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## Kazak

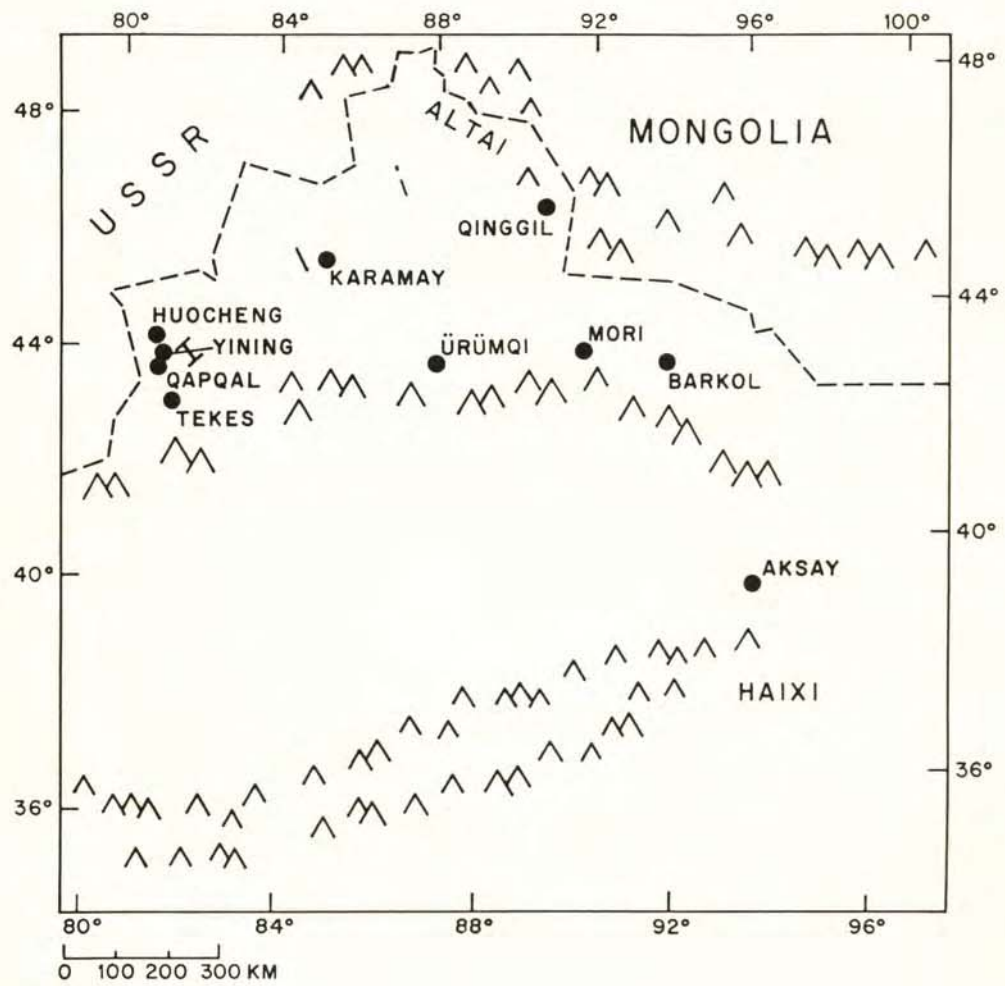
### Size and Location

Numbering 907,582 in the census of 1982,<sup>1</sup> the Kazaks 哈萨克 of China live principally in Xinjiang, most notably in the autonomous prefecture of Ili, the autonomous counties of Möri and Barkol and in Ürümqi county. Smaller groups of Kazaks are found in the Aksay Kazak autonomous county in western Gansu province and in the Haixi Mongol, Tibetan and Kazak autonomous prefecture of Qinghai province (see Map 2).

### History<sup>2</sup>

The historical roots of the Kazak nationality may reach back as far as the second century B.C., the time when the first of several Chinese envoys visited the Wusun as part of an abortive attempt by the Han dynasty to forge an alliance with the Wusun against the Xiongnu. From 161 B.C. until around 500 A.D. the Wusun led a federation which included the Saizhong 塞种 (Sakya) and Yuezhi 月氏 tribes who are considered today as the Kazaks' progenitors. They lived in the area between the Ili valley and Issyk Kul (Hot Lake).

When the Turks rose in the mid-sixth century and created their huge steppe federation, they incorporated the Wusun and many other previous groups. The Kazaks' ancestors remained in their homeland where, over the following six centuries, they would encounter and to some degree mingle with several invading forces. From the tenth to twelfth centuries it was the Uigurs



Map 2. Kazak

and Karluks who established their Karakhanid state, in the twelfth century the Kidans under the leadership of Yelü Dashi who found a refuge in the area between the Ili and Lake Balkash where they established their Karakitai state, and finally the Mongols, particularly the Kereits and Naimans, who entered that region in the early thirteenth century.

When Chinggis Khan started his western campaign in 1219, the proto-Kazaks once again came under a new leadership. They were enlisted as soldiers and moved westward with the Mongol armies and later, after the campaign, resettled over a wide area of West Asia. Their grazing areas stretched across the dividing line between the Kipchak (Golden Horde) and Jagatai khanates. In the 1460s some of the herders on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya wished to break away from the oppressive rule of Uzbek Khan. They fled eastward to their original homeland in the Chu River valley south of Lake Balkash. As a consequence of this move, they became known as Kazak which means 'the breakaways' or 'secessionists.' Over a period of time, they intermingled with the Uzbeks to the south and the Mongols of the Dughlat khanate. Prosperity caused their population to increase, and eventually they expanded their area to the vast plains northwest of Lake Balkash and south to the Talas River valley, to Tashkent, Andijan and Samarkand. During this process the Kazaks formed a new, distinct nationality, and by the end of the sixteenth century they divided into three hordes (*jüz*, or tribal federations): Ule (Big), Orta (Middle), and Qishi (Little). Qing records referred to them as Right, Left, and West, respectively. The Orta horde was the strongest and most populous, and the genealogies of its clans are the most complete.<sup>3</sup>

In the late seventeenth century the Jungars, the most powerful of the four Western Mongol (Oirat) tribes, living in the area of modern Northern Xinjiang, rose to power. In the 1670s their leader, Galdan, expanded to Southern Xinjiang and Qinghai and westward into the regions of the Kazaks and Kirgiz, forcing them to abandon their homelands. The Kazaks suffered greatly under the Jungars, particularly after 1723 when the latter devastated the Kazak area in the Talas river valley. The ensuing sufferings of the Kazaks is commemorated in their oral history as the 'era of catastrophe.' The Jungar yoke was lifted from them in 1755-57 when the Qing dynasty in a huge expedition invaded the Jungars' homeland and annihilated them.

Soon a portion of the Kazaks moved east to occupy the territory formerly belonging to the Jungars. They settled in the pastures of the Altai, Qoqek (Tacheng), and Yining districts. Each summer and fall they attended the trade fairs in Ürümqi, Qoqek, Kobdo, and Yining where they traded animals and animal products for tea, cloth, wheat and other commodities.

Starting in mid-eighteenth century, Russian control gradually extended to the region of Lake Balkash, and the bulk of the Kazak population which lived there came under Russian jurisdiction. With the eventual consolidation of the



Sino-Russian frontier in the nineteenth century, Kazaks of the Middle, Little and western part of the Big Horde became separated from the Kazaks of the eastern part of the Big Horde who had settled in modern Xinjiang. Later some of the latter Kazaks moved to the Caidam Basin and Qinghai province.

#### Language and Literature<sup>4</sup>

The Kazak language belongs to the Kipchak branch of the Turkic group of the Altaic family of languages. It is related to Uigur, Salar, Western Yugur, and Uzbek but is especially close to Kirgiz and Tatar. It is a relatively uniform language, without any major dialectal differences, so that Kazaks from different places have no difficulty in conversing with one another. What dialectal differences there are, are based on tribal divisions. The southwestern dialect is spoken in the counties of Tekes, Yining (Gulja) and Huocheng as well as the Qapqal Sibe autonomous county, all of which are located in the Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture. There the Alban and Suwan tribes reside. The northeastern dialect is spoken in other parts of this prefecture as well as in Möri, Barkol, and Aksay.

The Kazak language consists of nine vowels, as follows:<sup>5</sup>

<u>a</u> as in <u>ana</u> 'mother'	<u>o</u> as in <u>ortaq</u> 'common'
<u>æ</u> as in <u>æl</u> 'strength'	<u>u</u> as in <u>ul</u> 'son'
<u>e</u> as in <u>el</u> 'people'	<u>ó</u> as in <u>óte</u> 'very'
<u>ε</u> as in <u>εs</u> 'smoke'	<u>y</u> as in <u>yj</u> 'house, home'
<u>i</u> as in <u>iri</u> 'big, large'	

The twenty-four consonants are:

<u>b</u> as in <u>bel</u> 'waist'	<u>ɣ</u> as in <u>ɣaser</u> 'century'
<u>w</u> as in <u>waqt</u> 'time'	<u>l</u> as in <u>laq</u> 'goat'
<u>v</u> as in <u>vokzal</u> 'train station'	<u>n</u> as in <u>nar</u> 'dromedary'
<u>g</u> as in <u>gyl</u> 'flower'	<u>m</u> as in <u>mal</u> 'cattle'
<u>dʒ</u> as in <u>dʒas</u> 'youth, age'	<u>s</u> as in <u>sarε</u> 'yellow'
<u>d</u> as in <u>dala</u> 'open country'	<u>ʃ</u> as in <u>ʃaʃ</u> 'hair'
<u>r</u> as in <u>raqmet</u> 'thank you'	<u>k</u> as in <u>kisi</u> 'person'
<u>z</u> as in <u>zil</u> 'weight'	<u>q</u> as in <u>qabɹ</u> 'grave'
<u>ɳ</u> as in <u>dʒɳɳ</u> 'sleeve'	<u>tʃ</u> as in <u>tʃempion</u> 'champion'
<u>j</u> as in <u>dʒajlaw</u> 'summer pasture'	<u>x</u> as in <u>xaleq</u> 'people'
<u>p</u> as in <u>pajda</u> 'benefit'	<u>h</u> as in <u>qaharman</u> 'hero'
<u>t</u> as in <u>tas</u> 'stone'	<u>f</u> as in <u>feberal</u> 'February'

The consonants tʃ, v, ʃ are used only for foreign loan words.

Stress is almost always on the last syllable of simple and compound words,

Table 4  
KAZAK SCRIPTS



but not on suffixes. For example, temir 'iron,' temir/i 'blacksmith' but temirimin 'I am a blacksmith'.

A large number of loan words are from Russian or from other European languages, as transmitted through Russian. Examples include gazel 'newspaper', džornal 'magazine', radijo 'radio', and zawat 'factory.' Many other loan words come from Chinese, like čaj 'tea' and saj 'vegetable'. There are also some words derived from Persian and Mongolian, like mādenijet 'culture' and qunadžen (< guna-a) 'three-year old cow', respectively.

The Kazaks of Xinjiang have currently two scripts (see Table 4).<sup>6</sup> The older one is based on the Arabic alphabet which was adopted during the second half of the nineteenth century. The famous Kazak poet Abai (1845-1904) and certain publications, such as Dala walayeti (Grasslands) and Ayghap (Cry Out) did much to popularize this script. Shortly after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 the Russians reformed the Kazak Arabic script and, for a second time, in 1924. These two reforms were also adopted by the Kazaks in Xinjiang. In 1965 the central government of China introduced a Latin script for the Kazaks, and some books and journals were published in that script. Because of low popularity and other reasons, the Latin script was shelved in favor of the Arabic script in 1982.

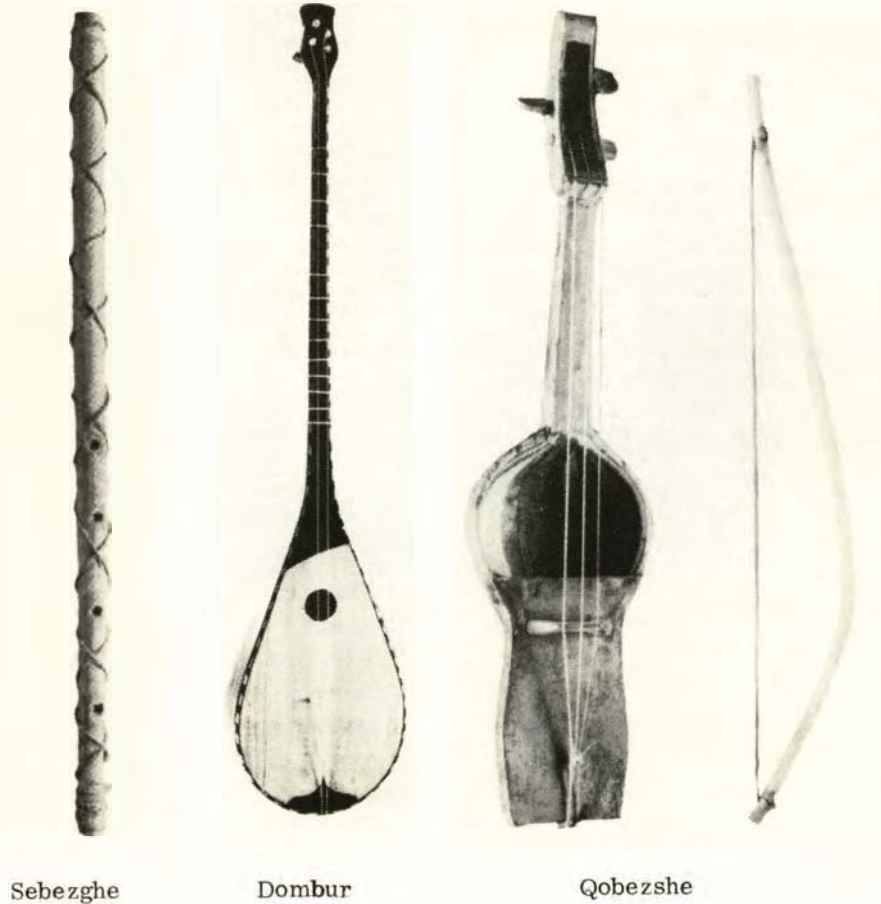
The Kazaks of Xinjiang have a rich oral history which includes many literary genres such as fables, riddles, poems, legends, and epics. Especially popular are stories about the adventures of Hoja Nasir which are similar to stories about the effendi circulating among the Uigurs and other neighboring nationalities. Like the Mongol badarch, the Kazak agen used to be a popular figure in herding camps where he would recite stories and sing poems. His favorite instrument was the two-stringed dombra (Illus. 4). The tradition of the agen has all but died out, and his activities now seem to be confined to stage performances and radio programs.

The dean of the contemporary Kazak literary community in Xinjiang is the sixty-year old Qurban Ali whose poems have been published in Xinjiang and, in Chinese translation, in Beijing and elsewhere in China. One of the youngest writers is Akbar Mijit, born in 1954 and currently working in the Party committee for the Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture. His short stories generally deal with contemporary themes. Several local literary organs and the magazine Shughila (Dawn), published monthly in Ürümqi, serve as platforms from which many budding Kazak poets and writers hope to launch their literary careers. The only Kazak intellectual journal is Ghilmy maqalar jynaghi (Collections of Articles), published by Xinjiang University.

### Society<sup>7</sup>

Traditional Kazak society was organized into a number of tribes, each of which contained several clans and individual families. The largest tribe was the

*Kazak*



Illus. 4. Kazak Musical Instruments

Kereit, followed by Naiman, Kezai, Alban and Suwan. While today families are monogamous, in the past Islam allowed up to four wives. There was, of course, a direct relationship between wealth and the number of wives because the higher the bride price, the fewer wives a man could afford to marry. Marriages were entirely arranged and required a minimum of twenty to thirty animals as bride price. The richer herders would often hand over more than 100 animals. In poor families no bride price was paid. When a man died, his wife or wives were taken over by his brothers. This system was known as ämënggër.

As in most other traditional societies, the eldest male in a family was the head, while wives obeyed their husbands and children obeyed their fathers. When



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a man married, he received a part of his family's property, then left and established his own home. Children stayed close to their parents in the home and, during summer, they all moved out to summer pasture where they set up clusters of three to five tents, known as awel, quite similar to the Mongolian ail, which was the smallest social unit.

Kazaks live in round felt tents call üy during the summer and in adobe houses with flat roofs during winter.<sup>8</sup> Felt tents have a roof with a smoke hole in the center. When building it, Kazaks first erect a framework of red willow covered with splendid achnatherum and felt on the outside. Tents of richer families sport red or multi-colored embroidery on their roofs. Furnishings are arranged according to a definite pattern. The door faces east. Sleeping accommodations are in the far left and right, with clothes trunks and saddles at the foot and a seat cushion in front of the trunk which is the seat of honor for guests. To the immediate left and right of the door are found horse utensils, hunting equipment, cooking utensils, and food. During inclement weather young animals are tethered inside the door.

On the pastures Kazaks live largely off their herds. A variety of dairy products, like yoghurt, milk skin, cheese, and butter are extremely popular. They are made from both cows and sheep. The meat most commonly eaten is mutton, usually large chunks eaten with the hands. It is a Kazak custom to slaughter animals during the late autumn festival and then to cure the meat by smoking it. Enough meat is stored in this fashion to last through the long winter. A favorite winter staple is horse meat sausage which can be preserved for long periods.

In late spring herders ladle fresh mare's milk into shaba, large flasks made of horse hide. The milk is then constantly agitated until fermented. This beverage, which is identical to the Mongolian airag, is the favorite summer drink. In addition, there are a variety of foods made of rice and cereals, like bawersaq, a dough deepfried in sheep butter. Due to the environment, Kazaks hardly eat any vegetables.

Kazak clothing is characterized by long sleeves, with considerable variations between different locations and tribes. In winter, men wear an unlined sheepskin overcoat. The more well-to-do also wear a küpi, a coat made of camel hair, which is held together by a cloth belt with gold embroidery and from which a small knife is suspended on the right side. Women wear dresses, preferably of red material. Girls like to wear embroidered leggings and silver ornaments which jingle when the girls walk. The Kazaks in the Altai region wear three-cornered hats in winter, while those in the Ili region wear round hats. Both kinds are made of lambskin. In the past girls wore colorful hats with tassels made of owl feathers. Married women wear white cloth scarves which reach down to the heels and are richly embroidered in red and yellow colors. Both men and women wear boots, and in winter also felt stockings (Illustration 5).



*Kazak*



Illus. 5. Kazak Costumes

Recent Developments<sup>9</sup>

After the Guomindang garrison command of Xinjiang surrendered to the Communists in September 1949, resistance against the new Chinese rulers continued in various parts of the province. The fiercest resistance in the early 1950s was offered by the Kazaks who under the leadership of Ozman Beg fought until their defeat in 1954. The survivors, more than 25,000, were resettled in Qinggil (Qinghe), Koktokay (Fuyun), and Burultokay (Fuhai) counties in the Altay district.

All autonomous areas for the Kazakhs were created during the year 1954, as follows: the Haixi Tibetan, Mongol and Kazak autonomous prefecture in Qinghai on January 25, the Aksay Kazak autonomous county in Gansu on April 27, and after the Kazak resistance in Xinjiang had been broken, the Möri autonomous county on July 17, Barkol autonomous county on September 30, and finally the largest area, the Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture on November 27.

One of the first goals was the settling of the Kazak nomads which was basically achieved by the end of the 1950s. Industrial development has gone apace, especially in the Ili prefecture where the two largest enterprises are the oil fields at Karamay and the iron and steel plant on the Gongnais plains. In addition, there are plants for the manufacture of leather goods, wool spinning, vegetable oil, chemical fertilizer, and coke.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80. In 1978 the Kazaks in China numbered 800,000 (Zhongguo, 195) and in 1958 568,000 (Jiankuang, v. 4, 1).

<sup>2</sup>Historical information is largely based on Zhongguo, 204-205.

<sup>3</sup>Zhongguo, 199.

<sup>4</sup>General linguistic information is adapted from Gelajden.

<sup>5</sup>Transcription of words illustrating vowels and consonants is according to Li and Nurbek, 64-65.

<sup>6</sup>Information on the Kazak script is based on Geng 1980, 75-76.

<sup>7</sup>The section on society is largely taken from Zhongguo, 196-197.

<sup>8</sup>The best source on Kazak housing is Mukanov.

<sup>9</sup>Information on recent developments can be found in Zhongguo, 206.