school. Also, people with a college education are 3.8%, and only 1.9% are Ph.D (Diagram 3).

I interviewed 15 people who are Kazakhs from China living in Kazakhstan. The selection of interviewees was based on the diversity of their jobs. I set up about 45-90 minute long conversations depending on the questions and conversations during the process. Before conducting interviews, I gave oral consent forms requesting their permission to record and transcribe the interview data. I recorded all the interviews in video or audio format after the participants had given their permission. Online interviews were conducted by Zoom. The respondents were urged to express their opinions on specified questions that had been predetermined. For example, what do they think are their advantages within local society? How do they form their self-identity? And how do they feel a sense of belonging in Kazakhstan? What are their perspectives on '*oralman*' or '*kandas*?' etc. By asking follow-up questions to grasp any given issue better, I investigated the themes of interest. After the interviews, data were transcribed and coded.

In terms of interpreting data, the analysis includes coding and categorizing data. In the initial coding step, I reread survey data and interview statements to identify the main themes; secondly, I reread the initial coding and combine similar labels and contents into different categories. As for the data collected by an online survey questionnaire, I sorted data into different categories and compared percentages and their relations. Later, I supplemented all survey data in the primary interview data analysis. Also, interview data were analyzed and grouped into preliminary categories according to given identifiers, such as 'language skills,' 'social network,' 'self-identity,' etc. I used pseudonyms based on gender to identify my informants and present their stories.

2.5.4 Ethical issues

As the subjects of interviews and surveys are human beings, special attention was given to ethical considerations such as respondents' rights to informed consent, anonymity, and safety from danger. In the beginning, people were asked if they would like to participate in a recorded interview after my self-introduction and explaining the research project. Also, consent for conducting the interview and making digital and handwritten records was asked for and followed. Interviewees were also ensured that their participation would be anonymous and that they would be entirely free not to answer, leave, or redact answers at their behest.

Chapter 3: Historical Roots of Kazakh Migration and the 'Oralman Policy'

As Diener (2003) mentioned, in Mongolia, China, Uzbekistan, and Russia, there are a lot of ethnic Kazakhs living there, and except in Mongolia, most of the dispersion was related to territory and policy changes during Tsarist Russia and Soviet time (Diener 2003: 95). And the constant resettlement formed the changing concepts of the homeland for the Kazakh people. In a 20th-century migration event, Kazakh people moved from Xinjiang to Turkey and Europe. Kuscu (2015: 392) argued that, during this process, people presented a blended sense of belonging to the different home places over time. For these Kazakhs, Xinjiang is considered the place of ancestors, while Kazakhstan is the historical homeland. Besides, Turkey is regarded as a motherland, and the European states could be viewed as a second motherland (Kuscu 2015: 392). In other words, the story of the Kazakh diaspora shows that even the 'homeland,' which is an essential factor of diasporic identification, can shift over time (Kuscu 2015: 393).

Dubuisson and Genina (2011: 482) argued that in a world where belonging is formed by movement: through space and time. Besides, Post (2007: 49) also noted that Kazakh people from Mongolia have strong ties to their historical and native lands, based on joint family and regional memories, both actual and imaginary. As a result, Kazakh people may have divergent ideas of the historical past, with the constantly changing migration routes, and people's homeland concept is also changing with time and space.

In regards to Kazakh people living at the foot of the Tianshan, Altai (northwestern China), and Tarbagatai mountains, Mendikulova (2016) claimed that, for generations, the Chinese side of Tianshan had formed part of the Kazakh nomads'

historical migration routes (see also Kuscu 2015: 383). To take a more critical look at Kazak migration and competing notions about 'Kazak homeland,' I will first clarify these ethnic Kazakh people living in Xinjiang (China) and explain what it means to have historical migratory routes in a particular territory. I will attempt to achieve this by outlining various migration paths back and forth through the Tianshan Mountains, mainly the 'Oralman policy' with its influences and how Kazakh people had been motivated to move into Kazakhstan.

3.1 Kazakhs in Xinjiang

In the first section, I will talk about the origins of Kazakh people, Kazakhs in Xinjiang, geographical features of this place, and the migratory lifestyle of Kazakh people to set a stage for the rest of the thesis to provide context for my argument.

In the book, *China's last nomads: the history and culture of China's Kazakhs*, Benson and Svanberg (1998: 30) pointed out that today's Kazakh people are an essential component of the less explored history of Central Eurasia. Specifically, Kazakh people speak the Turkic language, connecting them to the significant Turkic-Mongol-speaking confederations and empires. They have existed in ancient Central Eurasia for many years. People could find the oldest origins in territories stretching from modern-day central Mongolia to the Altai Mountainous regions in the northwest part of China (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 31).

Present Kazakh people originated from Turkic-Mongol-speaking confederations. They are one of the successors of the old Mongol empire led by the Kazakhs in the 16th century (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 31-2).[1] Benson and

[1] See (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 31-2). At that time, the northern steppes were ruled by Turkic and Mongol people, establishing a demonstrable link between ancient and modern Turkic. Accordingly, the

Svanberg (1998: 46) and Schatz (2000: 489-90) indicated that Kazakh people grew into a unified ethnic group because of their kinship network. They classify themselves into three hordes (Zhuz in Kz.) such as the Great Horde (Uly Zhuz in Kz.), the Middle Horde (Orta Zhuz in Kz.), and the Small Horde (Kyshy Zhuz in Kz.) based on their lineage. Besides, the Kazakhs' steppe heritage, like that of other Central Eurasian inhabitants, is divided into clans (Ru or Uru in Kz.) and tribes (Taipa in Kz.). Moreover, the 'Shezhyre' is about family relations in each group, and it was linked to the migration routes and pasture division (Yessenova 2005: 663).[2]

Almost 1,500,000 ethnic Kazakhs dwell as one of 55 recognized ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang province (Orazalyuly 2010: 44). The Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Mori Kazakh Autonomous County, and Barkol Kazakh Autonomous County have the highest concentration of Kazakhs (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 48). Kazakh people in Xinjiang are one of China's 55 ethnic minorities.

As mentioned above, Xinjiang is a stunning and diverse geographical region with mountains, basins, valleys, oases, and barren deserts. While Xinjiang is mostly desert and steppe, it has many oases which play a pivotal role in its history. The Tianshan Mountain range serves as a physical barrier between human settlements north and south. The IIi Valley is located in the center of the Tianshan range, with Kazakhstan being its only outlet to flat terrain (Roberts 1996: 23-4). In addition to that, the Tarbagatai Mountains, to the north and northwest, straddle the

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Mongols under Chinggis Khan, whose confederated coalition encompassed both Mongol and Turkic-speaking clans, were traditionally the most dominant confederation. Later, by the 16th century, the Kazakh people had formed themselves as one of the heirs to the ancient Mongol empire, led by their khan. They have followed the old Central Eurasian pattern of nomadism, which was shared by all the ancient confederations that arose on the steppes.

[2]See (Yessenova 2005: 663) the Shezhyre, which is taken from the Persian and Arabic words for "tree." Among Kazakhs, it refers specifically to the oral tradition of family history relations, which aided in forming sociopolitical structure lineage segmentation, and was linked to the migration routes and pasture division.

Kazakhstan-China boundary. Kazakhs and other nomadic peoples of steppes have used several passes over these mountains for generations. The Altai Mountains, which run along the northeastern border between Xinjiang and Mongolia, provide a comparable barrier, allowing only the Mongol and Kazakh nomads to pass through (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 12).

Overall, the Tianshan, Altai, and Tarbagatai mountains and the Ili valley were essential points of the migration of the Kazakh nomads. In the meantime, nomadic people change their migration paths and habitats in response to the evolving borders and state relations.

3.2 Modern Settlement and Resettlement

Various histories were behind Kazakh settlement and resettlement in multiple nations and locations. The formation of the Kazakh diaspora was influenced by a variety of historical events of many types: political, including wars, economic, and environmental, primarily climatic disasters (Orazalyuly 2010: 42-3). During the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, the historical footprints of Kazakh nomads show the mechanism of their migration process that they experience settlements and resettlements over time as they do their seasonal migration because of the changing state policy and the evolution of state relations. This history section will explain how the migration path was created by Kazakh people crossing mountains and borders to provide a background for the Kazakh migration today.

3.2.1 Migration Wave between 18th and 20th Centuries

The Kazakh migration movement was affected by a series of external forces. The earliest recorded history of the migration process is commonly linked to the eighteenth-century Kazakh-Oirat war.[3]which marked the start of the Kazakh migration and the dispersion of Kazakh people over Central Asia (Mendikulova 2016; see also Orazalyuly 2010: 42-3). Moreover, throughout the 18th and 20th centuries, as neighboring countries, whether it was Tsarist Russia or the Soviet Union, changes in their relations with China were constantly affecting the border policies of both sides. These border changes are reflected in the migration movement of Soviet Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, such as thousands of Kazakhs fled to China from Russian territory (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 42).[4]

Nevertheless, most of the Kazakh diaspora was founded in the first half of the twentieth century (Mendikulova 2016). During Stolypin's agrarian reform[5], the

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[3] See Mendikulova (2016). After the attack of Dzungars, people of various Mongolian-speaking Oirat tribes, in 1723, many Kazakhs migrated to Afghanistan and Tajikistan. According to Mendikulova (2016), the Kazakh-Oirat conflicts resulted in the deaths of thousands of people and intense migration movement among Central Asian peoples, which drastically altered the region's population structure, driving Kazakh to create diasporas throughout Central Asian republics (Orazalyuly 2010: 42-3).

[4] See (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 42), by the end of the 18th century, China and Tsarist Russia had formed an extensive border, and they also had common and straightforward interests to keep the border stable. However, Kazakhs from the Tsarist Russia side managed to infiltrate the other side of the border. In 1878, for instance, 9,000 Kazakhs fled to China from Russian territory. The continued movement of Kazakh nomads into the east was influenced by more and more Russian and Ukrainian peasants on the steppe. After the serfdom was abolished in Tsarist Russia in 1861, peasants began to migrate east, settling and cultivating in Central Eurasia. However, Kazakh migration into Chinese territory was not solely due to the Russian invasion and resettlement. The Kazakhs have also been driven aside from the near boundary by political chaos and Russian claims on Chinese territory. When the second Tarbagatai contract between Russia and China was established in 1883, Kazakhs began to relocate into the Barkol area of eastern Jungaria.

[5] See (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 42-3). Specifically, during the Stolypin agrarian reform, which took place in the Soviet Union before the revolution between 1902 and 1913, almost 300,000 Kazakhs, or roughly 10% of the community, fled to the Altai region (Northwest China) and the Upper Ili River Valley.

emergence of Soviet rule, civil war, and famine[6] Prompted new floods of Kazakh emigration from the west to the east (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 43). Kazakh people settled in various places throughout the first part of the twentieth century. Northwest China and its Ili Valley were the main settlement sites during the 1910s-1930s.[7]

In the next half of the 20th century, a large-scale migration took place in the Soviet-Chinese border areas, with considerable migration of Kazakh people from Xinjiang to Soviet Kazakhstan. There are a series of circumstances behind this big flight, including the changing Soviet-Chinese relationship, which existed along with the history of border areas between the two states, and the long-term Soviet influence on the Xinjiang region. Specifically, the mass migration that happened in 1962 shocked entire China (Kraus 2019: 516).[8] Soviet-Chinese relations changed with time, complicating Xinjiang's (migrant) situation (Li and Xia 2008; Mao 2017; Roberts 1996).[9] Migration activities were rare from the 1970s to the 1980s because of the

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[6] See (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 43). At the time, Kazakh people escaped not just to China and Uzbekistan but also to Russia and Western Mongolia, where they established large ethnic settlements. The history of famine in the Soviet era can better explain these escapes from Kazakhstan from 1932 to 1933. See (Pianciola 2001: 237) noted that the first and most devastating famine happened not in Ukraine but in Kazakhstan. Based on S. Maksudov's reports, the percentage of mortalities in Kazakhstan linked to the famine in the 1930s was nearly 40% of the whole population, which was the most significant proportion within any ethnicity in the Soviet Union. Kazakh people settled in various places throughout the first part of the twentieth century. Northwest China and its Ili Valley were the main settlement sites during the 1910s-1930s. At the same time, the main reasons for those settlements are the influence of Soviet rule and the Kazakh famine.

[7] See (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 43). Their major migration route was western China regions and also Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. They drove their cow flocks throughout the state line, across the Tarbagatai Mountain and the Black Irtysh Valley. The majority resettled in the Xinjiang Altai and Ili regions.

[8] See (Kraus 2019: 516). According to the Chinese reports, 60,000 individuals had escaped to the Soviet Union from Xinjiang, and most of them were Kazakhs and Uyghurs. According to Kraus (2019), 14,000 people crossed the border from Qorghas (Huoer Guosi in Ch.) and 58,000 people from different counties of Qoqek prefecture（Tacheng Diqu in Ch.).

[9] The Soviet Union repatriated Soviet nationals and got considerable backing from the Chinese authorities during 1954-19. Migrations from China to the Soviet Union were driven by a scarcity of labor following World War II and the need to develop forest resources, such as the Virgin Lands Campaign. However, the PRC was increasingly threatened by Soviet influence, internal crises, border control, ethnic concerns, and other factors, which led to its considerable departure in 1962.

political disagreements between China and the Soviet Union during the 1960s and 1970s (Sadovskaya 2016: 22).

3.2.2 The Last Wave of Migration during the Soviet Era

After 20 years of a broken relationship, Soviet-Chinese relations normalized in 1989 after reopening the Soviet-Chinese border (Levine 1992: 27). Moreover, Soviet Kazakhstan and Xinjiang (China) signed an agreement for cooperative development (Zakon. kz), which paved the path for increased trade, economic cooperation, and cross-border migration. Notably, the Kazakh and Uyghur people in Xinjiang first went to Kazakhstan looking for their relatives who fled to the USSR in the 1960s. Their activities coincided with the market-oriented reform process in China. Also, local manufacturers increased at that time, and Chinese entrepreneurs moved out to find new markets (Sadovskaya 2016: 24). Accordingly, involvement in business operations has also become one of the crucial ways of adaptation for Xinjiang Kazakhs later on.

However, the USSR was experiencing an economic crisis at this time, which resulted in a severe lack of food and production. Uyghur people contacted relatives and started the cross-border business when they came to Kazakhstan. Likewise, ethnic Han and Dungan people began business activities in those circumstances. Many petty traders did business from China to Kazakhstan during the early 1990s, and southern Kazakhstan had one thriving market for Chinese products. Overall, the final migration trend during the Soviet period came with trade and small business owners (Sadovskaya 2016: 24).

3.2.3 Migration after the Independence of Kazakhstan and the ‘Oralman’ Policy

Diener (2016: 55) mentioned that mobility and migration patterns in post-Soviet Eurasia indicate a variety of cooperation opportunities while also setting the stage for regional competition. Economic inequity within and between successor states accelerated the growth of labor markets, catalyzing large-scale urbanization and significant transnational migration flows. Regional conflicts, as well as the return myth and the titular status of migrants, all led to population redistribution.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan, as with other republics, became independent. Its economy also shifted from a state-controlled to a market-oriented economy (Sadovskaya 2016: 24-5). Inhabitants between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan restarted their historical interaction and created a new communication pattern thanks to their increased family and ethnic cultural ties and frequent trading activities (Sadovskaya 2016: 25). Above all, a new migration movement from Xinjiang to Kazakhstan started in the 1990s when Kazakhstan established a co-ethnic ‘return’ policy. It is also called the ‘Oralman Policy,’ in which the primary migration wave of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang only started in the 2000s (Sadovskaya 2016: 22).

According to Cerny (2010: 231), there may be two major motivations for Chinese Kazakhs to move to Kazakhstan. The main reason is that they are aware that Kazakhstan is a vast and lightly populated land (in sharp contrast to China), and they expect to be provided or receive access to extensive grazing areas. The second one is for the future education of their children. Cerny (2010: 240) claimed that Kazaks from China had been victims of the mirage illusion. Although they idealized their herding life on the other side of China, migrating to Kazakhstan is unlikely to solve their difficulties. Most of those challenges they confront daily as herders in an area with

limited pasture are similar to contemporary reality in Kazakhstan. They are still dealing with the new reality of learning to live in a very different society from their own.

Over 860,000 Kazakh people have immigrated to Kazakhstan, mainly from neighboring countries, e.g., Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, and Turkmenistan. These 'oralman' constitute an essential part of contemporary Kazakh society, with around 10 million Kazakhs in Kazakhstan's total 16 million population (Oka 2013: 4). In pace with the Kazakhstan government also issues policies to facilitate ethnic-based 'return' migration, 'oralman' as 'Kazakhs abroad' 'returned' back to their 'homeland' (Amangul 2012: 110; UNFPA 2019: 47).

Mendikulova (2012: 1) divided the conducting process of 'Oralman Policy' into three phases. Firstly, it legitimizes the related 'Oralman Policy' from 1991 to 1997. For instance, the state passed the Law on Migration in 1997, and under it, every ethnic Kazakh immigrant got 'oralman' status. Next, between 1998 and 2011, when the country passed the new law, all the 'oralman' (repatriate in Eg., now 'kandas') ('kandas': blood-related or tribesman in Eg.) could come to Kazakhstan by quota. Due to this legislation, the necessary circumstances for 'oralman's' living, working, and studying were granted. In the third phase of the process, after 2011, the Law on Population Migration was updated to reflect the country's current social, political, and economic condition. Primarily based on Mendikulova's (2012) division of three stages as mentioned above, I will explain the main features of ethnic Kazakh migration processes under the 'Oralman Policy' from three different periods, from 1991-to 2000 and 2001-to 2011, and 2012-to 2021.

3.2.3.1 The First Stage: 1991-2000

The first period of the 'Oralman Policy' could be summarized as the policy implementation and legalization. According to Oka (2013:3), regarding related policy and law for ethnic Kazakh immigrants in Kazakhstan, at the beginning of the 1990s, the Kazakhstan government allowed all 'compatriots' to go back to Kazakhstan, and 'compatriots' included non-Kazakhs among all former Kazakhstan citizens.[10] The 1992 Migration law grants all 'compatriots' (sootechestvenniki) residing outside Kazakhstan territory the right to return (Article 1). The following year, the 1993 Constitution was the first constitution adopted by Kazakhstan, allowing all former citizens of the republic who were forced to leave their territory and all Kazakhs residing in other countries to get citizenship in Kazakhstan without giving up their current passport (Article 4). But, the 1995 Constitution rejected this dual citizenship without exception (Article 1) (Oka 2013: 6). Moreover, in Article 1 of the 1997 Migration Law, the scope of 'repatriation' (*repatria*te in Ru. and *oralman* in Kz.) was narrowed to native ethnicity who were expelled from Kazakhstan for various reasons (Oka 2013: 7). In this stage, most ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang have not been included in the designated population since they were not expelled from Kazakhstan but have lived outside Kazakhstan territory for generations.

As for the government's supporting policy for ethnic Kazakhs to resettle and adapt to local society, the rules and regulations set the quota for ethnic Kazakh immigrants. According to United Nations Development Programme Kazakhstan (2006: 9), the 'Oralman Quota' was set annually and considered population, economic, and fiscal factors. Each year, it was formed by the Presidential proclamation. In 1993,

[10] For instance, an ethnic Russian who was born, say, in Almaty, had Soviet citizenship, but in 1992 lived, say, in Moscow, had the right to claim Kazakhstan citizenship.

the first yearly quota was established, which allowed for the arrival of 'repatriation' of 10,000 families (or around 40,000 individuals). However, the quota amount varied dramatically during the 1990s, dropping to 500 households in 1999 and 2000.

Motivating ethnic Kazakhs worldwide to move to Kazakhstan, the country has also implemented corresponding adaptation measures with the advancement of repatriation policies. In 1998, the repatriation of ethnic Kazakh was identified as the primary concern of migration policy in Kazakhstan in the "Concept of Repatriation of Ethnic Kazakhs to their Historic Homeland." Its principal goal was to develop effective methods for the repatriation of ethnic Kazakh to their historical land, as well as to prepare them for resettlement and to provide conditions for integration and transition (Mendikulova 2012: 3). According to *The Astana Times* (2021), in 1999, the Kazakhstan government began extending social aid to arriving ethnic Kazakhs, including accommodation without payment and big compensation. During that time, Kazakhstan was going through a period of economic growth. The standard of living had risen substantially, contributing to a shift in the size of 'oralman' who immigrated to the country.

Prior to 1995, the number of immigrated ethnic Kazakhs was less than the state-mandated quota. From 1997 until 2004, the state launched the Agency for migration and demography, which provided solutions for migration issues during the repatriation and resettlement process. As a result, the number of arriving ethnic Kazakhs started to increase in the late 1990s and in 2010 and 2011 (*The Astana Times* 2021). Moreover, based on the data reported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, 42,387 families, or 183,652 individuals, moved to Kazakhstan between 1991 and 2000, accounting for more than 17% of all immigrated population (*The Astana Times* 2021).

3.2.3.2 The Second Stage: 2001-2011

The second stage experienced a gradual increase in immigrated ethnic Kazakhs. One of the reasons for the rise may be the redefinition of the law, which expanded the scope of the designated group. As an example, in 2002, the Migration Law redefined the term 'oralman' again as a foreign or stateless citizen of Kazakh ethnicity who permanently resides in other countries when the Republic of Kazakhstan obtains sovereignty and has arrived in Kazakhstan for permanent residency (Oka 2013: 4). Obviously, in addition to former refugees of Kazakhstan who left their homeland because of repression or famine, etc., long before the Soviet era, there were also generations of ethnic Kazakhs living on lands outside Kazakhstan's current borders before Kazakhstan gained independence (Oka 2013: 4). Since then, the target of migration policy is not limited to the Kazakhs who were scattered in the former Soviet countries, but all the ethnic Kazakhs who lived in other countries when Kazakhstan was granted independence. This is also why the significant migration of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang only started in the 2000s.

Furthermore, the national law On Migration of the Population provided a more precise definition in 2011,[11] which continues to this day, except that the name 'kandas' replaced 'oralman' in 2021. Officials offered different opportunities and guidance to assist the 'oralman' in integrating into Kazakhstan society easily and quickly. In the same way, the development of the "Sectoral Program of Migration

[11] See (The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On Migration of the Population 2011). Ethnic Kazakhs permanently residing outside Kazakhstan at the time when the republic acquired sovereignty, as well as their children of Kazakh ethnicity born and permanently residing outside Kazakhstan at the time when it acquired sovereignty, who has arrived in Kazakhstan for permanent residence in their historical homeland and have received the relevant status in the manner established by the law and are to settle in areas defined by the government of Kazakhstan.

Policy of Kazakhstan for 2001-2010″ that supports ethnic Kazakh to better integrate into the society resulted in the growth of ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan (*The Astana Times* 2021). Beginning in 2002, as Kazakhstan's economy recovered, the limit of the annual quota was steadily expanded, eventually reaching 15,000 families in 2005 (United Nations Development Programme Kazakhstan 2006: 9-10). Also, from 2004-to 2008, 439,400 ethnic Kazakhs moved to Kazakhstan and filled the state-issued quota. The overall number of ethnic Kazakhs who arrived after 1991 was 1,062,200 (*The Astana Times,* 2021).

It is also important to mention a flaw in the repatriation policy. While ethnic Kazakhs can obtain citizenship through a simplified procedure and benefit from various ways, these advantages do not always persuade Kazakhs from China to become Kazakhstani citizens. Based on the census data (2010-2014), over 20,000 ethnic Kazakhs from China became Kazakhstan citizens, whereas 18,300 ethnic Kazakhs kept their Chinese passports (Sadovskaya 2016: 54). Undeniably, it was convenient for ethnic Kazakhs to hold Chinese passports to travel between two countries, visit relatives, and do business.

Nonetheless, the state's actions in the late 1990s, particularly the Concept of Migration Policy, have proven effective and efficient. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, 697,769 ethnic Kazakhs moved to Kazakhstan between 2001 and 2011, accounting for more than 65 percent of all ethnic Kazakhs who came after the independence of Kazakhstan (*The Astana Times* 2021).

3.2.3.3 The Third Stage: 2012-2021

The third stage saw the migration from a sharp decline to a gradual recovery, and new changes in the law. Since 2008, the quota system has favored higher-educated persons and families with multiple children (Oka 2013: 9). In the same year, officials introduced the 'Nurly Kosh' (Bright Move, in Eg.) program to solve the work and housing problems of migrants (Oka 2013: 6). After that, a common trend is for an immigrant to obtain a Kazakhstan passport, accept government assistance, and then return to their former country of living. The state decided to put a hold on the allocation of quotas for 2012 until the further direction of the official. This does not necessarily imply that the Kazakhstan government will completely abolish the quota. There has been no movement or recommence quota allocation since the end of the year (Oka 2013: 8).

Meanwhile, a labor conflict in 2011 strongly impacted the next stage of the repatriation process. Oil protests by workers happened in Zhanaozen city in 2011, in western Kazakhstan, which led to a temporary halt on ethnic repatriation progress in 2012. As a result, ethnic Kazakhs resettling from China decreased, with only 486 people relocating in 2014 (Sadovskaya 2016: 54). After that, the 'Enbek' State Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship, which runs from 2017 to 2021, was designed to encourage migration to the homeland and promote employment (Electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2021a).

Notably, five or six years after the 'Enbek' State Program, the immigration wave of ethnic Kazakh rose again. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of Kazakhstan reporting under the press agency, 12.3

thousand ethnic Kazakhs migrated to Kazakhstan in 2020 and were awarded 'Oralman Status' (GOV.KZ 2020). After that, 5685 ethnic Kazakhs migrated to Kazakhstan and were awarded 'Oralman Status' in 2021. Overall, 1 076 100 ethnic Kazakhs 'returned' to Kazakhstan from 1991 to 2021.

In 2021, a large percentage of 'oralman' came from Uzbekistan (76.9%), China (10.7 %), Turkmenistan (5.4%), Mongolia (2.9%), and other countries (4%). Almaty has the highest concentration of 'oralman' (31%), followed by Mangistau (15.9%) and Turkestan (15.8%), and Zhambyl (7.8%) regions, as well as the city of Shymkent (11.4 %). Working-age individuals represent 57.2 percent of the total number of 'oralman' who arrived; people younger account for 24.6 % and retirees account for 18.2%. Of the working-age individuals by the level of education, 11.1% have higher education, 39.8% have specialized secondary education, 45% have general secondary education, and 4.1% have no education (GOV.KZ 2021). Furthermore, in Kazakhstan, the term 'oralman' was recently replaced with' kandas.' The word 'kandas' means 'blood-related' or 'tribesman' in Kazakh (Kazpravda. kz 2020)[12] Additionally, the state provided assistance to 'kandas' and their families (Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2021b).

Overall, I introduced a multi-directional Kazakh migration process in chronological order. I observed that Kazakh migrations could be divided into two periods. In the pre-1991 period, the Kazakh migration was passively driven by state relations, mainly based on finding a stable destination. After 1991, Kazakh migration was driven by state nationality policy. The pursuit of Kazakh national identity and the drive to actively 'return' to the 'Kazakh homeland' is part of the Kazakh nation-building process in Kazakhstan.

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[12] As stated by Kazakhstan's Minister of Labor and Social Protection, Birzhan Nurymbetov.

Under this co-ethnic return migration, the state initiated an 'Oralman Policy' calling on overseas Kazakh compatriots to return to their historical homeland and developed integration policies to assist ethnic Kazakhs in adapting to local society. The implementation of the procedure has indeed greatly affected the proportion of the Kazakh population in the country in certain stages. Firstly, migration policy was legislated from 1991-to 2000. Next, from 2001-to 2011, there was a steady increase in ethnic Kazakh migration, and a significant migration wave of ethnic Kazakh from China took place at the beginning of the 2000s. It is also worth noting that such benefits don't always work for ethnic Kazakhs from China. In 2012, the oil protest had significantly reduced the migration willingness of ethnic Kazakhs from China, but the migration movement gradually rose again during the 2020s.

3.3 Adaptation Strategies of Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan under the 'Oralman Policy.'

Following the Kazakh migration, the final section will continue with a background discussion about how Kazakhs from China make a living in Kazakhstan under the 'Oralman Policy.' I mainly focus on the post-Soviet period when ethnic Kazakhs are coming to Kazakhstan and starting to build a whole new life. To compare their current adaptation strategies that I will analyze in the following chapter, in this section, I will talk about the general adaptation skills of this group and how they used cross-border trading practice as a unique adaptation strategy during that time. Besides, to better understand their cross-border trading, I will compare their cross-border trading activities with the practice of the Uyghur people from Xinjiang.

3.3.1 General Adaptation Strategies

In the first decade of the 21st century, the education level of most Kazakh 'repatriates' was relatively low, and the lack of professional abilities resulted in their low employment rate since most of them were herders from rural areas of Xinjiang before they came to Kazakhstan (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 114). Traditional production works such as breeding, fishing, and farming are their primary way of life. A small number of them worked in factories and public administration (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 114).

Kazakhs from China generally did animal herding and essential agricultural production work to adapt to local society after migration. For instance, they make a living by raising livestock, farming, and importing small farm machinery and transport tools from China to maximize the use of land (Sadovskaya 2016: 54-5).

Notably, livestock breeding is still a common way for them to survive in Kazakhstan (Bodaukhan et al. 2017: 6). At the same time, as the demand for qualified labor increases in Kazakhstan society, the employment of those with higher education levels is also growing. For example, some work as school teachers or professors in educational institutions, and some are also engaged in office and technical work. Some use their Chinese skills to work in Chinese companies in big cities and petrochemical companies in western regions (Sadovskaya 2016: 55).

Some Kazakhs from China are specialized in a specific sector, that of Chinese language education, which is also expanding in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs from China conduct most of the Chinese language teaching in universities. However, this has caused subsequent teaching quality and teacher qualifications problems since some are not good at Chinese (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 116-7).

With Kazakh nation-building in Kazakhstan, the demand for Kazakh language ability is also rising in governmental places. Thus, some Kazakhs from China occupied governmental work thanks to their professional Kazakh language skills (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 116). Some of them have medical backgrounds in China, which lead to the widespread popularity of Chinese medical and rehabilitation centers in Kazakhstan. These doctors and therapists in charge of different medical disciplines offer traditional Chinese treatment regimens and Chinese herbal formulas in their clinics (Sadovskaya 2016: 46).

3.3.2 Cross-Border Trading as an Adaptation Strategy

Before introducing the trading business of Kazakhs from Xinjiang, it is essential to talk about Uyghurs from Xinjiang and their adapting activities in Kazakh society. Since the 1990s, they have been the originators of the cross-border trade between Kazakhstan and Xinjiang in the 1990s, and Kazakhs are the successor of the cross-border trade in the 21st century.

Since both Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs have lived in Xinjiang for generations, they consider Xinjiang their homeland. As I discussed in the previous section about the migration history of Kazakh people between Xinjiang and Soviet Kazakhstan, Uyghurs experienced similar settlement and resettlement between the 1800s and 1980s.[13] The migration process resulted in the formation of different Uyghur groups

[13] See (Roberts 1998: 511-2). In 1881, the Treaty of St Petersburg established a more precisely defined and the strengthened boundary between Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, allowing 45,373 Uyghurs to relocate from Xinjiang's Kuldja to Kazakhstan's Semirech'e region. Uyghurs continued to cross the border regularly in future decades to conduct trade, visit family, and seek seasonal agricultural employment. Until the early 1920s, cross-border trade and migrant labor activities continued to transport Uyghurs from China to the Soviet Union. During the 1930s, many Uyghurs in Kazakhstan left the Soviet Union's collectivization and anti-religious activities for the Kuldja region of Xinjiang. Then, between 1953 and 1963, when Xinjiang experienced the Great Leap Forward and famine, many Uighurs migrated to the Soviet Union. When the Chinese-Soviet political rift came to a climax in 1963, the

in Kazakhstan and the Uyghur trade migration. The complete separation that preceded this renewed cross-border contact has posed problems for Uyghur identity and culture in the region (Roberts 1998: 512).[14] In the same way, Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and Kazakhs from China also developed different identities and cultures under the influence of two completely different cultures, the Soviet Union and China. For example, Kazakhs from China think the local Kazakhs are too 'Russianized,' while the natives think ethnic Kazakhs are very traditional and conservative or 'Sinicized.'

For 25 years of Chinese business expansion in Kazakhstan, ethnic-specific business practices and mechanisms for adapting to the receiving community have arisen. As a result, Uyghur trade migration was primarily reliant on the local Uyghur group, which offered migrant-receiving places through trade and small business development organizations (Sadovskaya 2016: 64). Uyghur people started the Chinese Wholesale trade market at Almaty's central Barakholka bazar. To expedite the transfer of commodities, they build cross-border business links based on kinship ties and a shared Uyghur national identity (Roberts 1998: 522). The reopening of the Soviet-Chinese border increased cross-border visiting and trading business among Uyghur and Dungan traders (Roberts 1998: 98). However, during the last half of the 1990s, Uyghur's trading activities were hampered by several factors (Roberts 1998: 100). Overall, Uyghur people from China were actively involved in catering, buying and selling, and service industries and have achieved considerable success.

The most visible form of economic engagement between China and Kazakhstan has been trading, which has been driven by Chinese (migrant) dealers,

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border between Kazakhstan and China was closed, and this history of numerous migrations came to an end. The wall was only reopened to limited travel in 1985, allowing many Uyghur families to reunite for almost two decades.

[14] See (Roberts 1998: 512). While the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of new stable trade between China and Kazakhstan have started allowing Uyghurs to cross the border in both directions with greater frequency than at any time since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Kazakhstani shuttle traders, and self-employed persons (Sadovskaya 2016: 61).[15] During the early 2000s, ethnic Kazakhs from China were able to obtain a job by taking advantage of the China-Kazakhstan cross-border business. With their 'Oralman Status,' they are allowed to transfer goods from the border without paying customs fees. As a result, many ethnic Kazakhs launched a business selling car parts and household electronics (UNDP 2006:10; Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 117).

Ethnic Kazakhs organized their small trade business with the Chinese language and social network in China. Most of them opened shops by themselves or worked for Han Chinese businesses at the Barakholka market in Almaty. Some are experts in providing legal guidance on export issues. Because they know the mechanism of the Chinese administration, their information and services help Kazakhstan entrepreneurs deal with it without difficulties. Those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, which usually acquired an intermediate technical education in China, are unable to find jobs in their field of expertise and are thus forced to engage in small street trade. Others operate phone call centers to offer the general public low-cost calls to China (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 117-8).

During the 2010s, Han Chinese businesspeople also recruited Kazakhs from China when they were unable to open the market on their own. Han Chinese traders left the business market and started other investments because of corruption and the shadow economy in Kazakhstan society. Thus, ethnic Kazakhs who could speak both Chinese and Kazakh gradually took their places in the market. And those who changed citizenship to Kazakhstan or used 'Oralman Status' become a mediator between market owners both in China and Kazakhstan (MIA RK 2014). Ethnic

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[15] See (Sadovskaya 2016). This type of self-employment is common in post-Soviet and some other countries. It arose as a reaction to the 1990s economic recession when widespread joblessness forced people to earn an income by purchasing basic goods overseas and reselling them at a greater cost in their home country.

Kazakhs from China who were bilingual in both Chinese and Kazakh (some of whom were mastering Russian) had an excellent opportunity to start their trading firms and even shopping centers (Sadovskaya 2016: 64).

As mentioned in the last section, Kazakh migration after 1991 has experienced a curve process from the peak of migration in the early 2000s to the decline in the 2010s and then rising. Moreover, in terms of their survival skills or strategies when they migrated to Kazakhstan, in the beginning, they mainly relied on traditional activities as what they used to do in Xinjiang. Afterward, with the entry of highly skilled and educated ethnic Kazakh people, their way of life has also diversified. Later, cross-border trade has also become their unique way of adaptation. Uyghurs started cross-border business in the 1990s, while ethnic Kazakhs from China only took part in the market from the 2000s. Also, compared with the adaptation strategy of the Uyghur people, in general, everything is inseparable from family relations and language skills, such as Chinese, Kazakh, and Russian. At the same time, for Kazakhs or Uyghurs from Xinjiang, their cultural differences from co-ethnic locals can still be seen in their different writing scripts, language acquisition, and attitudes toward tradition and religion (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009; Roberts 1998; Sadovskaya 2016).

3.4 Summary

Kazakhs have been migrating since the 18th century, not only because of the nomadic way of life but also the power of external influences and the collision of civilizations. During the Soviet era, Chinese-Soviet relations were an essential factor affecting Kazakh migration, leading to the formation of the Kazakh diaspora worldwide. In the post-Soviet period, the primary migration wave of Kazakh from

China to Kazakhstan is driven by the ‘Oralman Policy.’ The meaning of having historically migratory routes in a particular territory might be better understood in a way that people share common historical memories for certain periods and a sense of belonging to a certain place. The history of migration is a dynamic and changing process; Kazakhs try to find a certain dynamic in this uncertain settlement and resettlement process and constantly build their imagination toward the notion of 'Kazakh homeland' and their identity.

Those migration movements 'isolated' Kazakhs in Soviet Kazakhstan and western China and created a series of distances between these two Kazakh groups. Thus, physical separation caused cultural distance among Kazakhs and their interpretation of 'Kazakh homeland.' As Diener (2009: 465) pointed out, different groups had different experiences over time and space, and these encounters shape their unique diasporic perspectives and define the possibilities of hybridity/simultaneity. Xinjiang Kazakhs’ historical experience influenced their changing perspectives of 'Kazakh homeland' and further 'in-betweenness,' or 'middling' positions in the formation of their identity. These historical explanations could set the stage for the following discussions about adaptation strategies and identity formation of Kazakhs from China.

Chapter 4: Adaptation Strategies of Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

In the context of globalization, Cohen's (2008: 146) book *Global Diasporas* notes that "language skills, familiarity with other cultures, and contacts in other countries" enable many individuals of diasporas to be competitive in the worldwide labor, services, and capital demands. Regarding the definition and feature of capital, Portes (1998: 7) summarizes that both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) highlight social capital's intangible nature in comparison to other forms of capital noting that "[w]here as economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships." A person must be associated with others to have social capital, and it is those others, not himself, who are the true source of his or her advantage (Portes 1998: 7). Putnam (1993: 2) also points out that "social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital." Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) and Coleman's (1988) capital theory, this chapter investigates how Xinjiang Kazakhs use the social and cultural capital they acquired in China to integrate into the local society and make a living after migrating to Kazakhstan. In particular, I focus on their transnational social ties with China, Chinese language skills, and knowledge gained in China or related to Chinese culture.

According to interview data, many Xinjiang Kazakhs worked for Chinese companies or engaged in work related to China (40% of my respondents worked for Chinese companies or had Chinese-related work experience in survey data), and they were able to rely on social and cultural capital acquired in China in their post-migration work. This chapter examines how Xinjiang Kazakhs use social and cultural capital accumulated in China to adapt and make a living after migrating to

Kazakhstan. The first section is about social capital, mainly related to the respondents' transnational social networks between China and Kazakhstan. The second section focuses on the respondents' cultural capital accumulated in China, including their Chinese language skills and knowledge gained in China or cultural knowledge related to China that formed their cultural capital. Overall, in this chapter, I will examine how they use different forms of capital in their work.

4.1. Social Capital gained from China

4.1.1 Transnational Ties

Cross-border trade between China and Kazakhstan has its unique background and has become an important way for people to make a living for a long time. Kazakhs from China are actively involved in cross-border trade. Kazakhs from bordering regions developed cross-border private enterprises relying on the increasing cross-border business interactions between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan (Laruelle and Peyrouse 2009: 114). With the growing economic cooperation between China and Kazakhstan, many of them were able to engage in various small businesses relying on their Chinese skills and social networks in China. This adaptation strategy also helps them interact with different people and engage in various social activities, enhancing their integration into the local society.

Putnam (1993: 4) emphasizes that "[s]tocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative." Successful collaboration in one activity fosters network and trust, which serve as social assets for future collaboration on other projects. Interview data shows numerous linkages and

interactions that connect people and business organizations beyond national borders. Kazakh traders from China engage in cross-border activities using their transnational ties in China. Although they had difficulty adapting to the local society and finding jobs upon their arrival, they are now running cross-border businesses successfully converting their social capital into business profit.

4.1.1.1 Nurzhan's Story

Nurzhan, a 36-years-old man, came to Kazakhstan in 2006 at the age of 20. He came to Kazakhstan with the dream of studying and contributing to his 'ancestral homeland.' Since everything was expensive in Kazakhstan at that time and there were living difficulties, he could not continue his study but had to work. He tried various jobs. For example, he worked at a phone bar for one year and a cafe for three years. After that, Nurzhan started a cross-border business between China and Kazakhstan:

At that time, the border was open, and in Urumqi, we met a Han businessman from Hebei province. We've been importing from him ever since. We built trust between us, and our Chinese language skills helped us.

Nurzhan established a social network with a Chinese business partner during a trip to Urumqi. Building trust is crucial for maintaining social networks and preparing for further cooperation. He imported nets from China, relying on this social network, and they built mutual trust through this border activity. Nurzhan's Chinese language skills not only helped him to communicate with his Chinese business partners but also played an essential role in building trust with them and maintaining this network. Therefore, the Chinese language became an advantage in his field of business. Moreover, Nurzhan's pre-migration experience in China and familiarity with Chinese

culture also helped him build trust with Han Chinese business partners. Their further collaboration is also influenced by their trustworthiness of social ties (Coleman 1988: 100).

In 2016, he built a factory in Almaty and imported machines from China, using them to produce nets. Eventually, he created 12 jobs for both locals and Kazakh 'returnees.'

We have our factory in Almaty. We used to buy 100 percent from China. (Later) we could not keep moving the goods, and we needed to make them ourselves to benefit others. So, we brought in equipment from China and started our factory. It began in 2016, and previously we imported goods from China. We have 12 employees, 16 people in total working in the factory. Our main business is making nets.

Interestingly, the pandemic makes Nurzhan's business more efficient since they can browse Chinese websites and order products directly from the internet without going to the market. Thanks to his social ties in China and Chinese language skills, he could still maintain communication and make business connections online.

4.1.1.2 Kaster's Story

Kaster, 25 years old, is the founder of a China -Kazakhstan express. Before migration, he studied marketing at a Chinese university. In 2016, he came to Kazakhstan and created an express company with his Kazakh friend from China. The express business from Kazakhstan to China has utilized Kaster and his team's transnational ties.

Kaster's team shipped products of some domestic cosmetics brands from Kazakhstan to China at the beginning of their cross-border delivery business. Usually,

his team's service connects Kazakhs in both countries; as he illustrated, *"The women here sell these cosmetics to the Kazakhs in China."* In addition to individual traders, Kaster's network with the China-Kazakhstan joint ventures broadened his team's delivery services as these companies also needed freight transportation. He noted that "*China -Kazakh joint ventures also need to send their samples to China, like food and green products.*

In addition to business professionals and organizations, Kaster's team also provides service to ordinary people whose relatives live in China or whose children study there. To maintain kinship ties, Kazakhs send *salemdeme* (greeting gifts in Eg.) to their families and relatives living on the other side of the border. According to Kaster, Kazakh 'returnees' did not have a concept of cross-border delivery before the express service was popularized among them. Thanks to their express company, *salemdeme* could be delivered to any address and people gradually became aware of express delivery:

We started the express business in 2016. There was no concept of express delivery among the 'oralman' in Kazakhstan. The idea was that if someone crossed the border, they would be asked to carry a salemdeme (greeting gift). Or, people went to the train station to ask bus drivers to take things.

In 2013, China launched the 'Belt and Road Initiative.' This initiative "aims at fostering connectedness, economic development, and diversifying trade and transportation routes" (Zogg 2019: 1). As a result, with the introduction of Chinese brands in Kazakhstan, many Chinese companies were created in Kazakhstan. As the number of Chinese people in Kazakhstan increased, they also began to express their daily needs. Kaster mentioned:

Chinese people worked in Kazakhstan, and in the beginning, they demanded things from China. Because of this demand, we opened an express delivery channel from China to Kazakhstan.

Kaster and his team created an express service from China to Kazakhstan to meet the needs of overseas Chinese in Kazakhstan. Moreover, their Chinese language skills, and life experiences related to China enhanced their networking with overseas Chinese in Kazakhstan. Thus, Kaster's social network with overseas Chinese translated into the financial capital of Kaster's express company (Putnam 1993: 5). Over two years of operation, Kaster's company monopolized the China-Kazakhstan private express business in 2018. He created more express points in different cities. Later, his success encouraged other Xinjiang Kazakhs to start their express services between China and Kazakhstan.

4.1.2 Discussion

The social capital of Kazakhs from China enhances the benefits of investment in economic capital (Putnam 1993: 2). Their shared language, knowledge of Chinese culture, and life experiences in China all contribute to the creation and maintenance of social relationships with Chinese business partners.

These Kazakh traders from China are able to extend their social connections with their Chinese business partners as well as Kazakh traders in China. Those connections allow them to import products from China. Kazakhs from China maintain their social network in China. However, their networks are not limited to their relatives but are more concentrated in business associates such as Han Chinese

businessmen in eastern Chinese cities as well as Kazakh traders in both Xinjiang and Kazakhstan.

Moreover, as Kazakhs from China present their specialties by forming needlework communities in local society, the Sino-Kazakhstan express industry is mainly composed of ethnic Kazakhs from China. Besides the internal network within the community of Kazakhs from China, they maintain networks with both Han Chinese in Kazakhstan and Kazakh trading groups in Xinjiang.

Kaster's team created the China-Kazakhstan freight transport business using their social network. The tendency to build an intergroup community based on different specialties is also found in Genina's (2015) research, examining how Kazakhs from Mongolia actively built transborder networks and maintained kinship ties in both countries (Genina 2015: x).

In King and Christou's (2008: 15) study of second-generation Greeks from Germany, regular return visits are their way of preserving networks in Greece. Interestingly, under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kazakhs from China are heavily reliant on the internet, especially the Chinese application WeChat for their transnational exchanges. Thanks to the internet, virtual movement and telecommunication enabled Kazakhs from China to maintain their business ties.

To sum up, one male participant developed a cross-border business that went from importing net from the Chinese market to running a net-producing factory using the equipment imported from China. Another young male respondent created a China-Kazakhstan express company. Their transnational ties include social networks with Han Chinese partners in China and Kazakh business groups on both sides of the border. Their Chinese language skills afford them a certain advantage in searching for information and communicating with their market. Their premigration life experience

and knowledge about China foster the trustworthiness of their social networks. Currently, their efforts to maintain social networks primarily rely on online communication. While the pandemic situation has strengthened the importance of online communication. It has also provided some of the informants with new business opportunities.

4.2 Cultural Capital gained from China

When it comes to global metropolia, people who can communicate with overseas clients in their native tongues are likely to have an advantage over their competitors in the job market (Cohen 2008: 46). In addition, diasporas are usually in a more profitable position serving as a 'bridge' between their host and country of origin, which has empowered them to work as interlocutors in business (Cohen 2008: 148).

Many diasporic community members are bilingual or multilingual and can detect "what is missing" in their host environment and country of origin (Cohen 2008: 148). They are able to recognize what their group has in common with other groups and when its cultural values and social customs pose a risk to the mainstream society, but survival may be difficult without this alertness (Cohen 2008: 148). Overall, such insights are also beneficial for the survival skills of co-ethnic migrants in the host country. For co-ethnic migrants, various social and cultural capital acquired from the country of origin plays an important role in pursuing advantages in the host society after the repatriation.

4.2.1 Chinese Language Skills

For many of my informants, Chinese proficiency is a form of cultural capital gained in China. Their Chinese language skills and ability to explore the Chinese digital market network are essential in their work. Moreover, understanding both Chinese and Kazakh cultures enable them to be flexible and sensitive when coordinating work on both sides. Whether they work at Chinese companies or local joint ventures, most of the work they are accountable for builds bridges to link the two sides.

4.2.1.1 Aisulu's Story

Aisulu is 25 years old; her parents moved to Kazakhstan when she was in fifth grade. Aisulu lived with her grandparents in China until she migrated to Kazakhstan in 2011. She said, *"Maybe because I was away from my parents from childhood; I became independent."* After high school, she went to China again to study international trade. She said, *"I'm quite adaptable. I wouldn't say I can't adapt to another environment."* She returned to Kazakhstan and worked for a few companies. Aisulu summarized her work experience:

I first found a job at an overseas study agency. [...] Because I could speak Chinese, my boss asked me to be in charge of Chinese universities. Then I talked with Chinese universities about whether they could offer scholarships to students from our country and help them enroll. [...] Then, I went to a trading company. I was also responsible for communicating with customs clearance companies and freight forwarding companies. [...]I worked for another company, a dental equipment sales

company. They imported goods from China and needed someone who knew the Chinese language well and could find the source of goods.

Until now, Aisulu has worked for three local companies. All the work she was dealing with was related to China. Her Chinese language skills gave her job opportunities related to China in those local companies. Chinese communication skills and the ability to search for information from Chinese online sources were two main areas she was responsible for. Moreover, her study experience in China also gave her a broad understanding of the country. She said: *"Just some stereotypes, people think China is not good. [...] My understanding of China is relatively broad."* Aisulu's work experience taught her how to use her cultural capital gained in China and benefit from it, as she said: "I know how to find manufacturers or products in China quickly."

4.2.1.2 Baian's Story

Baian, 23 years old, moved to Kazakhstan with her parents in 2014 when she finished junior high school. At the beginning of her adaptation, she struggled with the Russian language and the student-oriented teaching style.[16] At the local school. She told me:

I moved here suddenly, and I could not follow the language. There were also significant gaps in many subjects in school. I did not understand many academic terms, and in getting along slowly, I also found that the gap between here and China is quite large.

Relying on her Chinese language ability, Baian found her first job as a tour guide in 2017 at the World Expo in Astana.

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[16] In China, mostly the class is mostly teacher-oriented.

In 2017 I was a sophomore. [...]There happened to be a travel agency called Skyway looking for a Chinese-speaking guide. [...] I led a group of men from China whom did landscape painting. I introduced Kazakhstan and Expo to those tourists in Chinese.

Baian worked as a translator and interpreter in the travel agency during the off-season. She was responsible for translation and communication work between Chinese and Kazakhstan companies. She shared:

I would help them communicate with each other at that time. Our company would have meetings in China and do some negotiations. The way and style of doing business in China are different. (Before the meeting) the use of language or any question should be coordinated with the Chinese side. Usually, local people do not talk. They only speak to me, and I communicate with Chinese companies when I understand.

After the outbreak of covid-19, Baian turned to the logistics industry which, she says, is controlled predominantly by Kazakh people from China. The ability to find information is not limited to the language itself; it also involves familiarity with information transmission. "*Although locals have their trucks, they have no Chinese resources. If Chinese goods need to be introduced abroad, they still need us."* She is working as a 'bridge' connecting companies on both sides. The Chinese companies also tend to rely on Kazakhs from China in this field because of their bilingual proficiency and work efficiency. "*Chinese people still cannot communicate complex ideas with locals. On the one hand, the language, and on the other hand, the efficiency is not as fast as ours."* But she also admitted:

There are many excellent people coming from China. Many local people are also learning Chinese now. Some locals are fluent in both Chinese and Russian. [...]

You may not have much of an advantage in a language other than the fact that you come from China and know more about people's customs and ways of doing things. Still, there is the advantage: we can relatively quickly get some information from China. We can keep an eye on all the Chinese trends and are always concerned about what can be done here. After all, it is a neighboring country, and many things are affected here.

Baian expressed concerns about her future career by mentioning the growing number of Chinese speakers in Kazakhstan. From her perspective, knowing the Chinese language is no longer her unique cultural capital. Nevertheless, the ability to collect and use information is still an advantage. More generally, understanding the communicative conventions of a cultural group makes diasporic people competitive in the globalized job market. For Baian, the ability to introduce and transfer some popular industries or trends in China to Kazakhstan and refashion them according to the specific situation of local society is also a kind of cultural capital that can advance her career.

4.2.2 Practical and Cultural Knowledge gained in China

The respondents' professional knowledge gained in China is also a form of cultural capital that helps their career development. They used their transnational experience and skills to secure jobs and run their business. Also, respondents expand social networks with local people using their knowledge of Chinese culture, like Chinese martial arts.

4.2.2.1 Akzhol's Story

Akzhol, a man in his late fifties, went to one of the best medical schools in China in the 1980s and worked for Xinjiang People's Hospital for many years, specializing in tumors and cancer. Many of his patients at XPH were from Kazakhstan. He was a visiting researcher in Kazakhstan in 2014. In 2015, he revisited Kazakhstan as a medical consultant, working for the President's hospital.

Afterwards, he migrated to Kazakhstan with his family, he opened a Chinese clinic with other local doctors, mainly relying on his professional knowledge of Chinese medicine. His work experience in China and Kazakhstan plays a significant role in his career. Akzhol also presented his attitude toward Kazakh medicine as follows:

We brought the word 'okpe kabynu' over here, and we should use the term 'okpe kabynu' for pneumonia. The Kazakh people of China preserved a lot of ancient words and medical terms. […] In Xinjiang, young generations have the ability to translate and use these Kazakh medical terms. […] Also, there are a lot of books on Kazakh medicine in Xinjiang. The Kazakh Medical Center was also established in Altai in 1985. Students are studying Kazakh medicine at Xinjiang Medical University.

The desire to make use of knowledge and skills among the diaspora is strong (Montes and Ladd 2011: 25), and it is the same for ethnic return migrants, who also have a strong interest in applying their knowledge gained in the country of origin to the host society. Akzhol stated that he would like to translate medical terms from Russian to Kazakh. He believed that Kazakh medical talents from China would play a key role in medical development in Kazakhstan.

4.2.2.2 Aia's Story

Aia, a 26-year-old female, completed a nursing school in China and worked as a nurse at regional hospitals. She immigrated to Kazakhstan in 2017 with her family. It was challenging when Aia and her family first came to Kazakhstan because they didn't have a home. They rented a room, and it was not easy for the family. She lamented that *"before migration, life wasn't difficult, but after that it suddenly became difficult, I thought, wow...! But I'm used to it now."* In any case, Aia gradually adapted to the new life and found a job. Aia works at Kazak Em Hanasy ('Kazakh Medical Clinic') in Almaty. She has busy work in the clinic. Aia said:

We only have two doctors. The head doctor has been practicing here for 12 years and has many other branches. The other doctor graduated from Xinjiang Medical University. We practice traditional Chinese medicine and Kazakh medicine—the hospital imports medical drugs from China. Our prices are not low and therefore unacceptable for 'oralman.' But they are acceptable for the local population. Currently, 100% of our customers are locals.

According to Aia's comments, this Kazak medical clinic provides traditional Chinese and Kazakh medicine, and it is popularized in Kazakhstan because traditional Chinese medicine has a unique position globally and traditional Kazakh medicine is also uniquely developed by Xinjiang Kazakhs. For their post-migration work, Aia and her colleagues rely on their cultural capital they acquired in China, namely their expertise in traditional Chinese and Kazakh medicine.

4.2.2.3 Arai's Story

Arai, a female in her thirties, migrated to Kazakhstan with her husband and little son in 2019. The pandemic started soon after they came. It was not easy for this young family to adapt to the local society and start making a living under the covid-19 pandemic. Arai started her own transnational business during the pandemic time. In addition to that, she used her unique cultural knowledge to connect with local people and adapt to local society. Arai had a kung fu master in China, and she learned kung fu as a morning exercise every day for six years. She said, *"It's something I'd been doing for six years in China."* Because of her training in kung fu, she attracted local Kazakhs who were also exercising outdoors, and they started communicating with each other. Moreover, she led a morning exercise team for two years, teaching people kung fu for free. In short, her cultural knowledge enabled her to connect with others.

One of my hobbies is Chinese kung fu. During my workouts, the locals who walk in the park always make small talk with me. They especially like to exercise, but many people do not know the right way to exercise. I eventually led a morning exercise team for two years. A lot of locals exercised with me, there were 30 people at most, and I did it for free. I realized although there is a social distance, we have the same concern about health.

4.2.3 Discussion

We could say that cultural capital gained in China helps Kazakh 'repatriates' find jobs and access the online market. Although there is a tendency that the Chinese language skills of Xinjiang Kazakhs are no longer a solid advantage in finding jobs due to the growing number of Chinese speakers in Kazakhstan, their understanding of Chinese culture still gives them some advantage. Many of them work as tour guides, consultants, interpreters, or translators.

One doctor runs a Chinese medical clinic, and a nurse works for a traditional Kazakh medical clinic. Also, one respondent learned kung fu from a Chinese expert while in China, and later led an exercise group in Kazakhstan for free. This helped her expand her connections with the locals. Overall, transnational work experiences provide Kazakhs from China with more diverse perspectives, and their post-migration life is also influenced by their knowledge and experience gained in China.

Many Kazakh ‘repatriates’ rely on cultural capital acquired in China, such as their Chinese language skills, understanding of Chinese culture, and knowledge or work experience they accumulated in China. This is similar to the case of second-generation Turks from Germany and the US migrating to Turkey (Grasmuck and Hinze 2016: 1971), whose pre-migration cultural capital could become a comparative advantage in their career advancement. Turks from Germany tend to depend more on German than Turkish when they migrate to Istanbul. After returning to the 'ancestral' motherland, these Turks from Germany work for German international companies and work as German instructors or tour-guides (Grasmuck and Hinze 2016: 1970).

Furthermore, Koreans from the US (Song 2014) and Greeks from the US (King and Christou 2010) also utilized their English fluency gained in the US in their work. The Xinjiang Kazakhs' experience is similar to those of Turks from Germany and Koreans and Greeks from the US. All of the work they are required to do is related to knowledge about China or the Chinese language efficiency.

To sum up, many of my informants take advantage of the cultural capital attained in China including their work experience in China and knowledge related to Chinese culture like Chinese martial arts. They not only translate their knowledge into financial income but also use it to create social ties with locals. Their command of the Chinese language and ability to navigate the Chinese digital market network is critical to their work. Also, understanding the Chinese and Kazakh cultures allows them to be flexible while coordinating work on both sides.

4.3 Summary

Co-ethnic migrants' social and cultural capital attained from the country of origin may become advantages in their post-migration life. Chinese proficiency, knowledge related to China, and transnational networks, are the unique cultural and social capital of Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan that can help them to find jobs and adapt to local society. Specifically, cross-border traders rely on their transnational networks with Chinese businessmen and Kazakh traders. Their Chinese language skills and common knowledge of Chinese culture help them build trust with their business partners. Such knowledge and skills also enable Kazakhs from China to be a 'bridge' between Chinese and Kazakhstani companies. Cultural knowledge like Chinese martial art helps respondents connect with local people in Kazakhstan.

Professional knowledge such as Chinese traditional medicine and nursing skills help Kazakh 'repatriates' from China create their businesses and seek opportunities in local society. Overall, Xinjiang Kazakhs' cultural capital enables them to maintain their social capital and provide unique skills to make a living and integrate into local society.

Chapter 5: Identity Formation of Xinjiang Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

Drawing on Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of 'in-between' space, hybridity, and the 'third' space, this chapter focuses on the diasporic cultural identity of Kazakh 'repatriates' from China. As Bhabha (1994) argues, cultures are not isolated but interrelated to each other in a hybrid space. People with hybrid identities live in an interracial, interethnic, or multinational setting, an 'in-between' environment where they can develop and rebuild their identities (Bhabha 1994: 37). Therefore, the transnational migration, integration, and adaptation processes of these Kazakh 'repatriates' developed hybridity in their identity and sense of belonging. The cultural transformation of their living place also influenced the formation of their self-identification as 'global citizens.' Overall, the cultural interaction and interchange process among Kazakhs from China formed their fluid and changing identities.

The main focus of this chapter is the respondents' identity formation. The first section discusses respondents' hybrid identity and the 'third' space of their identity. The second section pays attention to respondents' understanding of their 'homeland,' an 'in-between' space for many Kazakhs from China. The third section is about people's different attitudes toward the term 'oralman' and 'kandas.' My main argument for this chapter is that Kazakhs from China experienced a hybrid identity after the 'repatriation,' and their identity changed over the time and space.

5.1 Identity of Xinjiang Kazakhs

Turner (1974: 85) suggests that hybrid identity is a state where people are in a 'liminal space,' and they feel 'neither here nor there' or 'betwixt and between.' When

people migrate, they are likely to encounter different and new relationships, which will have an influence on their perceptions of their own identity, and that is the reason many scholars see identities as movable, relational, and hybrid formed within relationships (Easthope 2009: 69-70).

For the questions: *How do you identify yourselves? How do you feel a sense of belonging in Kazakhstan? Or do you have the feeling of being foreign and local simultaneously? Why?* Most respondents expressed the hybridity of their identity construction and reported that they felt 'in-between' between China, where they were born, and Kazakhstan they are living now. Also, they described the feeling of dissociation with their 'historical homeland.' In addition, some respondents identified themselves as 'global citizen.' Overall, respondents' narrative of identity formation presented that identity formation is a changing process, changing by time and space.

5.1.1 Hybrid Identity

In our conversation, Maira told me she identifies herself as *"fifty-fifty,"* with 50% of mind close to China and 50% close to Kazakhstan. On the one hand, Maira has intimate feelings toward China since it is her birth country and her relatives are there. On the other hand, her daughter was born in Kazakhstan, and Maira spent almost twenty-one years in Astana. Maira feels Kazakhstan and Astana are *"like a second country and a second city."* Maira also described her strong feeling toward Kazakhstan:

I witnessed the development of Astana, and we grew up together seeing Baiterek and Kanshatyr being built. So, I think I am also very close to this place.

For Maira, self-identification mixed the feeling of her birth and living places. Moreover, Kaster told me he is in a contradictory situation, belonging 'neither here nor there.' Because he is separated from his family in China, he feels 'in-between,' and it is hard for him to consider Kazakhstan his home. He said, *"I would say only half of me is living. I'm fighting to make money for life tomorrow."* He does not have feelings of being at home and struggles to find integrity as a person. He noted:

My heart is only half on this side because my parents are still in China. I've been in a very conflicted situation. I live alone at home, and it does not feel like home. There is always a piece of heart that is empty.

Co-ethnic migrants experience 'double exclusion' and stigmatization in both countries (Fokkema 2011: 383; King and Kılınc 2014: 132). Although two participants identify themselves as *"a local"* or *"a citizen of Kazakhstan,"* participants acknowledge that they had the feeling of being an *"outsider"* differently. Baian said, *"There has been the feeling of belonging neither here nor there. You think you are an outsider in a new environment."* Compared to Baian, Aia's feeling of 'in-betweenness' is even stronger. She expressed a sense of powerlessness to the fact that she believes her hybrid identity is passively given by local society. Aia laments:

I'm an outsider. That's not for me to decide. It is an identity that society has given to me. But migration was my choice. I am a stranger here, and I am indeed someone who left my old family, where I was born.

Dinara, an a 26 years old female, moved to Kazakhstan during her high school time. After graduating, she works as a research assistant at the university. In Dinara's case, after the migration from China to Kazakhstan, she could not get rid of the feeling of being a minority in the local society. She said, *"I felt I had changed from an ethnic minority in China to an 'oralman' in Kazakhstan. Still, I am a minority."*

Therefore, in the ethnic 'homeland,' the identity of co-ethnic migrants is often questioned by local residents, and it causes the minority status of co-ethnic migrants (Voutira, 2006: 379). This otherness also complicates respondents' hybrid identification.

5.1.2 Global Citizen-The Third Space

It is critical to consider the displacement and 'othering' that co-ethnic migrants experience (Anthias 2006: 25-6). Similar to Aia's feeling of being an outsider, Azamat also perceived his identity as a foreigner. Azamat, an a 25 years old male, completed his bachelor's degree at one of the top universities in China. He works remotely at a Chinese internet company. Azamat said, *"I feel like I live here as an alien."* During the conversation, I could sense that the sudden death of his grandparents affected Azamat's sense of belonging to Kazakhstan. Azamat added:

I felt a strong sense of belonging when my dearest grandparents were alive. For now, the feeling of belonging has gone downhill. Maybe I will have my own family in the future; perhaps I will feel like I belong here. Now, I would say I belong to the Earth. I am like a cultural hybrid!! If I divide myself, 30% of me has Kazakh culture, which is the influence of family when I was a child. Later I sought something from the western culture, which is 40%. I also have 30% of Chinese thinking.

Azamat mentioned that cultural transformation and interaction exist in his identity formation process. In addition to that, Azamat and Dinara identified themselves as *"global citizens."*

Kazakh identity was the one thing Dinara never questioned in her childhood. She claimed that *"I always felt like a Kazakh. I know I have a lot of ethnic value in my*

body and blood." But after studying at university, Dinara started to question her 'Kazakhness,' specially when she got involved with western values and experienced different cultures in other countries. She noted, *"I'm not traveling. I'm going there to experience their folk culture. Later, I asked myself, who are you again."* Then, Dinara explained why she felt far from her Kazakh identity and turned to balance it with her identification as a *"global citizen"*:

Some moral norms in Kazakh are debatable, such as the necessity to respect the elderly and care for the young. However, I believe that an older man is only respectable if he accomplishes the proper things. A lot of Kazakh things, I cannot say I have done all of them. [...]I always wonder if I am Kazakh. I want to say I am a global citizen. On the one hand, I like this concept because it encourages people to be more compassionate. On the other hand, it makes people's uniqueness slightly weaker. My own identity is probably a Kazakh and global citizen. They balance each other.

Having been exposed to multicultural values, Dinara questioned some traditional Kazakh moral values, which led to her alienation from her Kazakh identity. Afterward, she adopted the new concept, *"global citizen,"* in her identity construction. For her, this concept makes the world a better place to live in; however, she also admits that this concept diminishes people's individuality. A comfortable way for Dinara to express self-identification is switching between Kazakh and a global citizen.

5.1.3 Discussion

Most participants had hybrid identities, which is my main finding in the chapter. A state of *"fifty-fifty"* is a feature of their hybridity, meaning respondents cannot find complete belongingness in their place but feel they half belong to China

and a half to Kazakhstan. Also, their hybrid situation of belonging 'neither here nor there' refers to difficulties in fitting in on both sides—for example, being an *"outsider"* in Kazakhstan and being a *"stranger"* in China; being *"a minority"* in China and being *an "oralman"* in Kazakhstan. Most of them experienced this hybrid identity at the beginning of adaptation, and it is not easy to get rid of this feeling; the main reason is being separated from families in China and having emotional connections with them. There is the same observation in Kılınç et al.'s (2022: 11) work: many second-generation Turks from Germany hoped to feel accepted in their ancestral homeland in Turkey, but they realized their 'outsider' position. Prejudice from the locals resulted in their feeling of marginalization. They had feelings of 'in-betweenness' among the locals and their relatives, who referred to them as 'Almancı,' which translates as 'German-like.'

The second main finding is the 'third' space, the identity of being a *"global citizen."* It is a relatively common way for respondents to express hybrid self-identification in an uncertain world. It is also a way to describe their alienation from the local people. Also, these interviewees try to maintain their own identities and values. Under the influence of world globalization and the flow of the western world views, the second generation of Kazakh 'repatriates' attempt to balance their Chinese and Kazakh identities with their identification as global citizens to keep themselves more unique in Kazakh society. This observation also partly confirms Pratsinakis' (2021: 4) study of Greek 'returnees' from the Soviet Union to their ancestral homeland, Greece. In this unique case of the former Soviet Union (FSU) Greeks, 'Pontic identity' provides an alternative identity. It is a different ethnic category from the 'Greek' and 'Russian.' Although the Greeks from the Soviet Union left Russia as Greeks, they realized their cultural differences from local Greeks who questioned

their Greekness after settling in their ethnic country. The ‘Pontic identity’ expresses their sense of otherness/marginalization in Greece while still allowing them to be accepted into the Greek nation (Pratsinakis 2021: 13).

Moreover, participants reported feeling alienation from the local society. They describe the situation as *“a state of dissociation,”* or they could not experience the *“feeling of empathy”* in local communities. In conversations with these respondents, I observed more disappointment toward people and places they encountered. Also, many studies have emphasized that 'return' migrants suffer the adjustment processes and feel alienation, and not-belonging. In Christou’s (2006: 837) analysis, as they come to terms with the disappointments of their homecoming and their "reactive displacement from modern (Greek) life," second-generation Greeks from the US express isolation and alienation they experienced in Greece.

To sum up, most respondents had mixed feelings about identity formation in post-migration life in Kazakhstan. They experienced 'being foreign' and 'local,' and some felt belonging 'neither here nor there.' Besides, respondents also had the feeling of being "outsiders" and "aliens." Moreover, interviewees also had intercultural experiences and exposure to world values in this hybrid environment. Some of them developed the 'third' space to identify themselves as 'global citizen,' balancing their Chinese and Kazakh identities in an uncertain globalized world and keeping themselves more unique in the Kazakh community. No matter how respondents re-evaluate their identity, their identity is fluid, moving, and changing with time and space. Analysis of interview data confirms Dubuisson and Genina’s (2011: 482) argument that “belonging is made by moving: moving through space, moving through time.”

5.2 Homeland of Xinjiang Kazakhs

Belonging can be articulated in various social and geographical contexts, but one of an individual's most strong attachments is a sense of belonging to a place (Fenster and Vizel 2006: 7; Antonsich 2010: 644). People's daily movements construct place-belonging over time (Fenster and Vizel 2006: 10). A sense of belonging to an imagined/real place allows us to analyze multifaceted identities. Experiences, closeness, familial ties, interactions, and property ownership are all factors that help us locate our place in this volatile and globalized world (Hooks 2009: 19). The home tends to lose its stable and fundamental nature and is re-imagined in movement and change. Home is not where you left, or you thought you left; the location itself changes with time, but so do people's perceptions of it and what it signifies (Laoire 2008: 12). Home is re-made and re-membered throughout the migration (Ahmed et al. 2003: 1-2). Kazakh 'repatriates' perceptions and emotions toward 'homeland' is 'in-between' space. Most respondents' feelings toward 'home' are a hybrid between their birthplace in China and where they live in Kazakhstan.

I asked my respondents: *Where is the homeland for you?* For most of them, the feeling of 'in-betweenness' and hybridity still exists and does not go away. For example, Baian said, *"Do you like daddy or mommy?! That is the same question you asked me."* Baian's comments stressed that it is difficult to divide feelings into black and white simply. She pointed out that co-ethnic migrants' sense of belonging toward the country of origin and host country is complex.

Aia mentioned her birth country firstly, expressed hard feelings about giving up, and turned to where she is living now. She said, *"I still think of Kunes, but I will*

still come back to Astana even if I go back. There I might be a passer-by. Because here is my home." Maira also has mixed feelings toward her homeland. For her, China is her homeland because her family has lived in China for generations, and most of her relatives are there. Simultaneously, Maira also has feelings for Kazakhstan because of her job and friends here.

I think my hometown is in China. Our ten grandfathers, ten generations, were over there. Everything is about mountains and rivers. I was born there, but I do most of my work, and I have a lot of friends here. So, there is a sense of belonging here as well. Sometimes I don't know where I belong!! Maybe I belong here. I don't know. Hopefully, the China-Kazakhstan border will always open, and we will be able to travel between China and Kazakhstan.

Many respondents are torn between where they were born and where they are now. Massey and Jess (1995: 219) admit the importance of the physical location of a place, but they also point out that the place could be imagined. Gulmira's response is also a representative answer. *"Firstly, my birthplace is my hometown. Secondly, it is the place where you live. I live here, and my choice is here. I feel like I belong here."* Moreover, Dinara calls her birthplace "my first hometown" and Kazakhstan "the second hometown."

While personal attachment to a place is crucial, collective identity is also essential. Didar used words such as *"roots"* and "historical motherland" to describe her 'homeland.' She said:

My hometown is in China because I was born there and lived there for 14-15 years. I don't forget my roots, but we still end up in Kazakhstan. Here is 'tarihi otan' (historical motherland). Sara associated the notion of 'homeland' with a broader collective identity of *tugan jer and ata-meken.* She commented: *The place where you*

were born, "tugan jer" is where the blood is left in your navel, and this place is China. The ancestral land "ata-meken" in Kazakhstan.

Most of the respondents have mixed feelings about 'homeland.' Their perception of 'homeland' is 'in-between' space; for example, looking at the residing place in Kazakhstan, Xinjiang Kazakhs think about their families and relatives who are still 'there' in China; looking back the born place in China, Xinjiang Kazakhs also think about their current work and children who are still 'here' in Kazakhstan. This is the same with Jašina-Schäfer's (2019: 98) study about individual narratives of home/motherland (Rodina in Ru.) among young Russian speakers in Kazakhstan, emphasizing the consideration of a place as multilayered and created from various points. In addition to citizenship and language choice, an individual's emotional attachment to the place is also essential in people's identity construction.

Some respondents believe that their birthplace in China and the city they are living in in Kazakhstan are their homelands. Both places have geographical and emotional connections with them. Similarly, Laoire's (2008) study of Irish 'return' migration also emphasizes 'return' migrants' hazy nature of being home-comer and newcomers. Kazakh 'repatriates' regularly switch between insider and outsider positions. Some call China "birthplace" and Kazakhstan "historical homeland." Likewise, Kazakh 'repatriates' from Mongolia who relocated to Kazakhstan exhibit a strong emotional connection to Mongolia despite their offspring identifying Kazakhstan as their home (Dubuisson and Genina 2011: 479). Respondents have hybrid belongingness and attachment to the 'homeland.' Although some respondents considered their birthplace as 'homeland,' they also realized they became *" a passer-by" there.*

In summary, Similar to their hybrid identity formation, their sense of the homeland is also an 'in-between' place. Most respondents had mixed feelings about their birthplaces in China and their places of residence in Kazakhstan and acknowledged that both places are their 'homeland.'

5.3 'Oralman' / 'Kandas'-Identity as 'Repatriates.'

I asked: *Does being called 'oralman' or 'kandas' have any effect on your life, and how do you think about these terms?* Interviewees vary in their attitudes toward the terms *'*oralman' or 'kandas.' Many interviewees prefer the new term 'kandas.'[17] Some dislike it.[18] Some respondents believe that 'Kazaktar' is even better than 'kandas' since they do not like being categorized as any group with a name. Moreover, only one respondent shared her child's experience of having trouble with being called 'oralman.'

'Kandas' is a *"warm"* term for respondents who like it and feel *"closeness."* As Sara said, "*'kandas' means we have the same blood, representing a common connection. 'oralman' means someone who has returned from somewhere else."* Didar commented, *"'oralman' sounds more derogatory."*

Half of the respondents do not have feelings about these terms or dislike the naming practice. Specifically, Dinara clearly expressed her negative attitude towards the term 'kandas.' She believes the term is *"too general,"* as speakers of Turkic languages are all considered 'kandas' in the Kazakh community. Dinara also explained why the term is inappropriate:

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[17] Nearly 74% of respondents like the new term 'kandas' in survey data.

[18] Less than 5% of respondents do not like it, and nearly 23% have no feelings about the term in survey data.

I do not like the definition. That is just status for one year. The time between your green card and citizenship is called 'kandas.' There is no point in naming a little bit of time in between. I think it is just a term that can separate people from each other. Many locals do not know they are no longer 'oralman' or 'kandas' after taking a Kazakh citizen. But the stigma it had already caused was too severe. I think we should drop the terms altogether.

Dinara believes there is no need to name Kazakhs from abroad for a limited period. Most local people do not even know that ethnic Kazakhs are not called 'oralman' or 'kandas' after getting citizenship in Kazakhstan. However, these terms generated stigma, making it difficult for people to get rid of those sentiments.

Aia did not see any difference in the new word. *"I think 'oralman' or 'kandas' still gave us a name. There is no qualitative change in 'oralman' or 'kandas.'"* Azamat also mentioned that the way naming a group of people results in social division. "*These names create a gap between us. There should not be such a divide."*

Moreover, Maira recalled his son having trouble with the term 'oralman.' She was a university professor, and her family lived in Beijing. Her first-grade son had a hard time explaining to other children that he was a Kazakh, not *"Xinjiang Ren"* (Xinjiang person in Ch.) because other children kept calling him *"Xinjiang Ren."* When they moved to Kazakhstan, her son still had to explain, *"I'm a Kazakh,"* when other children called him *"oralman, Kytai."*

For Maira's son, the word 'oralman' was annoying at the time. Her son did not want to be called *"Xinjiang Ren" or "oralman."* He was always highlighting his Kazakh identity both in China and Kazakhstan. It felt as if he was being excluded. He stopped using Chinese because other children kept calling him 'oralman.' However, Maira's daughter, born in Kazakhstan, did not experience this identity struggle.

Instead, she told Maira, *"Mama, we have an 'oralman' in class."* Maira laughed and said, *"Then, I told her you are an 'oralman' yourself."*

The attitudes of respondents about these terms vary. Half of them prefer the new term 'kandas' because it highlights *"blood ties"* between local Kazakhs and 'returnees.' It is because of their desire to be an integral part of the 'motherland' and to identify with the Kazakh nation. At the same time, the other half dislikes the term. It is also because of their desire to be legitimate and unquestionable members of the Kazakh society and their earnest attempt to blur the boundary between them and local Kazakhs. Moreover, respondents commonly believe that *'kazaktar'* is preferable to 'kandas' since they do not want to be a group with a distinct label. They believe the situation could be changed. It is evident that the term 'oralman' is stigmatized in Kazakhstan, and there is an unspoken hierarchy that 'oralman' is labeled as low-skilled, conservative, and a community with low economic status. The existence of the term itself creates distance and emphasizes distinctions among Kazakhs. It is similar to Seol and Skrentny's (2009: 147) study about Joseonjok, ethnic Korean Chinese citizens moving to South Korea, and the word Joseonjok are also stigmatized in South Korean society. Whether it is 'oralman' or 'kandas,' the participants do not like being named at all since having such a name itself easily evokes certain stereotypes associated with it, creating distance and misunderstanding among people.

Most of them stated that being called 'oralman' or 'kandas' does not affect their lives. Only one respondent revealed her child's trouble with being called 'oralman.' Whether in China or Kazakhstan, the boy was always emphasizing his Kazakh identity by telling others that he was not a *"Xinjiang Ren," "oralman or kytai,"* but a *"Kazak,"* to emphasize his identification with the Kazakh nation. Since

his Chinese speaking habit distinguished him as foreign, he stopped speaking Chinese at school, and forgot the Chinese language over time.

To sum up, respondents had different attitudes toward the term ‘oralman’ and ‘kandas.’ Although some of them liked the new term ‘kandas,’ many respondents expressed their negative perceptions and pointed out that the labeling practice itself is disappointing. Many of them highlighted the term ‘kazaktar’ as a common name for all Kazakh people, and they emphasized that there should be no name for any Kazakh community.

5.4. Summary

Most Kazakhs from China appear to have hybrid identities. They struggle to locate themselves between their birthplace in China and Kazakhstan. They feel ‘in-between,’ and they also feel they belong ‘neither here nor there.’ They are passers-by from their birthplace in China, but still strangers to the ‘ancestral homeland.’ Moreover, under the influence of globalization, some Kazakhs from China choose to define themselves as *“global citizens”* to highlight their differences from other Kazakhs and balance Chinese and Kazakh identities. It is not easy to get rid of mixed feelings. They experience a change of identity over the migration. They have a hybrid identity. They also create the ‘third’ space and try to locate their mixed identity in an uncertain world. ‘Homeland’ is also an ‘in-between’ space for most Kazakh ‘repatriates’ between their birthplace in Xinjiang and ‘ancestral motherland’ in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, while respondents hold different attitudes toward the new term ‘kandas,’ they share a desire to be accepted as legitimate and indisputable

members of Kazakh society, trying to blur the boundary between themselves and local Kazakhs.

6. Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction, this thesis has a personal dimension, as I am also finding my community as an ‘oralman’ in Kazakhstan. I am not only a researcher but also a Kazakh from Tarbagatai in Xinjiang, writing about the stories of other Xinjiang Kazakhs.

I have shown that transnational ties facilitate their cross-border business. Their Chinese language skills, common Chinese culture, and online social application also help them maintain this social network and trust. Language skills and cultural awareness enable them to bridge local and Chinese companies. Kazakhs from China display great flexibility in how they run their business. Their practical knowledge generates financial income and expands their social networks in local society.

Another important finding is that most respondents have a hybrid identity; they feel 'in-between,' or 'neither here nor there.' They were an ethnic minority in China and became a minority, too, in Kazakhstan as 'oralman.' Moreover, respondents' identity formation is not static but a changing process. Respondents' identity formation is influenced by their pre-migration education and transnational experience. While some are still struggling with feeling 'in-between,' many of them create the 'third' space, defining themselves as 'global citizens.' Respondents' perceptions of their homeland are torn between their birthplace in China and their living place in Kazakhstan. Their opinions toward the ethnic label 'kandas' are also diverse, but one commonality is the respondents' desire to be an integral part of the Kazakh community in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan, as a nation-state, attempts to construct Kazakh history and national identity in its territory (Rees et al. 2021:11). State officials call for Kazakhs

abroad to ‘return’ back to the ‘homeland,’ the country of the Kazakh nation, and they named Kazakhs outside of Kazakhstan ‘returnees’ and the ‘oralman’ program ‘return’ migration. ‘Return myths’ are idealized ideas of a historic homeland that have been formed and reproduced over generations among displaced Kazakh diaspora. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has been eager to employ these myths as catalysts for reconceptualized ideas of the Kazakh homeland (Diener 2008: 266).

Individual Kazakh ‘returnees’ from China are in the process of leaving ‘home’ and adapting to their ‘motherland.’ The process is not easy, but they are trying to rebuild their capital, agency, and identities. They use language skills, knowledge related to China, and transnational ties to create and maintain different careers in Kazakhstan. My first objective in this thesis has been to uncover the adaptation strategies of Kazakhs from China. Even after leaving China, they maintain their social and cultural ties with China not only because they want to remain connected to their relatives and friends in China but also because they can benefit from their Chinese language skills, cultural awareness, and transnational business networks.

My second objective in this thesis is to explore the hybridity and fluidity of identity construction amongst Kazakhs from China in Kazakhstan. They say that they 'returned' to their historical land or ancestral land. However, they still refer to Xinjiang as their birthplace. It shows their ambivalent conception of 'homeland.' On the one hand, their identity is influenced by Chinese culture deeply since that was the environment in which they were raised their pre-migration life. On the other hand, they ethnically identify themselves as Kazakh. Globalization and transnationalism constantly pressure them to reflect on their identity in relation to China and Kazakhstan.

Evidently, many Kazakhs from China are not only well-adapted but also highly successful in certain industries. They take advantage of their unique social and cultural capital acquired in China, such as Chinese language skills, knowledge related to Chinese culture, transnational ties, and work experience in China, but whether they feel welcomed or not depends on other factors and their identities are hybrid and fluid. Thus, rather than glamorizing their positive experiences, I wish to situate them in a big picture that is about their displacements. Literature about the ethnic 'return' migration in Kazakhstan also suggests that the Kazakh 'returnees' situation in Kazakhstan is difficult in terms of economic and social status (Diener 2008: 286). 'Oralman' status in Kazakhstan is still tangible, and they are not treated as local Kazakhs. I am from the same place as my respondents, and I am also becoming a person who left *"Tuganjer" there.* But I am also a *"stranger"* to the *"Atameken"* here. I missed my family and my friends. I missed my small town and Beijing. At the same time, I am also adapting to Kazakhstan; I am getting a degree and getting a new life in the future. I have to overcome all these economic challenges and adjustment struggles, while living as an 'oralman' and being called 'oralman.'

I also questioned this place and my identity. Do I belong to that small town I left when I was 16? No, it is too far for me now. Do I belong to Beijing, cosmopolitan with my eight years of youth life? Yes? But not really. I have strong feelings for the place, but I do not feel I am part of it. I expected to feel close and warm to Astana since its 'kazakhness,' which is the thing that I have wanted to feel in my inner heart for a long time. Unfortunately, no, I am still a minority here. Since I am Kazakh, I feel close to the place. At the same time, I feel foreign as I have different thoughts from local people. I speak Chinese more; I have a solid Chinese culture in my

characteristics, personality, and decision-making conventions. I am a 'different' Kazakh.

Respondents are not only providing me data, but we are building friendships, and I value their experience, stories, and their feelings. We have the collective memory of our ancestors, migration history, and our life in Xinjiang. Also, we have the same adaptation experience in Kazakhstan. They find a way to integrate and reconstruct their identity. And it is the same as my own experience and identity struggles. This hybrid and changing identity is a common state; people come in and go out with their different stories and narratives.

This study also has limitations; for example, since my fieldwork focuses on people with jobs and mainly with higher educational backgrounds, and interview respondents are also limited to the two major cities in Kazakhstan that Astana and Almaty, this study does not include the experience and stories of Kazakh 'repatriates' without jobs, with lower educational backgrounds, or in other cities of Kazakhstan. Future studies on this topic regarding the impact of migration on Kazakh repatriates' career and identity could focus on the influence of their pre-migration education experiences on identity and the effect of family social capital on the social mobility of the second-generation Kazakh 'repatriates.' Also, studies could compare the migration motivation or identity construction between the first and second generations of Kazakh 'repatriates.' Besides, studies could be done by focusing on the adaptation and living strategies of Kazakh 'repatriates' from other countries such as Mongolia, Turkey, Russia, or Uzbekistan, etc., in addition to that, studies also could be based on the gender difference of adaptation strategies among Kazakh 'repatriates.'

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview questions:

1 What did you expect before you come to Kazakhstan?

2 What are the similarities and differences between your expectation and reality?

3 How did you adapt to local society?

4 How did you benefit from Kazakhstan society?

5 What kind of work have you tried, and how about now?

6 Does the Chinese language skills, and knowledge related to China or social ties that you have helped you find jobs on Kazakhstan? Can you give examples and explain how and why?

7 What do you think is your advantage with locals or other people?

8 What are the main factors that help you better adapt to the local society? Why?

9 How about your Kazakh and Russian? and which one is more important or useful for you to live in Kazakhstan?

10 Which group do you interact with more? Locals or ethnic Kazakh? Why?

11 What are your thoughts on the values of local people? (marriage, childbirth, education, etc.)

12 What is your future plan?

13 Do you have any suggestions for others to better adapt to the local society?

14 How do you identify yourselves and your families?

15 Do you have the feeling of being foreign and local at the same time? Why?

16 Do you feel ethnic distance with locals, and why?

17 How do you feel a sense of belonging in Kazakhstan?

18 What and where is the homeland for you?

19 Where do you feel you belong?

20 Does being called “Oralman” or “Qandastar” have any effect on your life, and how do you think about these terms (“Oralman” or “Qandastar”)?

21 Do you think your self-identity is changing as you adapt to the local society? Can you explain why?

22 Do you usually feel nostalgic?

23 How do you think of a life partner? Do you want to marry a local person? Why?

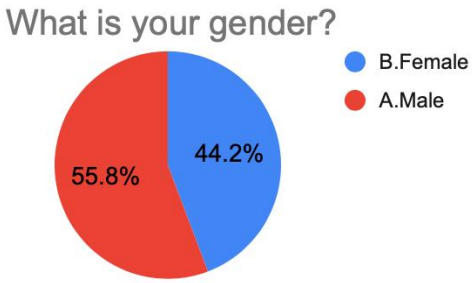
Appendix B

Survey questions:

1 What is your gender?

A.Male

B.Female



2 How old are you?

A.18-24

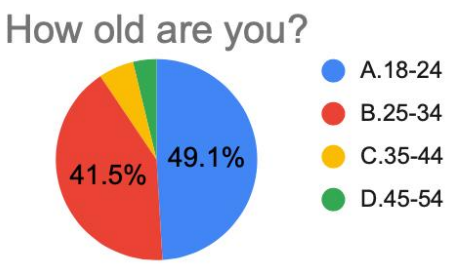
B.25-34

C.35-44

D.45-54

E.55-64

F.65+



3 What kind of job do you do?

A.Engineers

B.Technicians

C.Doctors

D.Teachers

E.Scientists

F.Civil servants

G.Arts & Culture

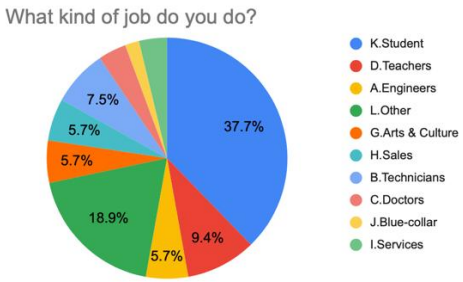
H.Sales

I.Services

J.Blue-collar

K.Student

L.Other



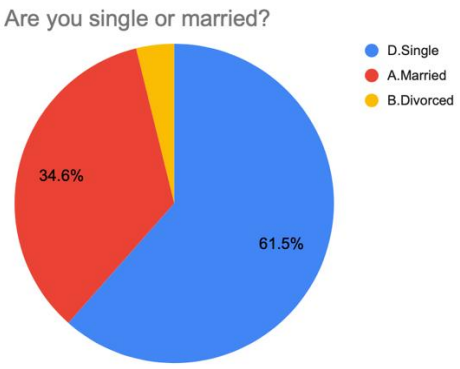
4 Are you single or married?

A.Married

B.Divorced

C.Widowed

D.Single



5 What is your education level?

A.High school

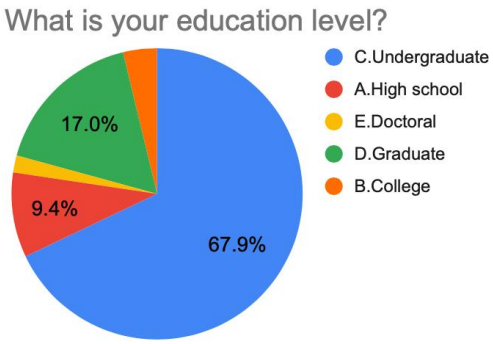
B.College

C.Undergraduate

D.Graduate

E.Doctoral

F.Other



6 When did you move to Kazakhstan?

A.Before 2000

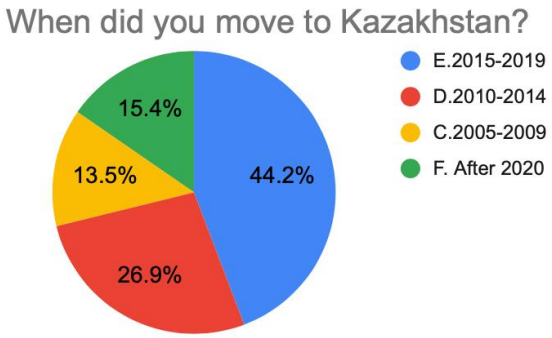
B.2000-2004

C.2005-2009

D.2010-2014

E.2015-2019

F.After 2020



7 How about your Kazakh language skills?

A.Low

B.Enough to carry out daily tasks

C.Good

D.Very good

E.Excellent

8 How about your Russian language skills?

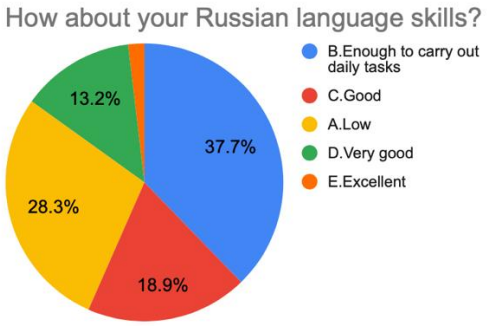
A.Low

B.Enough to carry out daily tasks

C.Good

D.Very good

E.Excellent



9 How about your Chinese language skills?

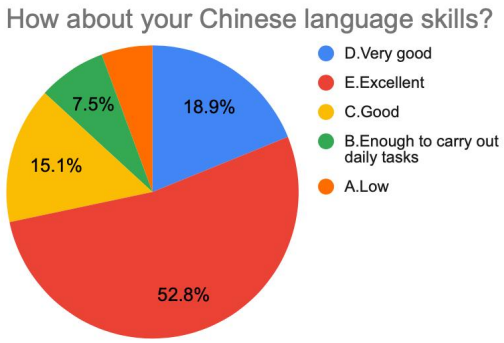
A.Low

B.Enough to carry out daily tasks

C.Good

D.Very good

E.Excellent



10 How about your English language skills?

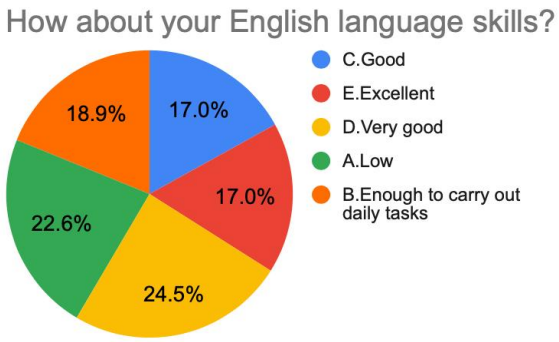
A.Low

B.Enough to carry out daily tasks

C.Good

D.Very good

E.Excellent



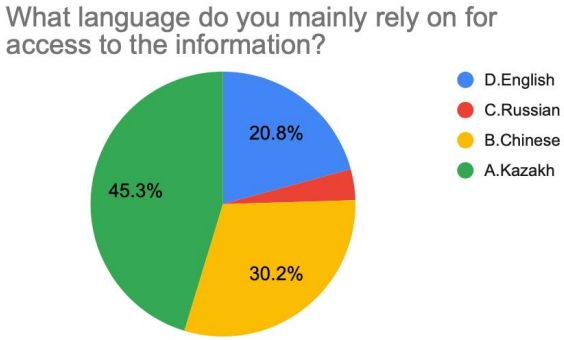
11 What language do you mainly rely on for access to the information?

A.Kazakh

B.Chinese

C.Russian

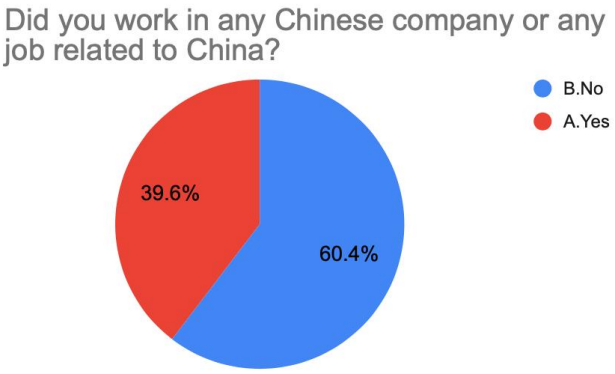
D.English



12 Did you work in any Chinese company or any job related to China?

A.Yes

B.No



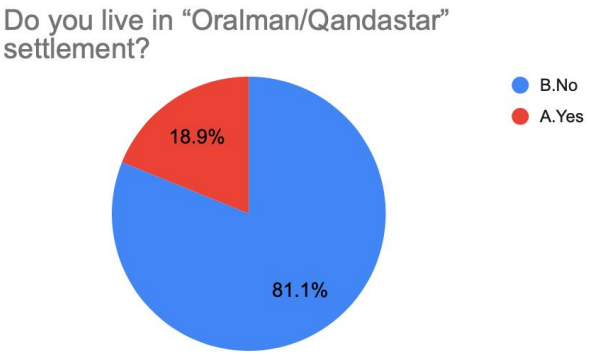
13 Do you like the new term “Qandastar”?

A.Yes

B.No

C.No feeling

D.I do not know this term

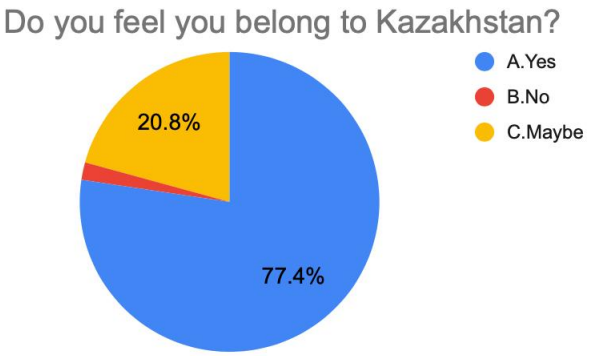


14 Do you feel you belong to Kazakhstan?

A.Yes

B.No

C.Maybe



15 How do you assess your degree of adaptation to the local society?

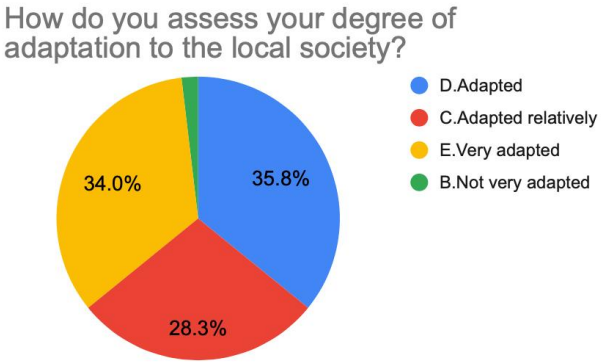
A.Not adapted

B.Not very adapted

C.Adapted relatively

D.Adapted

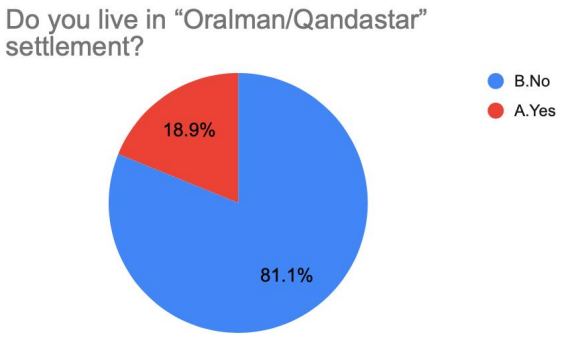
E.Very adapted



16 Do you live in “Oralman/Qandastar” settlement?

A.Yes

B.No

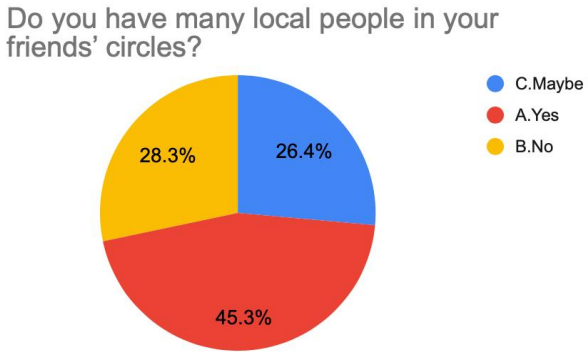


17 Do you have many local people in your friends’ circles?

A.Yes

B.No

C.Maybe

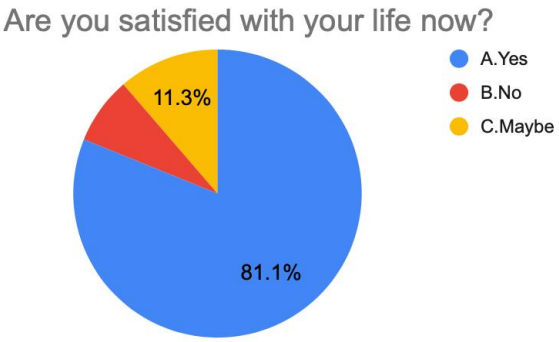


18 Are you satisfied with your life now?

A.Yes

B.No

C.Maybe


Are you satisfied with your life now?
11.3%
81.1%
A.Yes
B.No
C.Maybe