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KOREANS IN KAZAKHSTAN: QUESTIONS OF REVIVAL FOR THE KORYO SARAM

This paper seeks to elucidate the status of the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan in relation to South Korean diplomacy. After a historical overview of the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan, the authors analyze the cultural and geopolitical role of the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan-South Korea relations. The authors review existing literature and provide their insights from an outside perspective written firstly in English. The authors conclude that the Koryo Saram are in a precarious position as a diaspora, and risk losing their unique heritage barring intentional protection efforts on the part of the states of Kazakhstan and South Korea. The authors draw a distinction between protection and preservation efforts, favoring the former for its promotion of authenticity in cultural revival and agency for the diasporic group. This paper is the first to provide prescriptive policy analysis of diaspora diplomacy and the Koryo Saram, building off of economical, legal, and anthropological historiography.

Keywords: Koryo Saram, diaspora diplomacy, soviet koreans.

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Қазақстандағы корейлер: Корё Сарамды жандандыру мәселелері

Осы зерттеудің мақсаты – Қазақстан мен Оңтүстік Корея арасындағы дипломатиялық қатынастар контекстінде қарастыра отырып, Қазақстандағы корей диаспорасы Корё Сарамның мәртебесін талдау және анықтау. Зерттеу Корё Сарамның Қазақстанда болуына тарихи шолудан басталады, содан кейін осы бірегей диаспораның екі ел арасындағы қатынастарға мәдени және геосаяси әсерін талдауға көшеді. Объективтілікке қол жеткізу үшін авторлар талдауға сыртқы бақылаушы тұрғысынан қарайды және өз тұжырымдарын негізінен ағылшын тілінде бар ғылыми және публицистикалық әдебиеттерді мұқият зерттеуге негіздейді. Қорытындылай келе, авторлар Корё Сарам диаспоралық топ ретінде қауіпті жағдайға тап болып, егер оларды Қазақстан мен Оңтүстік Корея үкіметтері тарапынан қорғау бойынша нақты және мақсатты шаралар қабылданбаса, өздерінің бірегей мәдени мұраларын жоғалту қаупіне тап болады деп алаңдаушылық білдіреді. Жұмыста қорғау шараларының маңыздылығына баса назар аударылады, бұл жай ғана сақтаудан айырмашылығы, қорғаныс мәдени жаңғырудың шынайылығын сақтауға ықпал етеді және диаспора үшін қажетті қолдауды қамтамасыз етеді. Бұл мақала тарихнаманың экономикалық, құқықтық және антропологиялық талдауы негізінде диаспоралық дипломатияға және Корё Сарамның ондағы рөліне жан-жақты саяси талдау жасаудың алғашқы әрекеті болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: Корё Сарам, диаспора дипломатиясы, кеңестік корейлер.

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Корейцы в Казахстане: вопросы возрождения Корё Сарама

Цель настоящего исследования – проанализировать и выяснить статус Корё Сарам, корейской диаспоры, в Казахстане, рассматривая это в контексте дипломатических отношений между Казахстаном и Южной Кореей. Исследование начинается с детального исторического обзора присутствия Корё Сарам в Казахстане, затем переходит к анализу культурного и геополитического влияния этой уникальной диаспоры на отношения между двумя странами. Для достижения объективности, авторы подходят к анализу с позиции внешнего наблюдателя и основывают свои

выводы на тщательном изучении существующей научной и публицистической литературы, преимущественно на английском языке. В заключение авторы выражают обеспокоенность по поводу того, что Корё Сарам оказываются в уязвимом положении как диаспоральная группа и сталкиваются с риском утраты своего уникального культурного наследия, если не будут приняты конкретные и целенаправленные меры по их защите со стороны правительств Казахстана и Южной Кореи. В работе делается акцент на важности защитных мер в отличие от простого сохранения, подчеркивая, что защита способствует поддержанию аутентичности культурного возрождения и обеспечивает необходимую поддержку для диаспоры. Эта статья является первой попыткой представить всеобъемлющий политический анализ диаспорной дипломатии и роли Корё Сарам в ней на основе экономического, юридического и антропологического анализа историографии.

Ключевые слова: Корё Сарам, дипломатия диаспоры, советские корейцы.

Introduction

The Koryo Saram are a people uniquely defined by their migration. Their nation is not differentiated alone by ethnicity or land, but by ethnic migration. In 1937, Stalin deported around 180,000 ethnic Koreans in the Russian Far East to Central Asia over the course of six months. Since then, they have grown into a cultural group distinct from peninsular Koreans and other Central Asian peoples. When the Koryo Saram were finally free to return to their homeland after Stalin's death, that land had changed both politically and demographically. But— was that homeland the Russian Far East, newly populated by Russians; was it North Korea under Kim Il Sung; is it modern-day South Korea? Linguistically and materially, the Koryo Saram occupy their own cultural form as their history diverged from their kin and their neighbors in the Soviet Union.

Unlike other minorities under the Soviet Union, the Koryo Saram never had land to their name. They were never a “title-nation,” in the words of respected Koryo Saram scholar German Kim. Despite the fact that they lived in the Russian Far East since the 1860s, they were never assigned an autonomous oblast during the Soviet Union, as was the case with other small minorities such as the Greeks or Roma. In fact, the Koryo Saram have continuously migrated in order to survive. The centrifugal force of continuous migration, however, works counter to the centripetal force of national identity. This conflict defines their demographic history— what both distinguishes and threatens the Koryo Saram is their integration into the host society, host land, and host state. Nearly a century after their arrival in Central Asia, the Koryo Saram are at risk of losing their unique heritage in their homelands, now the states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The Koryo Saram need minority rights protections under the Kazakhstani state; Kazakhstan is where their nation developed and thus a homeland for them. While South Korea has connected with the Koryo Saram as a

Korean diaspora through programs in South Korean culture, this outreach does not recognize their singular diasporic condition. South Korea's interest in promoting their culture abroad does not gain from promoting a distinct Korean culture, such as the Koryo Saram's, that developed without its influence.

This paper will attempt to analyze the political conditions on which the Koryo Saram identity today rests. I will touch on several pertinent questions to the Koryo Saram over the course of this analysis. What role does the origin state play in the modern life of the diaspora, and what the host state? How can we determine which state is “origin” and which is “host” after several generations of a diaspora? How can we account for the desires of the diaspora in a politicized (Pacher, 2017) context? What does protection of a minority group mean, and what preservation? I will first review the history of the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan; I will then define diaspora, diaspora diplomacy, and relevant law in order to contextualize that history; finally, I will explore the implications of diaspora diplomacy on the Koryo Saram today. This paper concerns itself with the authenticity of national revival under politicized conditions, and recommends greater protections for minority cultures such as the Koryo Saram. I will refer to the Koryo Saram as such when speaking about their post-Soviet conditions; in Soviet contexts I will refer to them as Soviet Koreans.

Historical Overview of the Koryo Saram

Koreans now living in Central Asia represent three groups (Kim, 2003): the Russian Koreans deported by Stalin; the Sakhalin Koreans, resettled by Japanese occupation and who later migrated within the Soviet Union; and Koreans from North Korea who migrated through both legal and undocumented means to the Soviet Union throughout the 20th century (Chang, 2016). This last group has the closest linguistic ties to the modern Koreans. It is estimated that before the 1937 deportation, in 1926, there were

52,000 ethnic Koreans already in Kazakhstan. The Koreans deported by Stalin are the focus of this paper, and generally the group referred to as the Koryo Saram. Those Koreans began their history in the Russian Far East.

In 1860 ethnic Koreans settled the land between the Ussuri and Amur rivers, establishing agricultural settlements. The land had previously belonged to the Qing dynasty. Once Imperial Japan invaded and occupied the Korean peninsula in 1910, many Koreans fled north to their settled populations in Russia. Russian peasants rented farmland to the Koreans at a profit. The Koreans there integrated into the agricultural economy, growing rice and other products. The Koreans settled mostly in closed exclaves, retaining their cultural and linguistic heritage. They began to integrate more into the Russian population when they fought with the Russian army against Japan in 1905, and participated in support of the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution in 1917. They fought in the hopes that Russia and then the Soviet Union would liberate the peninsula from Japanese colonization. In the 1920s the Soviet Union claimed the Russian Far East where many Koreans lived as Soviet territory, declaring its residents Soviet citizens. When the Soviet Union took control of the Russian Far East, two thirds of the Korean population there did not have Russian citizenship. Thus, the Soviet power enforced that they had to buy residence permits, otherwise face fines or deportation if also passportless. By the 1930s, the Korean population was well-integrated, living in kolkhozes and sending students to top universities in the RSFSR (Kim, 2009).

The Soviet Union wanted to further solidify its hold on the territory of the Russian Far East against Japanese and Manchurian factions. Stalin's regime accused the Korean population there of being undercover Japanese spies. Stalin and Molotov signed the order to deport the Koreans, 1428-326cc (Постановление), on August 21, 1937. The order required the leadership in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic and USSR to identify resettlement locations within three days; to increase troops by 3,000 along the border of the evacuated region; and to move all the Koreans from the Far East by the end of the year. Russian kolkhozes were meant to replace the vacated land. About 180,000 Koreans were deported and 2,500 were arrested. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, 11,000 Chinese were arrested and 8,000 were deported, and a small number of other ethnic groups were also arrested (Kimura). The order declared the Koreans should be allowed to cross the border back to Korea if they desired, or else they would be deported to the Aral Sea and Balkhash regions of Ka-

zakhstan and Uzbekistan. Many Koreans died on the journey south— the trains were packed to the brim. Around 40,000 of the deportees died during the first year of resettlement from disease. This single event left an indelible mark on the Koryo Saram's psyche and group memory that would come to define their diasporic identity for generations to come.

Soviet Koreans worked mainly in agriculture after their deportation. They took techniques they honed in the Russian Far East and applied them to the Kazakh land. The Koreans had developed a particularly effective method of land-sharing for farm production called *kobonji*. They continued this practice in the Kazakh and Uzbek SSRs to much success. In particular, the Soviet Koreans produced rice, other grains, beets, and onions. During Stalin's lifetime, the Soviet Koreans' visas disallowed them from traveling, as were other deported peoples', on the basis that they might be disloyal. Only after Stalin's death was this ban lifted, and the Koryo Saram began to travel, growing and selling vegetables seasonally. During the 1950s and 1960s the Soviet authorities resettled the Soviet Korean populations to unproductive kolkhozes within Central Asia to boost production (Kim, 2009). Advances in technology and organization in the 1950s allowed the Soviet Koreans to shift production from mainly rice to include onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, and melons. Korean production in this time period is estimated to have been two to three times more productive than that of other kolkhozes. Koreans alone produced 70% of Kazakhstan's onions just in the Karatal region (Kim, 2009). Koreans also grew other crops space-efficiently, for example, plotting radishes and dill in rows between main crops. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Koreans' main industry— *kolkhoz* and *kobonji* farming— became unsustainable under the new political conditions. Koreans began to rely on prepared products for income besides crops as they settled in cities, selling Korean salads in markets, now a popular staple in Central Asia.

During the Soviet period, Koreans preserved their language and food traditions, working in mostly monoethnic agricultural plots. Unlike during their life in the Russian Far East, Koreans in Kazakhstan were forced to drop some of their traditions by the nature of Soviet employment in collective farming. Still, they adapted Korean culture to this new format, installing councils of elders and continuing Korean holidays within their communities in their new land of exile. Soviet Koreans also largely retained their food traditions during this time, as well as intangible traditions such as Confucianism and some shamanism. Only in third or fourth generation So-

viet Koreans was the Russian practice of patronymics adopted. Soviet Koreans built their own houses in Central Asia, reflecting their uniquely Korean architecture. Soviet Koreans kept traditional clothing but reserved it for special occasions (Youn-Cha). Korean culture was easier to sustain during the Soviet period than afterwards as Koreans migrated to urban areas. The more compact their communities were geographically, the stronger their hold on their culture was. The more urbanized they grew, the more disjointed their networks became, weakening cultural traditions. Correspondingly, rates of intermarriage with other ethnic groups was higher in cities than in collective farms or rural areas with a high density of Koreans. Since their deportation Koreans intermarried with other ethnic groups in Central Asia at high rates, especially with ethnic Russians because of common language and similar socioeconomic achievement (Yem, 2015).

Cultural documentation of the Soviet Koreans was poor before World War II. Many Soviet Koreans fought for the USSR in World War II, but their numbers are uncounted. After the war Soviet Koreans began documentation processes themselves. “*Renin kich’i*,” a Korean-language newspaper, started circulation in 1938 in KyzylOrda with a circulation of 5,000. By 1960 it was being printed five times a week with a circulation in various areas of around 135,000. Starting in the 1970s, a handful of anthologies of Soviet Korean writers were published, some in the Korean language. The first Korean Theater in Central Asia relocated from Vladivostok to KyzylOrda in 1937, remaining until 1941. There, Korean plays in the Korean language were performed. It moved to Ushtobe, then back to KyzylOrda, and finally to Almaty in 1968 where it still operates today (Human Rights, 1991).

The Soviet Koreans’ relationship to their language was transformed by deportation to Central Asia. Before, in the Russian Far East, the Korean population practiced both the Korean language and Russian. After deportation, Korean language use faced more state limitations. Korean children were only able to learn the Korean language in schools run by state-recognized Korean populations on collective farms in the early period, as Kazakh and Russian were taught primarily in Kazakhstan as the title-nation and state languages. In 1975 fourteen middle schools in Central Asia offered Korean as a language with around 2,000 students at the time. Korean parents were more likely to send their children to republic schools to receive Russian instruction in order to succeed in Soviet society. Also, Korean taught in schools, practiced in theaters, and

written in newspapers was “standard” Korean, and differed from the dialect most Soviet Koreans spoke among themselves, Koryo Mar. Koryo Mar differed from modern standard Korean both from its historical origin in northeastern Korea, but also after deportation that it absorbed local language— Russian, Kazakh, and Uzbek, depending on the location of the speaker. In 1970, the census showed that for the majority of Soviet Koreans, Korean in some form was their first language. Out of 81,598 Koreans in Kazakhstan, 64% of them claimed Korean as their native tongue. By 1979, this percentage had dropped to 55.4% of 389,000 Koreans in Kazakhstan (Kimura). These numbers directly indicate the level of success Soviet Koreans achieve in integrating into their host-states; conversely, they demonstrate the multi-generational loss of their “original” culture.

Unlike other, geographically concentrated ethnic groups in the USSR, Soviet Koreans did not live in a titular autonomous oblast. Therefore, integration into the title culture and economy was the best way to survive as a group. Soviet Koreans assimilated quickly by numbers. More Koreans in the Soviet Union knew Russian as a second language than Kazakh, as Russian was the lingua franca. This is reflected in the fact that Soviet Koreans in cities spoke Russian as a native speaker more often than Soviet Koreans in villages (Youn-Cha). Between 1959 and 1970, the percentage of Soviet Koreans living in rural areas compared to cities dropped from 70% to 41%. Soviet Koreans were unique in this migration compared to other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, in the span of a decade greatly boosting their educational and economic circumstances. Birth rates of Soviet Koreans, correspondingly, were lower as more of the population urbanized. In 1959, it is estimated there were 213,000 Koreans total in Central Asia, and 250,000 in 1970. In 1979, the census estimated the Korean population to be around 389,000 in Kazakhstan, but it is likely their numbers were twice that because of uncounted or inaccurately classified members (Youn-Cha). Because of high intermarriage rates, increasingly fewer Soviet Koreans were solely Korean by ethnicity.

Only during the 1980s did research on the Koryo Saram gain significant attention. The deportation of the Koreans was little known until that point. For example, in Krushchev’s Secret Speech, he did not mention Koreans as one of the deported peoples in the Soviet Union. Later, Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost opened archival and scholarly resources to study. During this period in the late 1980s a renewed interest in heritage seized national imaginations. Local Korean institutions supported the study of the

Soviet Koreans, receiving resources from the South Korean government. The South Korean government was motivated to associate themselves with the Soviet Koreans in order to establish stronger economic and diplomatic ties with the Central Asian states. The revival of Soviet Korean culture accelerated in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet years. In 1991 Human Rights Watch noted that a social movement to set up Korean language schools in Central Asia was supported by local Koreans and missionaries from South Korea, the United States, and Germany. In Almaty alone there were two Korean newspapers in 1991, as well as one radio broadcast, and one publishing house. The All-Union Korean Cultural Association was established in 1990 to support Koreans across the Soviet Union. Human Rights Watch also reported in 1991 that no Soviet Koreans showed an intense interest in repatriation to either of the Koreas. The report, quoting an editor of *Koryo Ilbo*, stated that some of the Koryo Saram expressed interest in repatriation to the Russian Far East from where they were originally deported, where they would fit in linguistically more than in the Koreas. Those Koreans cited tension and feeling excluded from Central Asian title-nation nationalism as a motivator to return to that land.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the transition to a market economy has benefited the Koryo Saram financially (Kim, 2009). Kim cites that in the 1999 census, 38% of the Korean population over age 15 was employed. Koreans represented 8.3% of all manager positions in Kazakhstan in 1990, a fair representation given they made up 1% of the total population. Comparatively, Kazakhs, the majority group, represented 17.3% of manager positions. Kim demonstrated that the employment rate for Koreans varied by region in the late 1990s, with the highest employment rate in Astana, the newly established capital. The new opportunities there spurred movement among Koreans to find employment. In Almaty, employment rates were lower because of the aging Korean population there. By the early 2000s, the demographics of the Koryo Saram continued earlier trends. In 2009 it was estimated that over 80% of Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan live in cities. In Almaty at the time of study, Koryo Saram married interethnically at a rate of 20%. Academic studies of the Koryo Saram continued to be published throughout this time, up to and including the current day. However, a lack of historical and current-day data seriously limits the rigor and scope of these studies.

Modern day Kazakhstani Koryo Saram live in the southern Jheitsu region (see Appendix A) and continue to engage in vital sectors of their host-state

economies. The majority of the Korean population lives in urban areas, with about 40% of their total in the Almaty area. Kim notes that Koreans are largely working in urban sectors now, with little of the population still engaged in farming (Kim, 2009). A significant number of Koreans own and run small- and medium-sized businesses, according to German Kim. Koreans are mostly employed in banking, agriculture, housing and other services, communications, trade, and construction and transportation. Kim has tried to enumerate small businesses owned by Koreans over time, but due to poor record-keeping, there is not a satisfying range of years to count since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kim, 2009).

Kim characterized Koryo Saram's economic and educational success following the collapse of the Soviet Union as "ethnic entrepreneurship, or the process of an ethnic group economically developing by means of ethnic connection—relying on co-ethnics and historical networks to launch the group. While Kim made strong arguments as to the success of the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan compared to other ethnic groups or other Koreans in different states, he failed to distinguish what was the success of the Koryo Saram and what was merely a byproduct of the transition to the market economy. In order to clarify a less subjective definition of "ethnic entrepreneurship," (Kim, 2009). further scholarship would need to clarify if the Koryo Saram's interconnectivity as a diaspora was causal to their economic success or concurrent with the expansion of the economy and overall surge in nationalism.

Today, there are fewer than 120,000 ethnic Koreans living in Kazakhstan, inclusive of all subgroups. This number is a significant decrease from the 1979 estimate of 389,000. The reason for this drop is unclear. Relatedly, the number of nationalities in the Soviet Union declined over time from the 1926 census to the 1979 census, which is generally agreed to indicate assimilation (Clem, 1986). Likely the drop in Koryo Saram is from a combination of several factors: changing census methods; mixed ethnicity because of high intermarriage rates; prior inaccuracies in Soviet censuses or changing definitions; higher mortality rates in the immediate post-Soviet years. More study is required to determine the cause of this decrease, however.

Koryo Saram Relations to Hostland and Homeland

Conway and Heynen (Brouwer, 2008) define cultures as both material and territorial: culture today is contained and spread in physical representa-

tions that harken back to the homeland. Homelands can be both physical territories or imagined places that a culture decides is theirs. The post-Soviet nations inherited physical territories to which to tie their cultures. Since the end of the Soviet Union, those nations have seen a mass revival in cultural traditions, commodified by capitalism and expedited by tech-enabled globalization. The Koryo Saram face a dual pressure then: to shake Soviet influence from its culture, like other post-Soviet nations; and to renew its “traditional” roots without the benefit of an autonomous space.

The Koryo Saram as a culture, however, developed in the Soviet Union— they undeniably underwent (Min, 2010) cultural transformation across history as compared to their co-ethnics, Koreans in the Korea. The source of their tradition depends on at what historical point we draw a cultural distinction between Koreans and Koryo Saram. If the historical point of departure of the Koryo Saram from peninsular Koreans as a cultural offshoot is the late 19th century as Koreans migrated and settled in the Russian Far East, then import of peninsular culture as “revival” is somewhat plausible. However, modern-day peninsular Korean culture has been shaped by the intervening years and reflects the geopolitical events that took place in the peninsula, particularly under Japanese occupation. By contrast, the Koryo Saram, aside from their initial migration to the Russian Far East, primarily formed under Soviet conditions. Pinpointing and quantifying an authentic origin of Koryo Saram culture is difficult and inherently contradictory: the Koryo Saram were defined by their deportation, their constant industry, migration, absorption, and integration. Take, for example, the food traditions of the Koryo Saram: it is a confluence of Korean recipes, Central Asian ingredients, and Russified names. Koryo Saram in Central Asia are doubly diverse, in that they developed in a polyethnic (Khan, 2002) environment, and within themselves differ by region and self-perception.

The majority of Korean associations in Central Asia are purely cultural organizations, promoting traditional peninsular Korean cuisine, language, and activities. These groups, according to one author (Kuzhakmetova, 2022), can be overbearingly political or South Korean, discouraging some Koryo Saram from participating. These organizations’ “revival” aim, as German Kim puts it, raises questions of national identity. As Kim points out, the Koryo Saram are not a nation that can distinguish themselves by territory. The Koryo Saram is a national group defined by its common history. “Reviving” the Korean language (Kim, 2009) imported from

South Korea, is not, therefore, a full revival as that language is only one aspect of the Soviet Koreans’ linguistic history. While Soviet Koreans taught standard Korean in their schools, they used Koryo Mar, Russian, and Central Asian languages more in daily life. The import of any aspect of South Korean culture does not equate to revival of Koryo Saram culture. A careful revival would consider the artifacts of Koryo Saram culture native to the hostland, such as Soviet Korean literature and the Koryo Ilbo newspaper.

The interaction between the peninsular Koreans and the Koryo Saram, however, is not limited to the post-Soviet age. As early as the 1950s the Soviet Koreans engaged in cultural exchange with the North Koreans. Soviet Koreans’ relations with North Korea depended on the diplomatic policy of the Soviet Union (Weathersby, 1993). Some Soviet Koreans returned to North Korea when the USSR was occupying the North, and again when the USSR was supporting North Korea after the Korean war. However, once North Korea drew closer to China after the Korean War, the Soviet Union cut most relations with the North, including the Soviet Korean population there. Kim Il Sung in his “jchujche” policy (self-sufficiency) went so far as to demote or deport certain high-placed Soviet Koreans in the 1950s. One author noted that returnees from the Soviet Union did not maintain a group identity. In diplomatic relations with North Korea, the Soviet Union sometimes relied on the language ability of returned Soviet Koreans, but did not treat them as a viable power group in North Korea in and of themselves. Further, their language ability was one-sided; they often spoke fluent Russian, but had to relearn Korean or de-Russify their names. A number of the returnees in the 50s worked in the media, having come from the Koryo Saram newspaper in KyzylOrda.

Outreach from North and South Korea was not significant as late as the 1980s (Youn-Cha); relations significantly took off after the Soviet Union fell. North Korea, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, established ties with the new Central Asian States. It made some efforts to connect with the Koryo Saram, but those have significantly lagged behind South Korea’s, rebuffed by Kazakhstan’s firm anti-nuclear stance (Adamz, 2015). South Korea also established diplomatic relations with the Central Asian states shortly after their independence; it recognized Kazakhstan in 1992, opened its first embassy there in 1993, and opened a Kazakh embassy on the peninsula in 1996. In the intervening years, presidents of Kazakhstan and South Korea have

visited each others' countries six times each. South Korea is among the top ten investors in Kazakhstan, having supplied \$8.1 billion in investments in the last seventeen years (Kwon, 2023). Kazakhstan sees South Korea as a safe diplomatic partner in the face of great power competition, with noncoercive financial and cultural inflow. South Korean companies, skilled workers, and K-culture are active in Kazakhstan; the question remains, where can the Kazakhstani Korean diaspora fit into this modern relationship?

The revival that Korean cultural associations promote reflects efforts across the post-Soviet states to reignite perceived ethnic histories in a nation-building effort. An aspect that further distinguishes the Koryo Saram revival effort is its secondary focus on reunification with the perceived homeland. The Koryo Saram, in this light, have been characterized as a diaspora, separated from its home by miles of Soviet history— at last, in the modern age of globalization— the lost Koreans can reconnect with their kin in the peninsula. From this rhetoric have sprung several return programs in the vein of reunification. As early as 1990 the Koryo Saram were a point of diplomatic focus and sympathy to South Korean diplomats, who also noted with interest the material success of their Kazakhn co-ethnics (Woong, 2010). South Korea designated a special visa, the H2, that grants ethnic Koreans the right to live and work in South Korea. Today, more than 100,000 “returned” Koryo Saram live in South Korea, most of them via special visa programs. While many pick up modern standard Korean, significant numbers of them live in enclaves, such as in Incheon (Suk, 2023), and use the Russian language. Because they are not accepted into Korean society, they remain somewhat apart. Illegal Kazakhstani migration to South Korea has also been on the rise; currently, about 5,700 illegal migrants from Kazakhstan toil in South Korea. Many of these migrants move to areas in Korea that are already settled by Koryo Saram such as Ansan and Gwangju (Rakisheva, 2020). Koryo Saram work illegally in South Korea as it benefits them in initial migration, and the South Korean economy benefits from their labor; as one author suggests (An, 2017), forming trade unions and better arrival protections such as language programs would reduce the problem of illegal immigration. Koryo Saram face significant cultural and linguistic barriers to integration, and would benefit from intensive support programs.

South Korea has opened several organizations for the support and study of Kazakhstan. There are four departments in Korean universities with Kazakhstan as a research area, the first of which was

opened in 1973 (Oh, 2021). There are two main organizations that export Korean culture and directly oversee diasporic Koreans: The Korea Foundation and the Overseas Koreans Foundation. In earlier years, Koryo Saram arrived in South Korea as workers on the H2 visa. In the last decade, South Korea opened the F4 visa to Koryo Saram, which allows them to live and work in South Korea for 2-3 years with easy renewal options. Since then, Koryo Saram have increased their numbers to South Korea fourteenfold. Despite the rapid growth of the Koryo Saram migrants to Korea, however, no Central Asian or Kazakh cultural centers have been opened on the peninsula (Oh, 2021). Rates of naturalization have not increased as rapidly as the inflow of Koryo Saram migrants, suggesting either barriers to naturalization (such as cultural and language testing) or hesitancy prevent them from becoming full citizens. On the F4 visa, migrants cannot vote; otherwise, they enjoy all the advantages of residency.

In Kazakhstan, the main supports for the Koryo Saram are cultural organizations. The Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan has offices in every major city, and helps organize local classes in language and culture. The Koryo Ilbo, Korean Theater (Kim, 2021), Youth Movement of Koreans of Kazakhstan, the Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a Korean church, and the Korean Culture Center (associated with the Korean embassy in Astana) are other major sources of Korean culture. While some of these organizations facilitate community among Koryo Saram members, they are also attended by locals of non-Korean origins. Several universities also have cultural events or clubs associated with their Korean studies programs. Hallyu, or Korean pop culture, have also widely affected Kazakh pop culture, especially among the youth. Listening to Kazakh pop music or enumerating the number of K-beauty products in major cities, South Korea's influence is evident. Enrollment in Korean language studies sharply increased in the 80s and 90s. The Korean language is necessary for jobs in Korean companies based in Kazakhstan. Exchange students from both countries continue to increase (Davis, 2021). Of these organizations, those that are run by members of the Koryo Saram themselves are well-equipped to maintain linkages in the local community. They are generally well-utilized by the Koryo Saram population and others.

These cultural, institutional, and population exchanges are a form of “diaspora diplomacy” (Ok, 2018) or diplomatic overtures between homeland and host-country packaged in the export of cultural

programming. The Koryo Saram are South Korea's soft-power window into the Central Asian states. Likewise, the Koryo Saram for Kazakhstan serve as a platform for dialogue with South Korea. Diaspora diplomacy is not inherently problematic; however, its political aspect can overshadow the voices of the diaspora themselves. While the homeland state exports culture, the host-state regulates the intentions, impact, and scope of imported homeland culture. Kazakhstan and South Korea mutually benefit from this exchange; however, the Koryo Saram may not as a diaspora despite individual benefits.

Many Koryo Saram feel a connection to Korea (Suk, 2023), demonstrating durable long-distance nationalism (Schiller, 2005), but that connection is complicated by their historical and economic conditions. The Koreans who originally migrated from North Korea to settle in the Russian Far East also harbored nationalist hopes to rid the peninsula of Japan one day, but their migration was also an act of disownment. The deported Koreans, by contrast, found themselves in a new land involuntarily; this disconnect by force fostered among them later a sense of nationalism to Korea. This nationalism evolved with geopolitical events—today, the Koryo Saram feel a connection to South Korea as the perceived homeland. However, one study in Uzbekistan showed that most Koryo Saram there feel a connection to South Korea only as an imagined homeland, and do not have a corresponding desire to “return” to it, preferring to remain in their created homeland (Adamz, 2015). Another study revealed that Koryo Saram in South Korea returned to the “homeland” for economic opportunity; Koryo Saram migrants felt superficial belonging there, were grateful for the higher earnings, but did not feel like they belonged racially or in terms of mentality (Yun, 2022). A similar study on Kazakhstani Koryo Saram needs to be conducted.

Need for Greater Legal Protections

National minorities, by Kazakhstani and international law, are a protected group. The Koryo Saram are a national minority: their history and ethnicity distinguish them from the title-nation, or Kazakh people. The Koryo Saram's heritage has absorbed the influences of its host-cultures. However, this adaptability threatens the existence of the Koryo Saram as a distinct group. The discourse of national preservation needs strengthened study and recognition of the uniqueness of the Koryo Saram. The Koryo Saram are arguably a diaspora without a homeland (Adamz, 2015), or perhaps with multiple

homelands. History fractured their origins; they belong in part to the host-state and to the origin-state. This hybrid identity should be protected as the Koryo Saram themselves navigate what direction they want their culture to go in the future. Both the states of Kazakhstan and South Korea should strengthen specific protections of national diversity.

Discussions of protection and preservation of national minorities toe a fraught line of extent: how far should states go to save a minority heritage? At what point does preservation become an artificial tie to the past in the face of modernization? What is too little of an effort to preserve national heritage, relegating minority cultures to extinction before they are gone in actuality? Many social science studies of the Koryo Saram concern themselves with questions of whether or not the diaspora is still “Korean” (Fumagalli, 2021) This is a false standardization of “Koreanness,” that all diasporic Koreans must be measured against peninsular Korean identity. The fact of the matter is that in Central Asia, Koryo Saram are seen as ethnically Korean and thus different, and in South Korea, the Koryo Saram are seen as not fully Korean, formed by generations of life in Central Asia. Given this dual place-dependent identity, the Koryo Saram must be recognized as nationally unique (Kim, 2003-04), and have protections in both of its homelands in light of this hybridity. The diversity of the Koryo Saram is not the mixture of Kazakh and Korean influences, but the novel culture they have developed. This nuance is lost in political discourse, which highlights or overshadows aspects of the Koryo Saram identity to build cross-national bridges.

Protection efforts are important regardless and different from preservation efforts. Establishing explicit protections for the Koryo Saram by name will do more in the direction of preservation than preservation programs without protections. The Koryo Saram in both Kazakhstan and South Korea are considered ethnically distinct from the title-nations. South Korea infamously does not have anti-discrimination laws; migrant Koryo Saram there have no recourse if they are discriminated against because of their diaspora identity. Kazakhstan does have anti-discrimination laws, but they have fallen short of their words in practice. For example, in a decree entitled “On the Concept of cultural policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (Указ Президента) approved by former President Nazarbayev on November 4, 2014, a plan for the promotion of “Kazakhstani” culture is outlined. The document, however, makes no explicit mention of national minorities. The document focuses instead on a general culture

of Kazakhstan, with only Kazakh-language or Kazakh-ethnic examples listed by name. In a similar vein, Kazakhstan established a Day of Gratitude in 2016 intended to observe the hospitality of the Kazakh people to non-title nations, subtly marginalizing those non-title nations. One author (Kuzhakmetova, 2022) contends “gratitude” rhetoric is a pattern in Kazakhstan-Koryo Saram relations, as with other deported peoples.

Kazakhstan has several laws pertaining to minority rights and protections. On March 2, 1992 the Republic of Kazakhstan joined the United Nations. On December 18, 1992 the UN General Assembly adopted the “Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.” This document expounds the duty of the UN and states to protect its national minorities, defined by ethnicity, language, or religion, in Article 1.1: “States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.” The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan similarly promises to protect national minorities. As stated in Article 7.3, “The state shall promote conditions for the study and development of the languages of the people of Kazakhstan.” In Article 14.2, “No one shall be subject to any discrimination for reasons of origin, social, property status, occupation, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude towards religion, convictions, place of residence or any other circumstances.” In Article 19.2, “Everyone shall have the right to use his native language and culture, to freely choose the language of communication, education, instruction and creative activities.” Rights of linguistic minorities are similarly guaranteed in such documents as “On the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan” from December, 2008 (Об Ассамблее). The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is a group composed of diverse members of Parliament to promote public interests. In Article 6.10 of this document, the Assembly states its recommendation to “support of Kazakh diaspora in the foreign states on issues of preservation and development of native language, culture and national traditions, strengthening its connection with historical homeland.” The language to protect the Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan therefore exists, even if it is nonspecific in nature.

The United Nations has outlined several ways Kazakhstan can improve protection of its minorities. On March 14, 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination published the “Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Kazakhstan.” This docu-

ment outlines the UN’s opinion on reports from the state of Kazakhstan, including measures to protect national minorities. In fact, the bulk of the document focuses on measures Kazakhstan could take to improve conditions for minorities (Заключительные замечания). The document noted the availability of population data by ethnic group, but also the lack of data on where those ethnic groups work, how many are in prison, and their economic status. The Special Rapporteur (Доклад) on the right to education, Kishore Singh, published the findings of his mission to Kazakhstan on May 11, 2012 in “Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.” There, Singh stated that “children from more than 100 ethnic backgrounds attended schools in the 2008/2009 academic year, with Kazakhs accounting for 71.4 percent; Russians, 14.7 percent; Uzbeks, 4 percent; Ukrainians, 1.5 percent; Germans, 1 percent; Uighurs, 1.7 percent; and others, 5.7 percent. As a whole, school instruction is offered in six languages.” He added that “current alternatives for education in one’s own native language are provided by Government institutions in cooperation with cultural associations. In this context a number of Sunday schools (about 79) have been established by national and cultural associations, providing language teaching, including German, Korean, Hebrew, Tartar and Polish, for children and adults.” Singh concluded that the state of Kazakhstan should invest more in multilingual education, particularly in updating and producing textbooks in minority languages. Kazakhstan should enact such concrete recommendations in order to bulk their protections of national diversity, which are already encoded in the spirit of its constitution.

Kazakhstan should recognize the diasporic nature of many of its ethnic groups. Tellingly, ethnic Koreans who have been in Kazakhstan for generations identify themselves both by ethnicity and their forefathers’ connection to the Kazakh land. They are sometimes referred to as “local” Koreans. In an increasingly nationalistic Central Asia, inhabiting such an indefinite identity space is complicated. Ethnic groups are encouraged to align themselves with their title land—Kazakhs to Kazakhstan and Koreans to Korea. This binary is restrictive. Most Koryo Saram today speak Russian; increasingly more are learning Kazakh; few speak Koryo Mar; and some are learning modern Korean as a foreign language. Kazakhstan’s Koryo Saram grew up in Kazakhstan; to apply an equivalent label of “Korean” to them and South Koreans as nationalistic discourse would have is simplistic. In fact, some (Kuzhakmetova, 2022) Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan feel uncomfortable

with such nationalistic discourse as they do not fit within its confines as a group. But the Koryo Saram today have not known a home besides Kazakhstan—they are the Central Asian Koreans. Kazakhstan should not drive them to seek a new one.

Conclusion

The political emphasis on centering title-nations in self-conceptions of the new post-Soviet states risks sidelining such minorities as the Koryo Saram. One of Kazakhstan's main goals as a state, however, is to maintain tolerance in their multiethnic society. A clear step in that direction would be to set up an internal support system to document and engage with Kazakhstan's minorities. According to Kim, the legal definition of diasporic groups in post-Soviet states is "vague" (Kim, 2009) National minority laws should proactively address the needs of minority groups, starting first by naming them explicitly in form. These laws should require regular study and survey of minority groups and their desires; supply resources for minority-specific in-group education and general education about their existence; and dedicate more host-state support to cultural associations rather than relying on outreach from the origin-state. Kazakhstan prides itself on its diversity; in order to protect Kazakhstani diversity, the state should make efforts to integrate diversity into Kazakhstani identity and promote all ethnic groups rather than only that of the title-nation. South Korea should continue to support its diaspora abroad, but also enforce anti-discrimination protections for Koryo Saram migrants and other minorities on the peninsula. Neither state should rely on the Koryo Saram's resilience and adaptability; for too long, the Koryo Saram have survived through assimilation. They have the right to survive through assertion of their unique culture in all of their homelands.

This does not mean governmental or cultural bodies should force the Koryo Saram to stick to their unique traditions in the name of preserving culture. Such a contrived policy towards culture would work against the natural forces of globalization, and belittle the vast economic achievements of the Koryo Saram as they successfully integrated into their host society. However, the Koryo Saram should have the means to observe their independent culture as a third option to the Kazakh-South Korean cultural binary. Rather than *preservation*, all parties should cultivate *protection* for the Koryo Saram.

Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, famously stated in 1982 that the goal of the Soviet sociocultural project was "not to bring the nationalities together but to fuse them." In the post-Soviet age, states have gone in the opposite direction, strengthening nationalism as a form of independent stateness. Neither model accounts for the existence of liminal groups like the Koryo Saram—minorities without a homeland, outliers among title-nations. Integrating minorities into state diversity will benefit stateness; marginalizing minorities will sideline some groups to extinction and foster nationalistic consolidation among others. Supporting minority groups in-state will strengthen relations between hostlands and homelands as neither party will be able to politicize support of said groups. Title-nation nationalism is not threatened but strengthened by diversity. Making room in nationalist narratives for ethnic minorities will, in the long run, make states more durable against outside influence and inter-ethnic conflict.

Appendix A (Приложение А)

Population table of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan by region (Таблица численности этнических корейцев в Казахстане по регионам):

Total	Region																			
	Абай	Ақмола	Ақтөбе	Алматы	Атырау	Батыс Қазақстан	Жамбыл	Жетісу	Қарағанды	Қостанай	Қызылорда	Маңғыстау	Павлодар	Солтүстік Қазақстан	Түркістан	Улытау	Шығыс Қазақстан	Астана қаласы	Алматы қаласы	Шымкент қаласы
119,823	532	1,567	1,587	7,527	3,799	1,010	9,644	9,551	11,654	4,067	8,230	1,127	1,038	535	2,820	1,058	970	8,128	37,844	7,135

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