



## The Korean Diaspora of the Republic of Karakalpakstan

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### **Abstract**

The promotion of interethnic harmony plays a crucial role in fostering socio-economic growth within a society, as it ensures that the rights and interests of all individuals, irrespective of their nationality, are legally protected. Presently, due to the implementation of the state policy pertaining to inter-ethnic relations, favorable circumstances have been established to facilitate the educational pursuits of individuals belonging to various ethnicities in their respective native languages. This inclusive approach aims to enable individuals to fully harness their capabilities and actively participate in the advancement of our shared homeland. This article examines the involvement of representatives from the Korean nation within the national framework of the Republic of Karakalpakstan during the period of independence. It explores their geographical distribution, conducts a year-by-year analysis of their activities, and evaluates the significance of the Korean National Cultural Center in fostering inter-ethnic relations.

**Keywords:** *Korean Nation; Korean National Cultural Center; Interethnic Harmony; Society; National Framework; Homeland; Geographical Distribution*

### **Introduction**

An imperative issue in the field of interethnic relations is the examination of the historical settlement of minority ethnic groups residing in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, including their distinctive characteristics and role in the socioeconomic and political fabric of the republic.

Politically, economically, and socially, the Korean diaspora residing in the Republic of Karakalpakstan occupies a unique position. Tens of thousands of Koreans were forcibly relocated from the Far East to Uzbekistan during the 1930s of the 20th century. Upon the Koreans' initial days in the republic, the indigenous populace extended a wide array of material and moral assistance. Culturally and historically significant Koreans have established themselves in this region, where they coexist harmoniously with representatives of other countries and engage in productive labor. Thousands of Korean diaspora members participate actively in every aspect of the country's social and political activity.

As of January 1, 2020, the Republic of Karakalpakstan is inhabited by 6,313 individuals of Korean nationality, constituting 0.33% of the overall populace. Since the initial year of 2020, when the

country achieved independence in 1991, the population has decreased from 8,993 Koreans in 1991 to 2,680 [1].

The location of representatives of Korean nationality in 16 districts and city of Nukus of the Republic of Karakalpakstan in 2012–2019 can be seen in the following table (Table 1) [2]:

Table 1  
The location of representatives of the Korean nationality in 16 districts and city of Nukus of the Republic of Karakalpakstan in 2012–2019

The names of the areas:	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Nukus city	5541	5521	5469	5427	5375	5333	5289	5256
Takhiatosh*	208					167	136	133
Amudarya	13	12	12	12	12	11	10	19
Beruniy	74	73	71	72	71	69	69	60
Konlikul	85	84	83	83	82	82	82	82
Korauzak	68	68	68	67	66	65	65	65
Kegeyli	115	114	112	111	108	106	106	87
Kungirat	93	84	81	71	70	63	73	72
Muynak	81	79	79	79	80	80	81	81
Nukus district	48	44	43	46	47	47	49	44
Takhtakupir	83	81	80	79	79	79	78	78
Turtkul	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
Khojayli	289	449	410	374	343	137	131	124
Chimboy	117	118	116	117	116	117	115	116
Shumanay	76	75	75	74	74	74	75	75
Ellikkala	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buzatov*								18
In total:	6892	6802	6699	6612	6526	6433	6362	6313

\*Note: in 2017, “Keneges”, “Saraykol” and “Naymankol” neighborhoods of Khojayli district were attached to the territory of Takhiatosh city, and Takhiatosh district was reorganized.

\*Note: Buzatov district was attached to Kegeyli and Chimboy districts in 2004. In 2019, the Buzatov district was reorganized, uniting the territories of the Kegeyli district “Kuskanatov”, “Erkindarya”, “Aspantay” villages, “Buzatov” town and “Kok–suv” village of the Chimboy district.

The districts of Nukus, Khojayli, Takhiatosh, Chimboy, Kegeyli, Konlikul, Muynak, Takhtakupir, Shumanay, Kungirat, Karauzak, and Beruniy contain the greatest proportion of Koreans in terms of territorial location, whereas the number is relatively low in the remaining districts. The data indicates a decline in the proportion of Korean nationals residing in the cities and districts of Nukus with respect to population growth over time. This procedure pertained primarily to the socio-economic challenges that arose throughout the transitional phase. The lack of proficiency in foreign languages, particularly English and computers, as well as environmental and water scarcity issues stemming from the drying up of the Aral Sea, further compounded the challenges faced by the Koreans. Agriculture–engaged Koreans travel to various regions of Russia and Kazakhstan on a temporary basis; the majority of these individuals eventually establish permanent residence there [3]. Consequently, migration mechanisms contributed to the decline in the Korean population.

On the basis of ethnic culture, national–cultural centers were established in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, with the primary objectives being the transmission of national traditional programs and the preservation of the national identity and native language of ethnic peoples.

The Association of Korean Cultural Centers of Karakalpakstan Republic was founded in 1990. The establishment of the association was initially authorized by the Nukus City Council of People's Deputies. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Karakalpakstan subsequently registered the Association of Koreans of the Republic of Karakalpakstan on August 11, 1993. The primary objective of the Association of Koreans is to facilitate the expansion of opportunities for the cultural and economic advancement of all Koreans [4].

It incorporated four Korean cultural institutions from its inception: Nukus, Kungiro, Khojayli, and Takhyatosh. Notably elected as the inaugural chairman of the Association of Koreans of Karakalpakstan was Tyugay Aleksey Sendich, a witness and victim of the deportation of Koreans from the Far East. He was honored with the title "Honored Public Education Worker of the Republic of Karakalpakstan" for his significant contributions to the development of the country. Additionally, he was a passionate and inspiring advocate for the revival of Korean spirituality. He collaborated with Pak Leonid Trofimovich (Takhiatosh) to achieve the objectives of the association. The sole Sunday school dedicated to Korean language learning has expanded into a network of educational centers spanning various regions of the republic as a result of their endeavors. Additionally, the "Moranban" artistic and musical ensemble, comprised of gifted young and older individuals who embody the Korean national culture, has been formed. It was commanded by the artist Lim Fedor Sergeevich, who had previously performed military service in Karakalpakstan [5].

In 1937, Koreans were relocated to the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The majority of the 1,383 households that immigrated at that time were fishermen, and the districts of Muynak, Kungirat, and Khojayli were populated by 6,826 individuals. They significantly contributed to the progress of the area, particularly in the realm of rice cultivation. The breeders developed early-ripening Avangard and Nukus-2 rice varieties, which resulted in the cultivation of abundant crops. Kungiro district has rice cultivation institutions established by seasoned farmers; Korauzak district has Kim Victor, Pak Guk, He Nam, and Lee Chun; Konlikol district has Kim Bon and Kim Moisey; and Chimboy district has Kim Victor [6]. During that era, the Korean people contributed significantly to the advancement of science and education, medicine, construction, and other sectors of the national economy, in addition to agriculture.

Educational institutions, the Institute of Asian Culture and Development (Seoul), the Foundation of Koreans Abroad, which is under the auspices of the South Korean government, and KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) all contribute to Karakalpakstan's social, humanitarian, and language initiatives. Citizens of Karakalpakstan travel to Korea with their assistance, annually internships are organized, outstanding students are transferred to Korean higher education institutions, scholarships are awarded to outstanding students, computer room networks are expanded, and educational institutions are outfitted with technological equipment.

Under the direction of Kim Ki Ho, the representative office of the Asian Culture and Development Institute in Karakalpakstan donated twenty computers to the Berdak-named Karakalpak State University in 2000. Volunteer Kim Ki-ho's instruction and facilitation of exercises and lessons piqued the interest and engagement of the young pupils. The Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) offers substantial assistance to Karakalpakstan. Since 1996, a language center has been operational at Karakalpak State University with the assistance of the agency; additionally, a computer laboratory was inaugurated in 2003 [7].

In 37 schools, Korean language courses were subsequently established. Under the auspices of the Association of Korean Cultural Centers, a Korean language course was established in 2004. Representatives of other countries residing in the republic joined the Korean diaspora attendees. In addition to students and schoolchildren, professionals also attended classes here. An annual interregional festival celebrating Korean language and culture is organized with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea

in the Republic of Uzbekistan and Korean language instructors from the Khorezm and Karakalpakstan regions [8] in support of language promotion.

Present day Uzbekistan is home to over 180,000 Korean diaspora members who have integrated themselves into our multinational society. The Association of Korean Cultural Centers maintains branches throughout the world. The association is actively engaged in the preservation and advancement of the Korean language, culture, traditions, and customs both domestically and internationally. Commemorating the eightyth anniversary of the Korean occupation in Uzbekistan, a memorial monument was inaugurated in Tashkent's Dostlik Park in 2017. A thoroughfare in the heart of Tashkent was given the name Seoul. To preserve and advance the spiritual, educational, and cultural heritage of the Korean people, the government of the Republic of Korea constructed the Korean Culture House in Tashkent. This land will serve as an additional symbol of our peoples' eternal affinity.

Over forty–five research institutions in South Korea have formed collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions in our nation. In Tashkent, branches of four universities affiliated with the Republic of Korea have been established.

Additionally, medicine is a significant area of collaboration. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is providing financial and technical assistance to Uzbek specialists in order to enhance their expertise at prominent clinics and centers in South Korea. In exchange, Korean physicians are conducting complementary examinations of Uzbek citizens.

Similar to other nations, the Korean people take great pride in their ancient heritage, customs, and culture. The rationale behind this is that these programs constitute a multi–thousand–year–old heritage that has been transmitted patriarchally.

“I am fortunate to have been born and raised in this country. So, the country from which my navel blood dripped, the beautiful Uzbekistan, is my beloved Motherland. I had the privilege of being born and raised in the vibrant city of Tashkent, and I embarked on a new chapter of my life when I came to Chimboy district as a bride”, – shares the chairman of the Association of Koreans, Marina Aleksandrovna Kogay. During the time of the former union, Koreans had the opportunity to learn new languages, embrace different customs, and explore new programs. Thanks to independence, our country has opened national centers, providing us with opportunities to restore our language, culture, traditions, and programs. Currently, our center is bustling with exciting activities such as language learning, dance, and young creative circles! Every year, we have the privilege of receiving 60–70 applications from individuals eager to join our language learning center. Valery Sergeevich and Lee Erina enthusiastically lead training sessions in the dance club, while Biybinaz Hurmetullaeva, a talented student of KSU, passionately leads the club of young artists “Alye Parusa”. I am proud to lead the “Let's learn Korean” group! Gifted children have a remarkable ability to quickly learn the language. We are fortunate to have a choir called “Ariran” consisting of experienced and talented mothers. The choir has a wonderful group of 16 members, including an experienced member who is 86 years young and a talented young member who is 69 years young. Arslon Najimov and Timofey Svechnikov are the incredibly talented artistic directors of the choir! Kim Alexey and Roman Tsoi are talented members of the choir, and we enthusiastically participate in the annual festival “Uzbekistan–our common home”. This vibrant event showcases the ensemble's captivating concert performances, captivating exhibitions of our rich national culture, and mouthwatering displays of our delicious national dishes. Last year, we had the amazing opportunity to participate in the stage of the festival held in Tashkent and achieved great success by winning several nominations [9].

Koreans are recognized as complete citizens of Uzbekistan and engage avidly in all aspects of the republic's sociopolitical, economic, and cultural existence. Illustratively, they take pride in the following

individuals: Elena Pak, a doctorate holder of the draft commission of the military commissariat of the republic; Lyudmila Hvan, a former department head at Karakalpak State University; Svetlana Son, the director of Khojayli “House of Kindness”; Larisa Kim, a representative of Nukus aero–air communications; and others. These individuals represent not only the Korean national and cultural center, but the entire republic.

On a recurring basis, the Association of Korean Cultural Centers “Sol” of Karakalpakstan observes Korean folk holidays, including “Chusok,” the harvest holiday, and “Tano” in the summer, all of which are calculated according to the solunar calendar. Additionally, the association has organized an initiative wherein South Korean physicians have been donating medical services to the people of Karakalpakstan with the intention of fostering greater amicability between the two nations.

The Association of Korean Cultural Centers’ “Mugumhua” dance ensemble is hardly an ensemble comprised exclusively of Koreans. This is because it comprises individuals of Uzbek, Karakalpak, Tatar, and Russian descent. They perform a variety of dances and recite songs in Spanish, Gypsy, and numerous other languages, in addition to their native tongue [10].

The Korean people manifest their national culture and traditions through a multitude of events, national holidays, and the observance of the Nowruz holiday. The Korean people’s performances hold a significant position in the Navruz festivities. Their distinctive attire, choreography, and melodies leave an indelible mark on individuals.

The Korean population holds a significant position in the republic’s political and socioeconomic existence, as they are an essential component of our multiethnic nation. They have been actively engaged in all aspects of the national economy, contributing significantly to the republic’s continued progress.

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