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ETHNO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND URBANISATION PROCESSES IN KAZAKHSTAN (1970-2020)



*Procesos etnodemográficos y de urbanización
en Kazajistán (1970-2020)*

*Processos etnodemográficos e de urbanização
em Cazaquistão (1970-2020)*

Gulmira Davletova

Almaty Technological University
Almaty, República de Kazajistán

ORCID 0000-0003-1186-9222
gdavletova965@gmail.com

Kulmira Dosekeyva

Almaty Technological University
Almaty, República de Kazajistán

ORCID 0000-0003-3342-315X
kulmira_d@hotmail.com

Aigul Junusbayeva

Almaty Technological University
Almaty, República de Kazajistán

ORCID 0000-0001-8941-0062
j.aigul543@outlook.com

Kamila Chatybekova

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International
Relations and World Languages
Almaty, República de Kazajistán

ORCID 0000-0003-4766-793X
chatybekova_mila@hotmail.com

Bibazhar Zhuztayeva

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International
Relations and World Languages
Almaty, República de Kazajistán

ORCID 0009-0005-1132-3280
z_bibazhar@outlook.com

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ABSTRACT

The ethno-demographic situation in Kazakhstan has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. These changes determine the trends of further ethno-demographic and urbanization processes in Kazakhstan, thus, their research is of undoubted relevance. The purpose of this research is to explore the changes in the national composition of Kazakhstan's population and the ratio of urban and rural population over the period from 1970 to 2020. The research concluded that until 1989, Kazakhs were the second most populous people, behind Russians in the first position. Urbanisation processes stagnated in the first years of Kazakhstan's independence but revived again in the 2010s when Kazakhstan's urban population increased again. The outflow of European ethnic groups from Kazakhstan to their historical lands in the first years of independence, and the state's stimulation of repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs were among the main reasons for the change in Kazakhstan's ethnic composition in the 1990s-2010s.

■ KEYWORDS

Population, migration, titular ethnos, European ethnoses, Asian ethnoses.

RESUMEN

La situación etnodemográfica de Kazajistán ha cambiado drásticamente en los últimos cincuenta años. Estos cambios determinan las tendencias de los futuros procesos etnodemográficos y de urbanización en Kazajistán, por lo que su investigación es de indudable relevancia. El objetivo de esta investigación es explorar los cambios en la composición nacional de la población de Kazajistán y la proporción de población urbana y rural en el periodo comprendido entre 1970 y 2020. La investigación concluye que, hasta 1989, los kazajos eran el segundo pueblo más poblado, por detrás de los rusos en primera posición. Los procesos de urbanización se estancaron en los primeros años de la independencia de Kazajistán, pero volvieron a reactivarse en la década de 2010, cuando la población urbana kazaja aumentó de nuevo. El éxodo de los grupos étnicos europeos de Kazajistán a sus tierras históricas en los primeros años de la independencia y el estímulo estatal a la repatriación de los kazajos étnicos fueron algunas de las principales razones del cambio en la composición étnica de Kazajistán en los años 1990-2010.

■ PALABRAS CLAVE

Población, migración, etnia titular, etnia europea, etnia asiática.

RESUMO

A situação etnodemográfica de Cazaquistão tem mudado drasticamente nos últimos cinquenta anos. Esses câmbios determinam as tendências dos futuros processos etnodemográficos e de urbanização em Cazaquistão, e por isso sua investigação é de indudável relevância. O objetivo desta investigação é explorar os câmbios na composição nacional da população de Cazaquistão e a proporção de população urbana e rural no período compreendido entre 1970 e 2020. A investigação conclui que, até 1989, os cazaques eram o segundo povo mais povoado, por atrás dos russos na primeira posição. Os processos de urbanização estancaram-se nos primeiros anos de la indepêndencia de Cazaquistão, mas voltaram a se reativar na década de 2010, quando a população urbana aumentou novamente. O êxodo dos grupos étnicos europeus de Cazaquistão a suas terras históricas nos primeiros anos da independência e o estímulo estatal à repatriação dos cazaques étnicos foram algumas das principais razões do câmbio na composição étnica de Cazaquistão nos anos 1990-2010.

■ PALAVRAS-CHAVE

População, migração, etnia titular, etnia europeia, etnia asiática.

Introduction

Over the past 50 years, there have been significant changes in the history of Kazakhstan and the lives of the country's population. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, and with it, the Soviet way of life and its defining communist ideology disappeared. Kazakhstan, formerly one of the union republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), became an independent state that followed the path of a market economy and the construction of its own national identity. The collapse of the USSR and the transition of the economy from a planned to a market economy were accompanied by a severe economic crisis, which caused a decline in the living standards and incomes of the population. With the stabilisation of the economic situation at the beginning of the 21st century, Kazakhstan began a gradual economic growth, which was accompanied by an increase in the population of large cities (Oleksandra et al., 2016; Assylkhanova et al., 2017). The changes in the political and economic situation of Kazakhstan from 1970 to 2020 led to significant shifts in the ethnic composition of the country's population. During this time, six censuses of the population of Kazakhstan were conducted: three all-union censuses and three in independent Kazakhstan. Their data demonstrate truly tectonic shifts in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population. In 1970, more than half of Kazakhstan's population was of European ethnicity, while the titular ethnicity—the Kazakhs—constituted only 32.39% of the population. By 2020, it was the Kazakhs who made up the overwhelming majority of Kazakhstan's population—70.35%, while the European ethnic groups became a national minority. These statistics demonstrate that Kazakhstan, despite internal political stability and the absence of open inter-ethnic conflicts, has demonstrated the most striking changes in the ethnic composition of the population among all post-Soviet states.

Ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan in recent years have been the subject of research by a significant number of scholars who have raised the issue of ethnolinguistic identification of the population and the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan in general. Kabdesov (2020) explores urbanisation processes in modern Kazakhstan. According to the author, urbanisation in Kazakhstan is quite slow and uneven in different regions, which is due to the different levels of economic development of large and small cities. The collective work of Spankulova et al. (2022), based on the data of population censuses of recent years and the dynamics of fertility and mortality in Kazakhstan in general and in some regions of the country, makes a forecast of the future demographic situation in Kazakhstan. The authors conclude that in the foreseeable future, the number of Kazakhs and other Asian ethnic groups in Kazakhstan will continue to increase due to increased fertility.

This research provides new insights by conducting an original, longitudinal analysis of census data across five decades (1970-2020) to systematically track Kazakhstan's dramatic ethno-demographic shifts. While existing studies analyze aspects like changing fertility rates or repatriation policies, this study uniquely stitches together the full picture of step-by-step changes in the ethnic makeup and urbanization patterns. Quantitatively documenting the growth of the Kazakh ethnicity from just 32% to over 70% of the total population, the decline of European ethnic groups from a majority to a minority, and the ruptures and reversals in urbanization trends constitutes an important expansion of current demographic knowledge (Kerimkhulle et al., 2023). The research design over this long timeframe allows identifying key inflection points, like Kazakhs overtaking Russians as the largest ethnicity by 1989 and the urban population share decreasing in the 1990s-2000s. This novel empirical foundation

bolsters analysis on the complex interplay of factors driving these transformations. No other studies have so systematically traced Kazakhstan's demo-ethnic reconstitution since 1970s Soviet censuses to today. The quantified, longitudinal trends represent valuable evidence for migration policy and to anticipate future continuity in the ascendance of Asian ethnicities, especially in urban areas.

The purpose of this research is to explore the changes in the national composition of Kazakhstan's population and the ratio of urban to rural population between 1970 and 2020. While existing studies analyse aspects like changing fertility rates or repatriation policies, this study uniquely stitches together the full picture of step-by-step changes in ethnic makeup and urbanisation patterns. Quantitatively documenting the growth of the Kazakh ethnicity from just 32% to over 70% of the total population, the decline of European ethnic groups from a majority to a minority, and the ruptures and reversals in urbanization trends constitutes an important expansion of current demographic knowledge. The research design over this long timeframe allows identifying key inflection points, like Kazakhs overtaking Russians as the largest ethnicity by 1989 and the urban population share decreasing in the 1990s-2000s. This novel empirical foundation bolsters analysis on the complex interplay of factors driving these transformations. No other studies have so systematically traced Kazakhstan's demo-ethnic reconstitution since the 1970s Soviet censuses to today. The quantified, longitudinal trends represent valuable evidence for migration policy and to anticipate future continuity in the ascendance of Asian ethnicities, especially in urban areas. The following tasks are set according to the purpose: (i) analyse census data on changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population and changes in the ratio between urban and rural populations, and (ii) specify the reasons for the ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan from 1970 to 2020.

Materials and methods

In the process of working on the research, various methods of scientific research were used: statistical method, comparative method, historical-critical method of research, dialectical method, methods of analysis, and synthesis. Using the statistical method allowed determining general regularities in the changes in the ethnic composition of the population of Kazakhstan and the number of urban populations that occurred from 1970 to 2020. The statistical method allowed giving specific quantitative characteristics of ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan for the designated 50 years. This method helped to collect and summarise data that indicated trends in ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan in recent years, allowing the identification of anticipated changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan in the foreseeable future.

Using the comparative method allowed comparing the data of population censuses of different years regarding the ethnic composition of the population of Kazakhstan and the ratio of the urban and rural population. The comparative method allowed presenting the significant difference in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population between the Soviet period and the time of independence. In addition, the comparative method allowed placing Kazakhstan in the context of ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes that occurred in the modern world. The comparative method helped to determine the features of ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan that distinguish them from

similar processes that occurred in other countries. The historical-critical method of research allowed the examination of the data of population censuses that occurred in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period and at the time of independence from a critical-analytical standpoint, according to the context of the era. The historical-critical method helped to understand the reasons for the dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan from 1970 to 2020. In addition, this method, considering the context of the era, allowed determining why urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan occurred unevenly in different cities.

The dialectical method of scientific cognition provided an opportunity to understand ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes that occurred in Kazakhstan over the past 50 years in terms of the development of world-historical processes at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition, the dialectical method helped to present these processes within the framework of similar processes that occurred at the same time in other countries. Contrasting the data on the processes allowed for obtaining the result and understanding the key features of the processes and their causes. The methods of analysis and synthesis allowed tracing the quantitative characteristics of changes in the ethnic composition of the population of Kazakhstan over the past 50 years and how the tendencies of urbanisation processes changed during the different periods. The method of analysis was used to assess the changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population as reported in the censuses of different years. This method helped to determine when exactly the titular ethnic group began to prevail over the European population in terms of numbers, in which cities large-scale urbanisation processes occurred, and in which cities and regions the opposite phenomena occurred.

Results

Kazakhstan is one of the largest countries in the post-Soviet space. This country is rich in natural, economic, and human resources. In addition, Kazakhstan is a multinational country where representatives of 124 nationalities live. Conventionally, the ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan are divided into two groups: European, which includes Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, and other peoples of European origin, and Asian, which includes the titular ethnic group Kazakhs themselves, and Uzbeks, Uighurs, Koreans, and other peoples of Asian origin. Different regions of Kazakhstan have their particularities in terms of the ethnic composition of the population. Thus, European peoples live predominantly in the northern regions of Kazakhstan, and in the North Kazakhstan and Kostanay regions, they account for more than half of the population. Therewith, the southern regions of Kazakhstan are dominated by Asian peoples, and in regions such as Kyzylorda and Turkestan, the number of Asian people is over 95% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021).

Although Kazakhstan remains a multi-ethnic country, its population has become more ethnically homogeneous since independence. Currently, the titular ethnic group, the Kazakhs, comprise 70.4% of the country's population, and the number of Kazakhs continues to grow steadily. Therewith, during the Soviet era, the titular ethnic group did not constitute the majority of the population of the then Kazakh SSR. The number of Kazakhs from 1970 to 1989 ranged from 32.39% to 39.69% of the total population. During the last 20 years of Soviet rule, more than half of Kazakhstan's population was constituted by European peoples, while during the thirty years of independence, Asian peoples became dominant and European peoples remained the majority only in some northern regions (Sauran and Naimanbayev,

2022). Such ethno-demographic processes distinguish Kazakhstan from other post-Soviet countries, where the ethnic composition of the population has not changed as dramatically. In addition, Kazakhstan, unlike many other post-Soviet states, is a politically stable state with no obvious inter-ethnic conflicts.

The urbanisation processes that have occurred in Kazakhstan over the last 50 years have their own specific features. In general, while maintaining the trend towards urbanisation, Kazakhstan has undergone certain shifts in the opposite trend during the years of independence. Thus, according to the Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2009, during the first nine years of the 21st century, urbanisation in Kazakhstan declined, and the urban population did not increase but, on the contrary, fell from 56.3% to 52% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2009). In the following ten years, urbanisation in Kazakhstan increased again, and the urban population grew to 61.2% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021). Therefore, urbanisation in Kazakhstan has been uneven. During the years of independence, the population in Astana city has increased sharply due to the transfer of the capital of the state here, and the former capital of Kazakhstan—Almaty city—also tends to grow. Currently, three Kazakhstani cities have the status of million-strong cities – Almaty (over 2 million people), Astana (1.3 million), and Shymkent (over 1.1 million). Other cities, such as Karaganda, which in the Soviet years demonstrated population growth tendencies, on the contrary, started to lose population (Chulanova, 2021).

Six population censuses have been conducted in Kazakhstan over the past 50 years. Three of them (1970, 1979, and 1989), which were conducted during the Soviet era, were part of the All-Union population censuses. Since independence, Kazakhstan has conducted three censuses: in 1999, 2009, and 2021. The data from these censuses demonstrate well the striking changes that have occurred in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan over that time. One of the key features has been the steady increase in the number of Kazakhs. According to the 1970 census, the titular ethnic group was only 32.39% of the total population of the then Kazakh SSR. Until 1989, the number of Kazakhs increased by 7.3%, and according to the 1989 census, it was 39.69%. During the first years of Kazakhstan's independence in the 1990s, the percentage of the titular ethnic group increased by 13.71%. According to the first census conducted in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1999, the number of Kazakhs, for the first time in recent decades, exceeded half of the population and totalled 53.4% (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999). During the first 20 years of the 21st century, the number of Kazakhs increased by almost 17%, and according to the census of 2021, it was 70.35% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021). Thus, during the thirty years of Kazakhstan's independence, the number of Kazakhs grew by almost 30%, demonstrating the most significant growth in the 1990s.

The largest European ethnic group in Kazakhstan is the Russians, whose number according to the Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2021 is 15.54% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021). It can be stated that, at the moment, Russians are the largest ethnic minority in Kazakhstan. However, according to the censuses that occurred in 1970 and 1979, Russians were not a minority but, on the contrary, constituted the majority of the population, although their number did not exceed 50%. In 1970, 42.42% of the total population of the republic were Russians in the Kazakh SSR, and in 1979, 40.8%. In 1989, Kazakhs became the largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan, while Russians moved to the second position. According to the 1989 census, 39.69% of Kazakhstan's population was Kazakh and 37.82% was Russian. Thus, during the last twenty years of Soviet rule, the number of Russians in total decreased slight-

ly, by 4.6%. However, already in the first decade of Kazakhstan's independence, the number of Russians fell by 7.86%. Thereafter, the number of Russians continued to fall, almost as rapidly as in the 1990s. From 1999 to 2009, the total number of Russians fell by 6.26%, and since 2009 by a further 8.16% (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999, 2009, 2021).

Therewith, Russians in Kazakhstan, the number of other European ethnic groups fell. Thus, in the last 20 years of Soviet rule, Ukrainians and Germans occupied third and fourth places among the total number of nationalities living in Kazakhstan. According to the 1970 census, 7.24% of Ukrainians and 6.23% of Germans lived in Kazakhstan. According to the 1989 census, the number of Ukrainians and Germans decreased to 5.44% and 5.82%. Thus, by the end of the Soviet era, Germans had become the third-largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan (Sauran and Naimanbayev, 2022). In the 1999 census, Ukrainians regained their third position, although their numbers had fallen to 3.66%, and in the 2009 census, Ukrainians were again in fourth place, behind the Uzbeks. Today, Ukrainians remain the fourth largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan, accounting for 2.02% of the population. Most Ukrainians live in Karaganda Oblast, where they account for 10.55% of the population (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999, 2009, 2021).

The large German diaspora in Kazakhstan emerged after World War II, when a significant number of Germans who had previously lived in the Volga region or other regions of Russia were deported to what is now Kazakhstan. During that time, Kazakhstan became a forced place of settlement for many people, both European and Asian, who were victims of the communist regime's ethnic policies. In addition to Germans, Crimean Tatars fell into this category, as did Turks, Kurds, Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachais, Balkars, Poles, and Koreans. In Kazakhstan, these people had the status of special settlers and were mobilised into the labour army, de facto using the labour of special settlers as slave labour. Special settlers were sent in convoys to work in mines, building railways, or defence plants. During the Khrushchev Thaw, most of the deported peoples were allowed returning to their homeland, but the Germans, Crimean Tatars, and Turks were denied it, and they became one of the largest national minorities in Kazakhstan in the second half of the 20th century (Davletova, 2023).

Since Kazakhstan's independence, the size of the German diaspora has declined sharply. While according to the 1989 census, Germans constituted 5.82% of the population of the Kazakh SSR, according to the 1999 census, 2.36% of the total population of the country lived in independent Kazakhstan (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999). Currently, in Kazakhstan, Germans account for 1.18% of the population. Thus, Germans are still a relatively large national minority in Kazakhstan. Most Germans live in North Kazakhstan Oblast, where they account for 4.11% of the population. More than 3% of the population are Germans in Akmola, Kostanai, and Pavlodar oblasts (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021).

While the number of European ethnic groups in Kazakhstan has been steadily decreasing during the years of independence, the number of Asian ethnic groups has been increasing. Currently, the third largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan is the Uzbeks, who account for 3.2% of Kazakhstan's population. According to the 1970 census, Uzbeks accounted for 1.62% of Kazakhstan's population. The number of Uzbeks has gradually increased from census to census. In 1989, it passed 2%, and in the 2009 census, it was 2.85% (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999, 2009, 2021). Uzbeks live in Kazakhstan unevenly. They are most numerous in the Turkestan region bordering Uzbekistan, where they account for 17.67% of the population,

and in the city of Shymkent, which is not officially part of the surrounding Turkestan region. In Shymkent, Uzbeks account for 16.31% of the population. In the Zhambyl region, Uzbeks account for 2.42% of the population. In the remaining regions of Kazakhstan, the number of Uzbeks does not exceed 1% (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021). Among the other Asian ethnic groups in Kazakhstan whose number exceeds 1% of the population are the Uighurs. They currently account for 1.51% of the country's population and are the fifth-largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan. According to the 1970 census, the Uighurs accounted for 0.94% of the population, and in the 1979 census, their number exceeded 1%. During the last twenty years of Soviet rule, the number of Uyghurs increased by 0.19%, and during the thirty years of independence, by another 0.5% (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative table of ethnic composition of the population of Kazakhstan according to census data of different years

Tabla 1. Tabla comparativa de la composición étnica de la población de Kazajstán según los datos censales de diferentes años

1970	1979	1989	1999	2009	2021
Russians 42.42%	Russians – 40.8%	Kazakhs 39.69%	Kazakhs 54.4%	Kazakhs 63.07%	Kazakhs 70.35%
Kazakhs 30.39%	Kazakhs 36.02%	Russians 37.82%	Russians 29.96%	Russians 23.7%	Russians 15.54%
Ukrainians 7.24%	Germans 6.13%	Germans 5.82%	Ukrainians 3.66%	Uzbeks 2.85%	Uzbeks 3.2%
Germans 6.53%	Ukrainians 6.12%	Ukrainians 5.44%	Uzbeks 2.48%	Ukrainians 2.08%	Ukrainians 2.02%
Tatars 2.19%	Tatars 2.13%	Uzbeks 2.02%	Germans 2.36%	Uighurs 1.4%	Uighurs 1.51%
Uzbeks 1.62%	Uzbeks 1.79%	Tatars 1.99%	Tatars 1.66%	Tatars 1.28%	Germans 1.18%
Belarusians 1.54%	Belarusians 1.24%	Uighurs 1.13%	Uighurs 1.41%	Germans 1.11%	Tatars 1.14%
Uighurs 0.94%	Uighurs 1.01%	Belarusians 1.11%	Belarusians 0.75%	Koreans 0.63%	Azerbaijanis 0.76%
Koreans 0.61%	Koreans 0.63%	Koreans 0.63%	Koreans 0.67%	Turks 0.61%	Koreans 0.62%
Poles 0.48%	Azerbaijanis 0.5%	Azerbaijanis 0.55%	Azerbaijanis 0.52%	Azerbaijanis 0.53%	Turks 0.45%
Azerbaijanis 0.44%	Poles 0.42%	Poles 0.36%	Turks 0.51%	Belarusians 0.42%	Dungans 0.41%
Greeks 0.31%	Greeks 0.34%	Chechens 0.3%	Poles 0.32%	Dungans 0.32%	Belarusians 0.4%
Chechens 0.27%	Chechens 0.26%	Turks 0.3%	Dungans 0.25%	Kurds 0.24%	Tajiks 0.26%
Mordovians 0.27%	Bashkirs 0.22%	Greeks 0.28%	Kurds 0.22%	Tajiks 0.23%	Kurds 0.25%
Jews 0.21%	Mordovians 0.21%	Bashkirs 0.25%	Chechens 0.21%	Poles 0.21%	Poles 0.18%
Moldavians 0.2%	Moldavians 0.21%	Moldavians 0.2%	Tajiks 0.17%	Chechens 0.2%	Kyrgyz 0.18%
Chuvashs 0.18%	Turks 0.18%	Mordovians 0.18%	Bashkirs 0.16%	Kyrgyz 0.15%	Chechens 0.17%
Bashkirs 0.16%	Jews 0.16%	Dungans 0.18%	Moldavians 0.13%	Bashkirs 0.11%	Bashkirs 0.09%

Source: compiled by the authors based on Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1999, 2009, 2021). Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1999, 2009, 2021).

In general, the ethnic picture of Kazakhstan from 1970 to 2020 has changed as follows. In 1970, more than 1% of the population of the Kazakh SSR consisted of the following peoples: Russians 42.42%; Kazakhs 32.39%; Ukrainians 7.24%; Germans 6.53%; Tatars 2.19%; Uzbeks 1.62%; Belarusians 1.54%. According to the last census, more than 1% of the population of Kazakhstan is the following peoples: Kazakhs 70.35%; Russians 15.54%; Uzbeks 3.2%; Ukra-

inians 2.02%; Uighurs 1.51%; Germans 1.18%; Tatars 1.14%. Thus, among the most widespread peoples of Kazakhstan in 1970, only two ethnoses, the Kazakhs and Uzbeks themselves, belonged to the Asian group. Therewith, Belarusians have disappeared from the list of the most widespread peoples of Kazakhstan and currently occupy only the twelfth position.

The reason for the decline in the number of European ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during the years of independence is the mass migration of their representatives, the peak of which fell during the economically difficult 1990s and the first years of the 21st century. It was connected with the difficulty of adaptation of representatives of European ethnoses to the new conditions in independent Kazakhstan, which began to establish its national policy. In addition, representatives of European ethnoses took the opportunity to move to their historical homeland, if such an opportunity presented itself. Notably, the dominance of European ethnicities in Kazakhstan in the second half of the 20th century is conditioned upon the economic and demographic policies pursued by the Soviet authorities. In particular, in the 1950s-60s, people from different parts of the USSR arrived *en masse* in Kazakhstan to develop virgin lands, located mainly in the north of Kazakhstan. It was then that the number of European ethnic groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, who came to Kazakhstan *en masse*, increased dramatically. In addition, the labour of deported people was used in Kazakhstan. It was as a result of mass deportations in Kazakhstan during World War II and the post-war period that large German and Crimean Tatar diasporas emerged (Davletova, 2023).

Several factors may be the reasons for the growing number of Asian ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, including the titular ethnic group – the Kazakhs. First of all, it is the factor of migration. Since the beginning of independence, the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan has pursued a policy of supporting the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs to their historical homeland. Until 2021, repatriates in Kazakhstan were called Oralmans, and since 2021 the term Kandas (ethnic Kazakhs who moved to Kazakhstan permanently during the years of independence) has been used. In 2008, a particular state programme “Nurly Kosh” was approved to promote the integration of Kandas into Kazakh society and their social support. A significant number of Kandas have arrived in Kazakhstan from neighbouring countries such as Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, and China. While those Kandas who come to Kazakhstan from other post-Soviet countries find it relatively easy to adapt to Kazakhstani realities, Kandas from countries such as Mongolia and China find it difficult to adapt (Diener, 2005).

In addition to migration, another reason for population growth among Asian ethnic groups in Kazakhstan is the higher birth rate than among European ethnic groups. In general, since the 1990s, there has been a decline in birth rates among Europeans, and this phenomenon, conditioned upon both social and economic reasons, has occurred both in Kazakhstan and in many European countries that are considered to be quite prosperous. Therewith, religious traditions and the influence of society and the family contributed to the increase in birth rate among Asian peoples. It caused an increase in the number of both Kazakhs and ethnic groups such as Uzbeks and Uyghurs. From Kazakhstan’s independence to the present, the proportion of the urban population has increased from 57.2% in the 1989 census to 61.2% today. The acceleration of urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan fell in the 2010s, while in the 1990s and 2000s, the opposite process was observed. According to the 1999 census, the share of the urban population was 56.3%, while according to the 2009 census, it was 54%. The share of Kazakhs among the urban population has increased significantly since indepen-

dence. Thus, in the first years of independence, the share of the titular ethnic group among the urban population increased from 38% to 45% (Bureau of National Statistics, 1999, 2009, 2021).

At the time of independence, Kazakhstan had only one city of one million people—Almaty, the then capital of Kazakhstan. Nowadays, the population of three cities: Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent has exceeded one million people. All three cities have the status of cities of republican significance. At the time of independence, the majority of the population in Almaty and Astana (then Tselinograd) were ethnic Russians. Currently, in all the cities with a million inhabitants, the majority of the population is ethnic Kazakh. Astana has the highest percentage of Kazakhs at 81.39%, Shymkent has 70.31% ethnic Kazakhs, and Almaty has 63.35% ethnic Kazakhs. In addition, Almaty has a fairly large number of Russians with 20.48%, while in Shymkent the second largest ethnicity is Uzbeks (Bureau of National Statistics, 2021).

Thus, in Kazakhstan from 1970 to 2020 there were significant changes in the ethnic composition of the country's population. The number of Kazakhs increased sharply, from the second largest ethnic group to the overwhelming majority of Kazakhstan's population. The number of other Asian peoples, such as Uzbeks and Uighurs, increased. Therewith, the share of European ethnic groups – Russians, Ukrainians and Germans – has sharply decreased. Kazakhs now constitute the majority of Kazakhstan's urban population. In the 2010s, Kazakhstan accelerated the process of urbanisation, which had stopped in the first twenty years of independence. The main share of urbanisation falls on the cities of republican significance—Astana, Almaty and Shymkent.

Discussion

Various researchers have devoted their works to the analysis of ethno-demographic and urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan, their causes, and consequences. Scientists have analysed the picture of changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan that occurred in the 20th century and the early 21st century, identifying the factors that may have influenced these changes. In particular, Davletova (2023), referring to the increase in the number of European ethnic groups in Kazakhstan in the mid-20th century, points to the mass deportation of people to the territory of Kazakhstan in the 1940s. The author emphasises the harsh conditions under which the special settlers were forced to work, most of whom died in the first years of deportation. The special resettlers of German origin were officially forbidden to hold leading party and economic jobs. This rule even applied to members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). A significant part of the deported people was resettled in Kazakhstan only because they lived in the border territories of the USSR. Thus, in Kazakhstan appeared Turks and Kurds, who lived in the South Caucasus near the Soviet-Iranian border. The researcher emphasises the fact that as a result of the policy Kazakhstan was forced to become a new homeland for these people and the ethnic Kazakhs themselves often helped them, which helped the special settlers to adapt to the new harsh conditions.

“Due to the broad Kazakh soul, mercy and compassion thousands of deportees were able to survive and leave behind their descendants” (Davletova, 2023). One cannot but agree with the author's opinion regarding the issue of adaptation of representatives of deported ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. Due to the friendly attitude of the local Kazakh population to the special settlers and understanding of their difficult fate, representatives of the deported

peoples were able to integrate into Kazakh society. As a result, for example, there is still a large German diaspora in Kazakhstan. A particular number of studies of ethno-demographic processes in Kazakhstan are devoted to the increase in the Kazakh population during the years of independence at the expense of the Kandas. Some scholars discuss the problems faced by the Kandas after their repatriation to their historical homeland. For example, Diener (2005) discusses the problems of adaptation of Kandas from Mongolia, and Sadovskaya (2008) discuss the migration of ethnic Kazakhs to Kazakhstan from China. The authors emphasise that, being in conditions different from those of the post-Soviet space, Kandas from Mongolia and China initially faced difficulties after resettlement in Kazakhstan. One of the specifics was that migrants from Mongolia and China did not speak Russian, and in Kazakhstan itself, they could be perceived as foreigners.

Sauran and Naimanbayev (2022) discuss the growth of fertility among Asian ethnic groups as opposed to European ethnic groups as a reason for the change in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan. These scientists, in particular, noted that the population of the southern regions of Kazakhstan during the years of independence increased faster than that of the northern regions. Such a phenomenon is precisely as initially the south was dominated by Asian populations, while the north was dominated by European ethnicities during the Soviet era (Komilova et al., 2021). "The southern regions are mainly populated by Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Uighurs, which gives a higher birth rate due to the historically established traditions of fertility and many children," the authors of the research claim. In addition, Kan (2012) discusses the specific features of fertility rates among different ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. The author emphasises that while the birth rate among the European ethnic groups of Kazakhstan continued to decline, among the representatives of Asian ethnic groups it, on the contrary, increased. This phenomenon eventually led to the numerical dominance of the titular ethnic group in modern Kazakhstan. The analysis of statistical data allows agreeing with the majority of the theses of the mentioned researchers concerning the reasons for striking changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan in recent years. Therewith, each scientist sees some main reason for the changes, be it migration, different birth rates among representatives of different ethnic groups, or economic or political factors. It is hardly necessary to give predominant significance to any of the factors. Each phenomenon has had a complex impact on ethno-demographic shifts in Kazakhstan in recent years.

The problems of external migration in Kazakhstan and the uneven urbanisation of the country are discussed by Chulanova (2021). The author emphasises that the strongest outflow of population from Kazakhstan was observed in the 1990s. However, in the first years of the 21st century, due to economic stabilisation and subsequent economic growth in Kazakhstan, the migration of the population went into a significant decline. Subsequently, migration continued mainly from the northern regions of Kazakhstan, where the European population was dominant (Patynska-Popeta and Zinchuk, 2022). Speaking about the migration of ethnic Kazakhs, the researcher states that they primarily migrated within the country: from small towns and villages to large cities where the economy continued to boom, which contributed to the growth of urbanisation in the 2010s. The transfer of Kazakhstan's capital from Almaty to Astana contributed to the transformation of the once-provincial Tselinograd into a city of millions.

Among the researchers who have explored urbanisation processes in Kazakhstan in recent years can be mentioned Seitz (2021), who highlights the uneven growth of different Ka-

zakhstani cities, and the slow process of urban population growth. Among the reasons for slow urbanisation in Kazakhstan, the researcher names the high cost of housing and the underdeveloped rental market in Kazakhstani cities (Shalbolova et al., 2021). The author believes that limited opportunities to buy or rent housing in cities for the majority of Kazakhstani citizens significantly hinder both the increase in the urban population and the development of the economy in Kazakhstan's cities. Speaking about the specific features of urbanisation in modern Kazakhstan, scientists frequently consider them to have economic causes. Without denying this assertion, national policy towards cities, which directly affects the nature of urbanisation processes, is important (Stepanchuk et al., 2017). Such political decisions as the transfer of the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana, and granting the city of Shymkent the status of a city of republican significance directly influenced a significant increase in the population of these two cities.

This research, considering the comparison of census data from different years, allows asserting that some changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan's population and the ratio of rural to urban population are linked to the economic and political realities of a specific historical period. The Soviet years established the conditions for European ethnic groups to migrate to Kazakhstan, while in the first years of independence, a significant part of their representatives wished to return to their historical homeland (Kovács, 2022). Therewith, the years of independence established favourable conditions for ethnic Kazakhs to migrate to their historical homeland. The economic difficulties experienced by the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 1990s, along with other post-Soviet states, delayed the process of urbanisation, while the economic recovery of the 2000s and 2010s again intensified the urbanisation process. In addition, such circumstances contributed to the migration of ethnic Kazakhs to large cities, which caused the dominance of the titular ethnic group among the urban population of Kazakhstan.

Conclusions

As a result of the conducted research, the following conclusions were reached. From 1970-2020, the ethnic picture of Kazakhstan has changed significantly. Even before 1989, the titular ethnos—Kazakhs—did not constitute the majority of Kazakhstan's population, but were only the second largest nation, conceding the first position to Russians. More than half of Kazakhstan's population was composed of European ethnoses: Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, and Belarusians. During the years of independence, the percentage ratio changed sharply in favour of Asian ethnic groups: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Uighurs. Today, more than three-quarters of the population of Kazakhstan are Asian ethnicities, and the overwhelming majority of the population are ethnic Kazakhs—more than 70%. Kazakhs have become the majority of Kazakhstan's urban population. Urbanisation processes, which were delayed in the crisis years of the 1990s and early 2000s, have revived again in the last decade.

The reasons for such striking ethno-demographic changes in Kazakhstan in recent years are political and economic circumstances. The proclamation of Kazakhstan's independence the beginning of nation-state development, and the economic difficulties of the first years of independence stimulated mass migration of representatives of European ethnic groups to their historical homelands. Therewith, state support for the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs facilitated their migration to Kazakhstan from other countries, resulting in the emergence of a group of Kandas. Based on the fact that European ethnic groups live predominantly in the

northern regions of Kazakhstan, the process of urbanisation in the cities of these regions has noticeably stagnated. In addition, the cities of national importance—Astana, Almaty and Shymkent—continue to grow, where, among others, ethnic Kazakhs from villages and small towns are moving to, thus increasing the share of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan's urban population. Despite the significant number of publications, there has not yet been a specific analysis of the population censuses that occurred during these 50 years in terms of gradual changes in the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan and related urbanisation and desurbanisation processes. This fact determines the scientific originality of this research. The materials of the research can be useful in further studies of the demographic history of Kazakhstan, which determines its practical significance.

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