

Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan: Question of Topical Problems for Minorities in Post-Soviet Space

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Introduction

Kazakhstan is a multinational state. Dozens of nations and ethnic groups living there generate a lot of problems that are both immanently national and part of the system of international relations. Before moving to the presentation and causal-consequential analysis of the actual problems of the Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to make a brief historical inquiry into the pre-history and history of the appearance of Koreans in Kazakhstan and neighboring Central Asian states.

By the beginning of the 20th century, situations of hunger, cruel exploitation by the ruling classes, and the Japanese colonial yoke forced tens of thousands of pauperized Koreans to migrate to Manchuria, the Russian Far East and America. At present the number of Koreans outside Korea constitutes more than 5 million, and the most numerous groups live in China (2 million); the USA (about 1–5 million); Japan (0.7 million) and the former USSR (0.450 million). On the Korean peninsula, which is divided at the 38th parallel, in the two opposing Korean states, there is one common social phenomenon—the absence of a national question. In both North and South Korea, the number of permanently living foreigners is minimal.¹

In total, the number of Koreans who lived in the USSR according to the 1989 Census was 439 thousand, and a great bulk lived in Uzbekistan, Russia and Kazakhstan. The modern demography of the Korean population is characterized by dispersion. This demography is a legacy of the policy of forced migration during the Stalin era, and also by processes of migration and infiltration among the Korean population.

In scientific, public, and political literature, the term “Soviet Koreans” became the most common form of self-appellation and was also adopted in other countries as the most frequently used nomenclature. Upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet republics became sovereign and the need arose for a new name for the Korean

¹ Kim, G. N., *Koreans abroad: Past, Present and Future*, Almaty, 1995, p. 202.

population in the republics. In my opinion, an appropriate term already exists, which is “Koryo Saram.” Up to the present, older generations of Koreans born in the Far East have preserved a form of self-appellation that is an ancient ethnic designation—“Koryo Saram” and “Choson Saram” (i.e. the people of Koryo and the people of Choson). Nowadays, you can often hear the following claim: “We are neither Hanguk Saram nor Choson Saram—we are Koryo Saram.” It is not by accident that the Soviet Korean newspaper “Lenin Kichi” was renamed “Koryo Ilbo.”² Since any historical reconstruction and retrospection assumes an application of the terms of the investigated period, the inevitability of a parallel usage of the terms “Soviet Koreans” and “Koryo Saram” does not require any special explanation.

1. The Studies on Korean Diaspora

The history of the Koryo Saram constitutes an inexhaustible focus for research work, and there is voluminous literature, the quality of which has been determined by factors such as the methods used and the objects studied.³ The interpretations within the historical material also vary widely according to the levels and methods of analysis. The historiography of Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan has established traditions. The main stages in the historical development of Soviet Koreans, which are ethnic processes and areas of material and spiritual culture, their professional performing arts, language and speech behavior, folklore, and school education have received sufficient attention.⁴ However, to date, the majority of scholarly and popular work has remained primarily descriptive in form and mostly general in approach.

Since the end of the 1980s, researchers and those in literary circles, such as writers, playwrights, poets and artists, have taken great interest in the history and culture of the Koryo Saram and have become more and more active. During the last ten years, more books and articles on Koreans were published than during the preceding fifty years. There are causes and explanations for this occurrence. Firstly, Gorbachev’s democratization and *glasnost* opened the eyes of many scholars, provided access to secret archival documents, and made it

² Хан, В. С., “«Мы» и «Они»,” *Известия корееведения Казахстана*, № 6, 1999, с. 103-108.

³ Kim G., “History, Culture and Language of Koryo Saram,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 6, 1993, pp. 125-153; Ким Г. Н., Кинг, Р., *История, культура и язык коре сарам. (Историография и библиография)*, Алматы, 1993; Ким, Г. Н., *Коре Сарам. Историография и библиографии*, Алматы, 2000.

⁴ Ким, Г. Н., “К историографии развития духовной культуры корейцев Казахстана,” in *Вопросы истории и историографии культуры Казахстана*, Алма-Ата, 1987, с. 47-54.

possible for people to publish books and pour out their emotions and facts in newspapers and magazines. Secondly, the productivity of the researchers met the demands of an unprecedented ethnic renaissance. This fed a wave of interest among all the nationalities with regard to their cultural “roots.” Thirdly, Korean cultural centers played a certain organizational role in the cause of studying the history of the Korean diaspora. Fourthly, the South Korean government, research centers, foundations, societies, associations and private persons, stimulated the interest of local researchers by sponsoring the discovery, copying and publishing of archival materials, the publication of books, and invitations to language and scientific conferences in Seoul, as well as other international conferences and seminars.

There still remains much unexplored territory in terms of examining questions along more specific specialist lines with more theoretical pondering about the meaning of the work being done. More specific research on various aspects of the history of the Korean diaspora needs to be done. We need to research more deeply into the foundations of empirical data and the present day life of the diaspora. Furthermore, we must conduct scholarly research, which can serve to form actual goals for the future political, socioeconomic, and ethnic development of the Korean diaspora, and attempt to make prognoses concerning the role of the diaspora in the future development of the multi-ethnic independent states of the former Soviet Union.⁵ Thinking about the future of the Koryo Saram should play a major role in the work being done on the Korean diaspora in the fields of science and culture in the 21st century.

2. The Historical Overview of Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan

The immigration of the Koryo Saram began in the late 1860s and continued in several waves through the mid-1920s. Famine, natural disasters, exploitation, lack of land ownership, and later repression from the Japanese occupation of Korea pushed many people to emigrate from Korea to Russia. Geographical proximity, tolerance of Russian authorities to Korean immigration, availability of farmland, and the opportunity for starting a new life pushed people to migrate to Russia from Korea. In the beginning of the 20th century, Koreans had settled not only in the rural areas of the maritime province, but also in the cities of the Far East and Siberia. In the first decades of Korean immigration, the Koreans lived in

⁵ Ким, Г. Н., Хан, В. С., “Актуальные проблемы и перспективы корейской диаспоры Центральной Азии,” *Известия корееведения Казахстана*, № 6, 1999, с. 27-40.

separate villages, and their daily life, social relations, ethnic culture, and language were exactly the same as in Korea. The October Revolution of 1917 united workers of all ethnic groups with its slogans of justice, freedom, and equal rights for all workers. Koreans largely supported the Soviet cause, with hundreds sacrificing their lives in the war with Japan, believing this would also help lead to the liberation of Korea.⁶

By the 1930s, the Koreans of the Soviet Far East had established their own identity, culture and traditions. In the Far East, there were dozens of Korean agricultural and fishing *kolkhozes*, and Koreans were actively involved in the government and social organizations. Korean traditional culture flourished, the Korean intelligentsia prospered, and Korean radio, theater, educational, and cultural institutions were established. Hundreds of young Koreans were educated in the universities of Moscow, Leningrad, and other big cities of Russia. Koreans were Sovietized and integrated in the new political and socioeconomic system.⁷

The Koreans of the Far East were also the first people of the Soviet Union to be deported, after which the same fate was shared by several of other groups. It is wrong to think that Stalin spontaneously decided to deport the Koreans. On August 21, 1937, by top secret order number 1428-326cc of the Soviet government and Communist Party, the deportation of Koreans in the Far East was signed by Molotov and Stalin, and was a logical continuation of earlier Czarist and Soviet policies relating to national minority populations.⁸ About 100,000 Koreans were resettled in Kazakhstan, mostly on new Korean *kolkhozes*, while others were distributed to pre-existing ones. It was in Kazakhstan that the Korean theatre, the Korean newspaper “Senbong,” the Korean pedagogical institute and college, and deposits of Korean-language books were relocated, which made Kazakhstan the center of Korean intellectual life in the Soviet Union. About 74,000 deportees were sent to Uzbekistan and were evenly divided between new Korean *kolkhozes* and pre-existing Uzbek *kolkhozes*. The Koreans that settled in this new place established the basis for a new life, and contributed to the development of agriculture in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. More than 100 Koreans

⁶ Бабичев, И., *Участие китайских и корейских трудящихся в гражданской войне на Дальнем Востоке*, Ташкент, 1959; Ким, Г. Н., “Октябрьская революция и советские корейцы,” *Известия корееведения Казахстана*, № 4, 1998, с. 83-103; Ким, М., *Корейские интернационалисты в борьбе за власть Советов на Дальнем Востоке, 1918-1922*, М., 1979; Pak, H., *A History of Nationalist Movements among Koreans Residing in Russia*, Seoul, 1995; Hara, Teruyuki, “The Korean Movement in the Russian Maritime Province, 1905-1922,” in Suh, Dae-Sook (ed.), *Koreans in the Soviet Union*, Honolulu, 1987, pp. 1-23.

⁷ Пак, Б. Д., *Корейцы в Советской России*, Москва-Иркутск, 1995; Wada, Haruki, “Koreans in the Soviet Far East, 1917-1937,” in Suh, Dae-Sook (ed.), *Koreans in the Soviet Union*, Honolulu, 1987, pp. 24-59; Kimura, Hidesuke, “Korean Minorities in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan,” in Suh Dae-Sook (ed.), *Koreans in the Soviet Union*, Honolulu, 1987, pp. 85-100; Lee, Aeliah, *Chuuou Ajia shousuu minzoku shakai no henbou: Kazahusutan no chousenjin wo chuushin ni*, Kyoto, 2002.

⁸ Kim, G. N., King, R. (eds.), “The Koryo Saram: Koreans in the Former USSR,” *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 12, Nos. 2/3, 2001, pp. 19-45.

received the highest honor of the Soviet Union, the Gold Star, and became "Heroes of Socialist Labor."⁹

The turning point in the life of the Koreans, as with all other Soviet peoples, was in 1953, with the death of Stalin, and the beginning of the liberalization of the political regime. With this, the Koreans began to reestablish their ethnic identity, culture, language and civil rights. In 1957 and 1958, Koreans began to petition the party and government for their national rehabilitation. The government could not ignore such an organized campaign, and began to “strengthen cultural-educational work among the Korean population,” in order to give the appearance of addressing the people’s concerns. Because of their education, hard work, and organizational skill, Koreans joined the ranks of the leaders of industry, government, and educational institutions. By the 1970s, the number of graduates of universities was about twice that of the general population. Koreans were elected to the parliaments of the Soviet Union and the Central Asian republics, were given ministerial posts in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and some also became generals of the Soviet army. Today, hundreds of Koreans in Central Asia and Russia have received Ph.D. degrees, and work as professors and researchers in universities, institutes and scientific centers.¹⁰

The political and socioeconomic changes, and deteriorating standard of living of the last decade in Russia and the newly independent states of Central Asia, has led to much trepidation among all peoples of the former Soviet empire about their future. In Soviet times, the standard of living of all people was roughly the same, whereas today, there is an ever-increasing socioeconomic divide, with a small number of very rich people, and the majority of the population with little income and many difficulties coping with daily needs and problems.¹¹ The Koryo Saram share the same difficulties as all other people in the former Soviet Union, along with additional problems unique to them.

⁹ Kho, S., “Koreans in Soviet Central Asia,” *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki), Vol. 61, 1987, p. 262.

¹⁰ Ким, Г. Н., *Социально-культурное развитие корейцев Казахстана*, Алма-Ата, 1989; Кан, Г. В., *История корейцев Казахстана*, Алматы, 1995; Ким, Г. Н., Мен, Д. В., *История и культура корейцев Казахстана*, Алматы, 1995; Ким, П. Г., *Корейцы Республики Узбекистан*, Ташкент, 1993; Ли, Г. Н., *Корейцы в Кыргызстане*, Бишкек, 1998; Хан, В. С., Хан, С. М., *Коре сарам. Кто мы?*, Сеул, 1998; Хан, Г. Б., *Прошлое и настоящее корейцев Казахстана*, Алматы, 1997; Chon, Kyongsu, *Chungbu Asea koryoin sahwe ui yokchong kwa chillo-chegukchui u yoksa wa sinsosu minjok*, Seoul, 1996, etc.

¹¹ Materials of sociological investigations among Koreans of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be found in the following books: Кан, Г. В., *Корейцы в Степном крае*, Алматы, 2001; Kwon, Hwi Young, Han, Valery, and Ban, Byong Yul, *Uchekhistan hanin'yi jongchasong yongu*, Seoul, 2001; Бугай, Н. Ф., *Российские корейцы: новый поворот истории. 90-е годы*, М., 2000; Бугай, Н. Ф., *Российские корейцы и политика «солнечного тепла»*, М., 2001.

3. Consolidation and Integration

All complex topical problems of Kazakhstan's Korean diaspora can be classified according to a number of parameters. For example, a surface content analysis of publications in the national periodical press and a mini-survey of Koreans in the public will reveal, first of all, such concerns as a revival of the native language, customs, traditions, and so forth. As a matter of fact, these have already been stated as urgent tasks in the activities of Korean cultural centers and associations.¹² If one asks the director of the Korean Theater about the problems of the diaspora, he would answer that there is no building for the theater scene because the old building has been closed for 3 years due to its poor condition. In answering the same question, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Koryo Ilbo" would speak about urgent financial problems which could lead to the stopping of publication, and about the lack of journalists able to speak Korean, and so on.

In discussing topical problems of the Korean diaspora, we need above all to take a conceptual approach, which considers both the historical experience of the Korean diaspora in the former Soviet Union, and the realities of the young republic that wishes to acquire all the attributes of a sovereign state. Here lie two primary binary problems. The first pair includes the problem of an all-embracing internal ethnic consolidation and the problem of further inter-ethnic integration under the new political and socioeconomic conditions of the post-Soviet period. The second pair includes the problem of national revival and the problem of national survival as a small ethnic group that does not have any form of autonomy.¹³

In speaking about internal-ethnic consolidation, one should note that Koreans in Kazakhstan are heterogeneous in their composition. They can be divided into three groups. Absolutely dominating, in terms of quantity, is the group that consists of the descendants of settlers mostly from the northern part of Korea to the Russian Far East. This group is represented among 2 to 5 generations. The second group is that of the Sakhalin Koreans. As is well known, nearly 60,000 Koreans were resettled from the southern part of the Korean peninsula by force and deceit in 1939-1945 for labor in the mines of "Karafuto," the Japanese name of Southern Sakhalin Island. After the end of the Second World War, more than 47,000 Koreans stayed in the Southern Sakhalin. At the present time, the number of

¹² *Lenin Kichi*, March 14, 1989; May 12, 1989; June 14 1989; August 16, 1989.

¹³ Ким, Г., Хан, В., "Актуальные проблемы корейской диаспоры в Центральной Азии," *Диаспоры* (Москва), № 2-3, 2001, с. 181-194; Ока, Нацуко, "Корейцы в современном Казахстане: стратегия выживания в роли этнического меньшинства," *Диаспоры* (Москва), № 2-3, 2001, с. 194-221.

Sakhalin Koreans is more than 35,000 and they represent 1 to 3 generations.¹⁴ The third group is the least numerous, yet it is noteworthy because its representatives know the Korean language very well. This group is composed of former citizens of North Korea who stayed in the Soviet Union after contract work, after graduation from higher educational institutions and post-graduate courses, or those who had crossed the border and got a residence permit. This third group, in turn, is also characterized by heterogeneity, and includes persons who had Soviet citizenship, citizens of the DPRK (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea) permanently living in Kazakhstan, and persons without citizenship.¹⁵

Up to recent times, the term "Soviet Koreans" has been widely used, and it embraced all Koreans living in the former Union. It seems that there are many grounds to consider this community as a new ethnic unity, being the result of the multi-sided and complicated process of creation and formation.¹⁶ The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the breaking of many vital horizontal ties among the independent republics could lead to the nascent formation of a new ethnic community, whose constituent parts were originally formed in the Soviet period, and for which I suggest the use of the name "Koryo Saram" in the current post-Soviet period. By the way, the term "Koryo Saram" has always been used as a parallel self-name and ethnic designation among Soviet Koreans. Will such nascent formation lead to the idea of new ethnic communities of "Kazakhstan Koreans," "Uzbekistan Koreans," "Kyrgyzstan Koreans," "Russian Koreans," and "Sakhalin Koreans?" Since nearly 70% of the Koreans of the former-USSR live in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the formation of a regional community is possible. However, in order to achieve it, at least two factors are needed: first is a strong feeling of ethnic consolidation among broad masses of the Korean diaspora, and second is a definite, well-thought-out program of ethnic consolidating events for Korean Republic organizations. Unfortunately, the opposite situation can be stated. Joint activities of the associations of cultural centers in Central Asia and Kazakhstan are limited to the episodic organization of some contests and competitions. In a number of big cities, there have appeared parallel Korean societies with standard programs and charters, but uniting different and sometimes conflicting groups of Koreans. Three years ago in Almaty, Tashkent, Bishkek, Moscow and other big cities, associations that supported the unification of

¹⁴ Бок, Зи Коу, *Сахалинские корейцы : проблемы и перспективы*, Южно-Сахалинск, 1989, с. 181-194; Кузин, А., *Дальневосточные корейцы: жизнь и трагедия судьбы*, Южно-Сахалинск, 1993, с. 141-330.

¹⁵ Ginsburgs, G., "Labor Policy and Foreign Workers: the case of North Korean Gastarbeiter in the Soviet Union," in *Soviet Administrative Law*, Boston, 1989, pp. 399-424.

¹⁶ Джарылгасинова, Р., "Основные тенденции этнических процессов у корейцев Средней Азии и Казахстана," in *Этнические процессы у национальных групп Средней Азии и Казахстана*, М., 1980, с. 43-73.

Korea (ASUK) with a pro-North Korean orientation were founded. Among the leaders of ASUK and Korean cultural centers, very tense and sometimes hostile relations exist.¹⁷ We would not like to repeat the negative experience in Japan of the long years of opposition between the pro-South Korean organization “Mindan” and the pro-North Korean organization “Chonryon.”¹⁸ Analysis of the materials and studies of modern life-styles of foreign Koreans may bring about some conclusions regarding the characteristics of Korean communities, especially with regard to the unity and counteraction of centrifugal and centripetal forces on ethnicity.

Historical experience shows another characteristic feature of the Korean diaspora—the special ability to adapt to new ecological, economic and socio-cultural conditions. The Koryo Saram adapted twice, in Russia and Central Asia, and in both these cases achieved considerable success by creating a viable system for itself. Koreans in America are considered to be a model minority, which in a very short time has made great progress in small and medium-sized businesses, in science, and even in politics. Lately, Koreans have been often called the “Asian Jews” to emphasize their surprising social mobility, and their ability to adapt and mimic. Researchers have distinguished their intensive acculturation through the social function that Koreans perform in a polytechnic society. Like the Jews, they play the role of ethnic mediators for other mutually distant ethnic groups, and profit from this role. A pilot survey of students in Almaty revealed that the two main ethnic groups of the republic, the Russians and the Kazakhs, expressed a higher evaluation of Koreans than to each other. The small businesses of Korean Americans, in the form of vegetable stalls, laundries and snack bars, have brought considerable profit. This is not only because of hard work, which is always noted as the most important national trait, but also because of the simple fact that Koreans developed their businesses in places where Whites and Blacks did not even think of competing, such as in Harlem.¹⁹ Hundreds and thousands

¹⁷ Kim, G., Khan, V., “Ten Years Later: Thoughts and Path Traversed by the Korean Movement,” in Kim, G., King, R. (eds.), “The Koryo Saram: Koreans in the Former USSR,” *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 12, Nos. 2/3, 2001, pp. 19-45.

¹⁸ Mitchell, R. H., *The Korean Minority in Japan*, Berkeley, 1969; Lee, Changsoo (ed.), *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*, Berkeley, 1985; Weiner, Michael, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan*, London and New York, 1994; Ryang, S., *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity*, Boulder, 1997; Ryang, S. (ed.), “Koreans in Japan. New Dimensions of Hybrid and Diverse Communities,” *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No.1, 2001.

¹⁹ Kim, H., “Ethnic Enterprises among Korean Emigrants in America,” *Journal of Korean Affairs*, No. 6, 1976, pp. 40-58; Bonacich, E., “Korean Immigrant small business in Los Angeles,” in Lapote, B. (ed.), *Sourcebook on the New Immigration: Implications for the United States and International Community*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1980, pp. 167-184; Min, Pyong Gap, “Korean Immigrant’s Small Business Activities and Korean-Black Interracial Conflicts,” in Kwak, T. H., Lee, S. H. (eds.), *The Korean American Community: Present and Future*, Seoul, 1991, pp.13-28; Chang, E. T. (ed.), “The Korean Diaspora in the

of Koreans traveled around the Soviet Union, sometimes even for two or three years, such as in Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus and Moldavia where they were engaged in seasonal vegetable growing and melon growing. Koreans of the Karatal region used to produce 70% of all the marketable onions in Kazakhstan and they did not face any competition since they have been filling this niche of for a long time.²⁰

Now, when seasonal agricultural work brings very little profit, Koreans have quickly transformed into new businessmen, and there have appeared family and clan economic enterprises in the sphere of production, services and trade in which relatives work together, although this is typical not only for Koreans. In this connection, by speaking about the problem of inter-ethnic integration, I am referring to the necessity of balanced employment for Koreans in all spheres of public activities in a multinational environment, such as it was during the Soviet period. As I see it, in the near future, we shall witness a considerable reduction in the number of Korean students, scientists and intelligentsia. Here we should remember that losses in intellectual potential would be greater for the Korean diaspora than for larger ethnic polity.

4. Revival and Survival

The problem of a national revival of the Korean diaspora, like other national groups of Kazakhstan, has not been developed in academic circles, in the institutions of state power, or in Korean public organizations. In the programs and founding documents of Korean cultural associations and centers there are only declarations on the necessity of reviving the native language. Above all, it should be made clear what language is to be considered native. Koryo Mar, the language of Koreans of the oldest age groups, exists mostly in its forms of usage and function only in the sphere of family and every-day life. Linguists state that Koryo Mar is a unique form of dialect, which has its roots in the 15th century and was preserved as a result of long isolation from developing literary Korean.²¹ Living in different types of ethnic environments, the laws of language contacts led to an enrichment of the

USA: Challenges and Evolution,” *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No.2, 2001, p. 82.

²⁰ Kim, G. N., “Socio-cultural Development of Koreans in Kazakhstan,” *Journal of Institute for Cross-cultural Studies* (Seoul National University), No. 2, 1995, pp. 201-251.

²¹ Kho, S., “Koreans in the Soviet Central Asia,” *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki), Vol. 61, 1987, pp. 101-134; King, J. R. P., “An Introduction to Soviet Korean,” *Language Research* (Seoul), Vol. 23, No.2, 1987, pp.233-277; Пак, Н. С., “Тенденции развития Коре мар,” *Известия Национальной академии наук РК. Серия общественных наук*, 1995, с. 21-29.

limited lexical foundation of Koryo Mar with borrowings from Russian and other languages. Koryo Mar practically has no written form, it is not used on the radio or in the theater, and it is dying. In ten or fifteen years there will be no speakers of this unique language. Is it possible to revive Koryo Mar? There is, however, another possibility, which is the transplantation of the living and functional literary standards of the Pyongyang or Seoul Korean language, but who would be empowered to solve this dilemma? The situation is paradoxical. For example, in the newspaper *Koryo Ilbo*, the translators are Sakhalin Koreans and their parents came from the southern provinces of Korea, but the North Korean language is used. On the radio, the same Sakhalin Koreans speak in what is very close to the Seoul standard. In the National University, teachers from Pyongyang use North Korean textbooks, while teachers from Seoul use South Korean textbooks. Professor Kho Song Moo, who was delegated by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, tried to teach Koryo Mar at Almaty State University, but without much success.²²

As for reviving Korean customs and traditions, here we also have more questions than answers. To give you an example, I was present at a funeral ceremony in South Korea and discovered considerable discrepancies with Koryo Saram practice, although it is thought that in these ceremonies, the traditional elements of ritual's attributes and semantics are supposedly well preserved.²³ It is clear that it is not sensible to mechanically copy some actions, if they fall out of the context of life and do not correspond to a transformed mentality. In everyday life, there exists a kind of simplified view on the revival of customs and traditions, which can then be presented figuratively as changing into a national dress. Let us consider a category of material ethnic culture such as food. While staying in Korea, I hardly recognized any of the familiar national dishes and some of them even seemed utterly unknown to me. The Korean diet mainly consists of seafood, which is difficult to obtain in continental Kazakhstan, and a radical change in traditional food components may also be harmful to health. For example, in the last century, Russian doctor M. Krivoshapkin described how he treated two Selkups (west-Siberian aboriginal). He treated one of them

²² Haarman, H., *Aspecte der koreanisch-russischen Zweisprachigkeit*, Hamburg, 1982; Югай, И. Г., *Развитие современных этноязыковых процессов в инонациональной среде* (Автореферат канд. дисс.), Москва, 1982; Ким, Г. Н., "О «родном языке» корейцев Казахстана," *Известия корееведения Казахстана*, № 8, 2001, с. 21-33; Сон, С. Ю., *Социолингвистический анализ функционирования коре мар и русского языка в корейской диаспоре Казахстан* (Автореф. канд. дисс.), Алматы, 1999; Хан, М. М., "Язык и этническое самосознание корейцев Казахстана," *Кунсткамера. Этнографические тетради*, вып. 10, 1996, с. 35-60; Нур, Seung-Chul, "Language Shift and Bilingualism among Soviet Nationality Groups," *The Journal of Slavic Studies* (Seoul), Vol. 3, 1988, pp. 123-139.

²³ Цой, В., *Современная культура и быт корейцев Казахстана* (Автореферат кандидатской дисс.), Ленинград, 1985; Мин, Л. В., *Семейные традиции и обычаи корейцев, проживающих в Казахстане*, Алма-Ата, 1992; Ли, Г. Н., *Обычаи и обряды корейцев СНГ*, Москва-Ташкент, 2001.

according to the rules of western medicine and he died, but to the second one he let him eat the foods he wanted, which were raw meat, raw fish and animal's blood, and as a result the sick man fully recovered.²⁴ Thus, to revive the ethnic culture of the Koryo Saram would mean a radical change in their way of life, psychology, mentality, and to sacrifice their specific habits, customs and traditions—but would they want to do it?

And last but not least, like other national groups that never had any national-territorial formation either during the time of the USSR or in the post-USSR period, the Koreans are also facing the problem of surviving as a unique ethnic group. At present, Koreans are one of the most urbanized groups of the republic. More than 80% of the Koreans in Kazakhstan live in cities, and due to the standardization and unification of their way of life can be characterized in English as a “melting pot.” Among urban Koreans the number of international marriages is quite high. For example, in Almaty it is 20% and as a consequence there have appeared a generation of marginal Koreans with weak, underdeveloped ethnic identity. There is a change for the worse with regard to living standards, and the general tendency to have fewer children is fraught with danger of natural depopulation. As mentioned above, the nascent formation of Korean communities in the republics of Central Asia, Russia and Kazakhstan is aggravating the problem of preserving Koryo Saram as an independent ethnic group.

The independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Kazakhstan gave the Kazakhs the status of the title nation. As the original people of the modern territory of the country, the Kazakhs gave their name to the former Union republic and to the present state, which in turn gives them natural and artificial advantages when compared to the situations of other diasporas and national minorities.²⁵ We should note a certain nonconformity with the declared fundamental democratic rights and duties of the citizens of Kazakhstan, which is equality among themselves irrespective of nationality, according to the Constitution, the existing legislation of the country and the practices of everyday life. However, neither Western experts nor external-internal opposition bring any accusations to Astana regarding official state discrimination of the non-indigenous (Russian speaking) peoples, diasporas and ethnic minorities

The historical experience and the practice of other countries shows that in a multiethnic state undergoing a stage of construction or radical reformation, it is necessary to establish

²⁴ Гемуев, И., *Легенды и были таежного края*, Новоисбирск, 1989, с. 34.

²⁵ Masanov, N., Karin, E., Chebotarev, A. and Oka, N., *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan* (M.E.S. Series, No.51), Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO, 2002.

institutes of legislative or executive power that are able to represent and protect the interests of all the peoples living there. Past and present examples of this could be the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, the Chamber of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the Ministry of Federation, National and Migration Policy of the Russian Federation.

Situations akin to "childhood diseases" are characteristic of all states in the transition period and the Republic of Kazakhstan can neither be a classical example, nor an exception. The task is not to turn such diseases into the chronic and incurable illnesses of the transforming country.