Social Change and Marriage Patterns among *Koryo Saram* in Kazakhstan, 1937–1965*

Natalya Yem and Stephen J. Epstein

This article considers social forces set in motion when ethnic Koreans of the former Soviet Union (*Koryo saram*) were deported from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia under Stalin, treating these emerging phenomena as a context for understanding the community's marriage patterns. Drawing on archival records from 1937 to1965 in Kazakhstan, we show how choice of marriage partner reflects changes in socioeconomic status, places of residence, gender roles and language use. Demographic data about interethnic marriages in Kazakhstan, we argue, serves as a useful tool for exploring relations between *Koryo saram* and the larger host society; these evolving trends in marriage patterns offer a window into the Korean diaspora experience locally and more broadly.

Keywords: Korean diaspora, *Koryo saram*, interethnic marriage, census, Kazakhstan

In recent years, scholars have turned increasing attention to the history of Koreans in the diaspora, outlining distinctive histories and patterns of settlement among Korean-Americans, Korean-Chinese (*Joseonjok*), Korean-Japanese (*Zainichi*), and Koreans of the former Soviet Union (*Koryo saram*) among others.[1] With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of

* This work was supported in part by the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies International Scholar Exchange Fellowship for the 2011–2012 academic year.

1. Important book-length studies in English on different segments of the Korean diaspora include, for example: Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii 1896–1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988); Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue*

Natalya Yem (Natalya.Yem@kaznu.kz) is Head of the Department of Korean and Japanese Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies at al-Farabi Kazakh National University; Stephen J. Epstein (stephen.epstein@vuw.ac.nz) is Director of the Asian Studies Programme at Victoria University of Wellington.

Seoul Journal of Korean Studies 28, no. 2 (December 2015): 133–152.

diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea, return migration of *Koryo saram* and *Joseonjok* to South Korea has become a noteworthy phenomenon and further underscored differential patterns of assimilation that have occurred as ethnic Koreans have spread throughout the world. Nonetheless, gaps in our understanding of the Korean diaspora experience remain, and in this article we consider marriage partner choice for *Koryo saram* in Kazakhstan, which, as we show, was constituted by such factors as gender roles, language use, socioeconomic status and overall integration within the host society. Accordingly, the study of intermarriage among *Koryo saram* in Kazakhstan, a Soviet republic that had already become strikingly multicultural by the first half of the twentieth century, provides a window on acculturation in a noteworthy segment of the Korean diaspora.

Although scholars have investigated intermarriage in the former Soviet Union,[2] few detailed historical studies of *Koryo saram* marriage patterns have previously been published in English.[3] We employ here data collected from

Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Pyong Gap Min, *Caught in the Middle: Korean Merchants in America's Multiethnic Cities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Sonia Ryang, ed., *Koreans in Japan. Critical Voices from the Margin* (London: Routledge, 2000); Kwang Kyu Lee, *Overseas Koreans* (Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 2000); John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); David Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Caren Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship: Marriage and Labor Migration between China and South Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

2. See A.A. Susokolov, *Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR* [Interethnic marriages in the USSR] (Moscow: Mysl', 1987); N. P. Borzykh, "Rasprostranennost' mezhnatsional'nykh brakov v respublikakh Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane v 1930-kh godakh" [The prevalence of interethnic marriages in the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the 1930s], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 4 (1970): 87–95; N.P. Borzykh, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR v seredine 1930-kh godov" [Interethnic marriages in the USSR in the mid-1930s], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 3 (1984): 101–112; A.B. Kalyshev, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v sel'skikh raionakh Kazakhstana (po materialam Pavlodarskoi oblasti 1966–1979gg.)" [Interethnic marriages in rural areas of Kazakhstan (based on the Pavlodar region between 1966–1979)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 2 (1984): 71–77; A.B. Kalyshev, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v g. Alma-Aty" [Interethnic marriages in the city of Alma-Ata], in *Kazakhstan: Etnografiia sovremennosti* [Kazakhstan: an ethnography of modernity] (Alma-Ata, 1995), 23–31; A.V. Kozenko and L.F. Monogarova, "Statisticheskoe izuchenie pokazatelei odnonatsional'noi i smeshannoi brachnosti v Dushanbe" [Statistical study of the performance of monoethnic and interethnic marriage in Dushanbe], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 6 (1971): 112–118.

3. For the few publications in Russian on the historical patterns of Korean intermarriage, see N. Yem, "K probleme natsional'no-smeshannykh brakov (po rezul'tatam aktovykh zapisei gorarkhiva ZAGS g. Almaty)" [On the problem of ethnically mixed marriages (based on file records of the archive registry office in the city of Almaty)], *Izvestiia koreevedeniia Kazakhstana* 2 (1997): 40–51; N. Yem, "Ustoichivost' mezhnatsional'nogo braka sredi koreitsev Kazakhstana v 1970–1980gg. (po materialam arkhiva ZAGS g. Almaty)" [Sustainability of inter-ethnic marriage

branches of ZAGS (*Otdel Zapisi Aktov Grazhdanskogo Sostoianiia*), the Civil Registry Office of Kazakhstan, which was introduced in the early years of Soviet rule. Because registry statistics include the ethnicities of both marriage partners but do not specifically flag interethnic marriages, research necessitated going through marriage entries involving a Korean one by one in order to determine rates of outmarriage. Archival material from the registrar's offices for much of the 1937–1965 period was collected from the four cities with the largest concentrations of Koreans in Kazakhstan: Alma-Ata, Kyzyl-Orda, Ush-Tobe and Taldy-Kurgan (now known as Almaty, Kyzylorda, Ushtobe and Taldykorgan, respectively). Data collection was painstakingly carried out over a two-year period; the archives are open to researchers only one day a week and arranging permissions demanded patience. On occasion, a lengthy journey to a provincial office was rewarded with a staffer's gruff notice that a special event had closed ZAGS for the day without prior warning. Furthermore, all data had to be copied out by hand. As a result, a decision was taken to make data selection representative rather than comprehensive and to give a snapshot of the decades under discussion at intervals. In particular, records for 1946–1949 and 1956–1959 have been omitted in the sample for all four cities. We contend, however, that the absence of figures for these years is unlikely to have a significant impact on the overall contours of patterns that emerge.

We have also drawn on the censuses of 1939 and 1959, which included questions about ethnicity and other socio-economic and socio-cultural indicators, to fill out the picture we outline. During the years of the 1937–1965 period for which records were gathered by the researchers, a total of 73,219 marriages were processed in the four cities considered.[4] Ethnic Koreans were

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among the Koreans of Kazakhstan in the 1970s and 1980s (based on the archive registry office in the city of Almaty)], *Vestnik KazNU*, Seriia vostokovedeniia 1, no. 26 (2004): 73–77; and N. Yem, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki koreitsev Kazakhstana v 30-90-e gody XX veka (istoriko-demograficheskii aspekt)" [Interethnic marriages of Koreans in Kazakhstan between the 1930s and 1990s (historic-demographic aspect)], PhD candidate diss., Almaty, 2004. For overviews in English, see German Kim, "On Inter-Ethnic Marriages among the Korean Population in the City of Almaty," *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* 5 (2000): 14–27, and Marina I. Kozmina, "Comparative Analysis of Inter-Ethnic Marriages in Korea and among the Korean Diaspora in Central Asia," *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* 16 (2012): 39–60.

4. Total marriages processed were as follows: Alma-Ata: 36,433; Kyzyl-Orda: 22,400; Taldy-Kurgan: 6,874; Ush-Tobe: 7,512. For logistical reasons relating to the individual archives, the data compiled is not fully commensurate, most particularly in the case of Alma-Ata, which is by far the biggest city and thus possesses substantially more entries. The years transcribed are for Alma-Ata: 1940–1946, 1951–1952, and 1962–1963; for Kyzyl-Orda: 1938–1945, 1950–1955, and 1960–1965; for Taldy-Kurgan: 1937–1945, 1950–1955, and 1960–1965; and for Ush-Tobe: 1937–1946, 1950–1955, and 1960–1965.

involved in 1,715 of these marriages; among them, 1,438 took place between two Koreans, but in 277 cases, one partner was of another ethnicity. In analysing this data, we have kept in mind the method of the Soviet scholar Pershits,[5] who compares the actual percentage of interethnic marriages that occur against the percentage that would be expected on the basis of a statistically random choice of partner in a given locality. Such an approach thus highlights pairings that are anomalous by being either notably present or absent.

Kazakhstan and the Arrival of *Koryo Saram*

Koreans first settled in what was to become the Soviet Union in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The majority were peasants from North Hamgyong Province who came to the Russian Far East seeking land on which to establish small freehold claims for farming. Migration continued to grow when Korea came under Japanese occupation, particularly after the failure of the March First Movement. The Korean migrants who had arrived in the USSR after the Russian Revolution participated in the building of socialism on an equal footing with other minorities. Full involvement in the newly developing Soviet society required knowledge of Russian, and an increasing number of Koreans acquired facility in the language. Accommodation in Russian settlements allowed interethnic contact, which from even early on led to occasional marriages between Korean men and Russian women.

The history of the *Koryo saram* in Kazakhstan more specifically begins in earnest in 1937: Stalin had grown concerned about reports that the Japanese had been infiltrating the Soviet Union via ethnic Korean spies and, determined to disperse what he perceived as a growing threat, he deported Koreans from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia. As a consequence, whereas the 1926 census recorded only 42 Koreans in Kazakhstan, by 1939 this number had exploded to 96,453.[6] This mass deportation had, of course, a substantial impact on the

5. Iu. I. Pershits, "O metodakh sopostavleniia pokazatelei odnonatsional'noi smeshannoi brachnosti" [Methods for comparing monoethnic and mixed marriages], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 4 (1967): 129–132.

6. For more on the history of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan, see G.V. Kan, *Istoriia koreitsev Kazakhstana* [History of Koreans of Kazakhstan] (Almaty: Gylym, 1995); John J. Stephan, "The Korean Minority in the Soviet Union," *Central Asian Review* 13, no. 3 (1970): 138–147; George Ginsburgs, "Citizenship Status of Koreans in Prerevolutionary Russia and in the Early Years of the Soviet Regime," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, 2 (1975): 1–19; George Ginsburgs, "A Statistical Profile of the Korean Community in the Soviet Union," *Asian Survey* 17 (1977): 952–967; Youn

Korean community's collective sense of self-understanding within the Soviet Union. Despite, or perhaps because of, the hardships faced by Koreans in this alien environment, deportation enhanced a shared sense of ethnic identity. Koreans cooperated on irrigation works in order to establish rice farms on the Central Asian steppe and to engage in agriculture once more.

Koreans were far from the sole group to experience deportation to Kazakhstan, and the rapid and unusual change experienced by the republic makes it a particularly interesting site for the study of interethnic contact, assimilation, and adaptation. According to the first census of the Russian Empire in 1897, Kazakhs comprised 81.8% of the total population of Kazakhstan, which then stood at approximately 4.1 million. In 1926, when the initial census of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (henceforth also Kazakhstan) was held after the formation of the Soviet Union, this population had reached almost 6.2 million, of whom now only 57.1% were Kazakh, while 19.7% were Russian, and 13.2% Ukrainian.[7]

From the early 1930s, the population gradually increased in Kazakhstan in concert with the socialist transformation of agriculture and industry. By the second half of the decade, policies that actively encouraged migration, together with forced relocations on the basis of ethnic affiliation, had had a major impact on Kazakhstan's population distribution. In addition to Koreans, Kazakhstan also became home to deported Finns, Poles, Letts, Azeris, Kurds, Turks and others. The population in all Soviet republics increased by 2.6% from 1926 to 1939, but Kazakhstan experienced the most rapid rate of growth of all. In particular, its urban populations increased by a remarkable 268% over this period, albeit from a low baseline, in the wake of regulations designed to provide factories with personnel through the reallocation of labor from rural areas. By the 1939 census, 28% of the republic's population had become urban.

Collectivization and industrialization, plus the disproportionate impact of famine between 1930 and 1933 upon indigenous Kazakhs, led to a gradual increase in populations of European descent and a relative decrease of Kazakhs, of whom almost one million became displaced over the 1926-1939 period. The 1939 census records the population of Kazakhstan at 6,395,000, of whom only

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Cha Shin Chey, "Soviet Koreans and Their Culture in the USSR," in *Koreans in the Soviet Union* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 60–84; Yi Kwanggyu and Chŏn Kyŏngsu, *Chaeso Han'in: Illyuhakchŏk chŏpkŭn* [Soviet Koreans: An Anthropological approach] (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1993).

7. The remaining 9.0% were composed of various ethnic groups, including Belarusians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Uighurs and Germans, among others. See A.N. Alekseenko, *Naselenie Kazakhstana, 1920–1990* [The population of Kazakhstan. 1920–1990] (Almaty: Gylym, 1993).

36.4% were now Kazakh, while Russians had come to occupy 41.2% of the total. Ukrainians formed a further 10.6% of the population and 11.8% came from other ethnic groups, including Koreans. This marked shift reflects both increased voluntary immigration to Central Asia and the epochal upheavals of the early twentieth century, which included not only forced deportations but war and famine.

From 1937 on Koreans formed a substantial group in Kazakhstan. The Korean birth rate was higher than the republic's average, but difficulties in resettlement and in adapting to extreme natural and climatic conditions led to an infant mortality rate double that of the mean. Poor nutrition, inadequate housing and patchy access to medical care compounded such difficulties; many on Korean resettlement farms experienced scurvy in winter and spring, and gastro-intestinal diseases in summer.[8]

Forced relocation and dispersion across a vast area thousands of kilometres from the border with Korea caused fragmentation in resettlement and broke up bonds established in the Soviet Far East. Although the disastrous collectivization of Kazakhstan's agricultural system brought about widespread shortages of manpower, the grouping of Koreans in southern Kazakhstan also enabled local concentrations of those experienced in rice and vegetable production. Environmental differences between the region the Koreans had left and the one in which they arrived, however, meant great difficulty in carrying on traditional agricultural activities. These troubles were exacerbated by indifference and miscalculation by the Soviet authorities in how Korean deportees might organize their new lives economically.

Upheaval followed by contact with the diverse population of Kazakhstan had further significant effects upon *Koryo saram*. In the 1930s and into the 1940s the collective farms on which Koreans worked were either entirely composed of Koreans or dominated by them. Although regulations severely restricted Koreans' places of residence, some moved illegally within the region,[9] and over time, the community began to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of economic opportunity. By 1959, a significant portion of the roughly 74,000 ethnic Koreans in the Kazakh Republic were living in one of four cities: Alma-Ata, Kyzyl-Orda, Taldy-Kurgan, and Ush-Tobe. As their social organization grew ever more centered on multiethnic labor communities,

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8. G.N. Kim, *Istoriia immigratsii koreitsev. Kniga pervaia. Vtoraia polovina 19v.–1945 g.* [The history of Korean immigration. Vol.1. Second half of the 19th century–1945] (Almaty: Dyke-Press, 1999).

9. Kan, *Istoriia koreitsev Kazakhstana*.

material culture became standardized, and architectural style, furniture, and household items converged with those of Soviet society generally. Many elements of culture brought from Korea, such as calendar holidays, largely disappeared; traditions were preserved most stably in food culture and family relations.[10]

The urbanization of the *Koryo saram* fostered interethnic contact. The initial reliance on social networks and solidarity among co-ethnics to overcome hardships soon confronted competing demands, and as a community Koreans found themselves negotiating the rival claims of ethnic identity and assimilationist pressures that determined success. Moscow's command economy, the dominance of the state bureaucracy, ideological management, and rigid policies in relation to minorities led to significant changes in intellectual culture. Korean schools had opened in the 1930s and 1940s in areas in Kazakhstan with a significant proportion of *Koryo saram*. At an early stage, the compact Korean population in rural areas and the availability of teachers and textbooks had facilitated the teaching of Korean language, but this situation did not last long. The linguistic cohesion of the community began to wane as Korean ceased to serve as the medium of education in schools for Korean children. Korean was soon relegated to second language status after Russian, and eventually stopped being taught altogether.

Acculturation and Assimilation

A further wave of movement for Koreans within the Soviet Union after the initial deportations occurred in the latter half of the 1950s and was prompted by the lifting of the Civil Rights Act restrictions. At this point Koreans were allowed to return to the Far East and Maritime Provinces.[11] Between the 1939 and 1959 censuses, the Korean population in Kazakhstan declined by nearly

10. R. Sh. Dzharylgasinova, "Novoe v kul'ture i bytu koreitsev Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana (na primere sel'skogo naseleniia)" [Innovations in the culture and daily life of Koreans in Central Asia and Kazakhstan (the example of the rural population)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 6 (1977): 59–70; R. Sh. Dzharylgasinova, "Osnovnye tendentsii etnicheskikh protsessov u koreitsev Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana" [Main trends of ethnic Koreans processes in Central Asia and Kazakhstan], in *Etnicheskie protsessy u natsional'nykh grupp Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana* [Ethnicization processes in ethnic groups in Central Asia and Kazakhstan] (Moscow, 1980), 43–73.

11. G.N. Kim, "Sotsial'no-kul'turnoe razvitie koreitsev Kazakhstana. Nauchno-analiticheskii obzor" [Socio-cultural development of Koreans in Kazakhstan, an analytical review], in *Izvestiia AN KazSSR. Ser. Obshchestvennykh nauk* [Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh Republic of the Soviet Union, Social science series] (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1989), 17.

one-quarter from 97,269 to 74,019 and their relative proportion went from 1.6% to 0.8% of the total. Even so, in 1959 they still composed the seventh largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan. Desire to assimilate into larger Soviet society grew further, as from the 1950s and into the 1970s many of the institutions in which Koreans participated, such as *dopriselenie* (additional farming settlements) and *orgnabor* (organized bodies for labor recruitment), became multiethnic. By 1960, the collective farm Gigant in the Kyzyl-Orda region, for example, consisted of members of 16 ethnic groups.

Korean disappeared from schools in this latter era. Soviet policies aimed at standardization. Though couched rhetorically as a move towards a greater inclusiveness of different "nations," or ethnic groups, within the USSR, in practice the need for a common language amidst increased contact unquestionably led to Russification. The Russian language came to dominate in all spheres of life in the Soviet Union, including literature and the arts. Though education in Russian remained voluntary, strong incentives gave it coercive power. Lessons in minorities' native languages did not belong to the standard curriculum, and as such were not tested in final examinations. Firm command of ethnic languages potentially came at the expense of deepened knowledge of Russian.

In such a situation, emphasis on education in a minority tongue narrowed prospects for students and limited their functioning within the larger society. From the 1940s, Koreans had little motivation to study Korean formally, and all the more so when possibilities for their higher education expanded: from 1937 until the 1950s, Koreans had been unable to move freely, and the scope of their residence was limited. Many restrictions on the movement of Koreans were lifted in the second half of the 1950s, however. In 1954, one year after Stalin's death, children of deportees who had not yet reached 16 were exempted from the need to reside in special settlements. Young Koreans were thus able to attend institutes elsewhere in Kazakhstan for their study. Some of the more ambitious and gifted took up the opportunity to move to such cities as Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev in pursuit of education at leading universities in the USSR,[12] but numbers still remained low at under 100.

Over time, it became possible for Koreans in Kazakhstan to participate in multiple spheres of economic and social life, which further allowed interethnic mixing. This period of the mid-1950s to mid-1960s coincided with a large-scale ethnically selective migration of Russian and Eastern Slavic (e.g., Ukraine,

12. G.N. Kim and Eng Sob Sim, *Istoriia prosveshcheniia koreitsev Rossii i Kazakhstana.Vtoraia polovina XIX–2000g* [The history of education of Koreans in Russia and Kazakhstan. Second Half of the 19th century–2000] (Almaty: Kazakh State University, 2000).

Belarus, Moldova) peoples to Kazakhstan; the majority of these new arrivals were highly skilled professionals. By the 1960s, Korean intellectuals from the community likewise occupied leading positions in professional jobs, including management, administration, industry, and various other sectors. Many Koreans in Kazakhstan became scientists, and several achieved prominence.[13] By the middle of the decade, an estimated 20 Soviet Koreans held PhDs and a further 280 had advanced to candidacy. From this cohort emerged a substantial number of workers in research institutions and higher educational institutions of the Kazakh Republic.[14] The percentage of Koreans who attained a level of secondary or higher education grew substantially; in the USSR, Koreans became second to Jews among ethnic groups in their pursuit of higher education.

All these factors contributed to a changing linguistic situation for Koreans in Kazakhstan. Moving part of the Korean population so that they mixed more readily with Soviet society had an inevitable impact on the proportion of Koreans who spoke their ancestral tongue. Desires to preserve Korean as a marker of ethnic identity remained, but heritage language use ran counter to the acquisition of social and economic capital that came with use of Russian. Between 1946 and 1959 the share of Korean speakers in Kazakhstan decreased by roughly 10%, and continued to drop over the following decade. The number of bilingual Koreans grew. According to the Soviet census of 1959, 74.2% of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan claimed Korean as their first language; 25.8% considered it to be Russian.[15] By 1970, 83.3% of Koreans in Kazakhstan could claim proficiency in Russian. Nearly 36% declared Russian as their first language, with the replacement of Korean by Russian most pronounced in urban areas.[16] Census data shows that Korean males moved to Russian as primary language more quickly than females did. The difference results from men's greater integration into the public sphere, where Russian held sway as the language of interethnic communication. The proportion of women who retained Korean as first language was on average 3–4% higher than males in both rural and urban areas.[17]

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13. D.V. Men, "Vklad koreitsev v sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe razvitie Kazakhstana" [Korean contribution to the socio-economic development of Kazakhstan], *Izvestiya koreevedeniya v Kazahstane* [News of Korean Studies in Kazakhstan] 6 (1999): 64–72.

14. Syn Khva Kim, *Ocherk po istorii sovetskikh koreitsev* [Essay on the history of Soviet Koreans] (Almaty: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka,' 1965), 134.

15. 1959 census. Kazakh SSR, 162–163.

16. http://journal.iea.ras.ru/archive/1970s/1977/1977_6_Dzharylgzsinova.pdf.

17. G.N. Kim and D.V. Men, *Istoriia i kul'tura koreitsev Kazakhstana* [History and culture of Koreans in Kazakhstan] (Almaty: Print, 1995), 218.

Language use has a clear relation to choice of marriage partner: increased use of Russian led to increased interethnic marriages, especially for men. The high professional level of Koreans and their fluency in Russian allowed them to occupy a position of relative influence in society and brought with it social capital. Many Koreans, like members of other ethnic groups, lived in apartments in urban areas, studied Russian literature, and were brought up under Soviet ideologies of inter-ethnic equality and friendship.[18] As Gantskaia has observed, if a socio-political system provides equality, operates efficiently, and interethnic communication increases, impact will be felt in the most intimate spheres of life, and interethnic marriages will occur.[19] In the remainder of this article, we analyze these marriages in greater detail.

Koryo Saram and Interethnic Marriage in Kazakhstan

Over the course of the period under discussion, Korean society in Kazakhstan, as noted, experienced conflicting desires to cling to tradition and to innovate, and the contradictory effects of these desires may also be traced in marriage patterns. Marriage traditionally was a highly significant moment in the life of Koreans: individuals were not considered adults, regardless of age, if they had not married. Accordingly, how the Korean population reconstructed patterns in this important area proves revealing of how the community experienced relationships in the larger multiethnic society.

The following information about those intending to marry was recorded by ZAGS on applications for marriage licenses in the Soviet Union: surname prior to marriage, surname after marriage, given name, ethnicity, age, and whether the individual was marrying for the first time or remarrying. Occupation, position, place of work and address were also recorded, as was whether either partner had children, separately or together. (These latter details ceased to be recorded from the 1960s). Employees of the Registrar Office made notes on this information and then the bride and groom signed a statement affirming willingness to enter into the marriage.

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18. Iu. V. Ionova, *Obriady, obychai i ikh sotsial'nye funktsii v Koree (ser. XIX–nach. XX v.)* [Rituals, customs, and social functions in Korea (mid-19th–early 20th c.)] (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 163.

19. O.A. Gantskaia, "Obshchie tendentsii etnosotsial'nogo razvitiia brachno-semeinykh otnoshenii" [General trends in ethno-social development of marriage and family relations], in *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy* [Modern ethnic processes] (Moscow, 1977), 34–42. Cf. also M.I. Kozmina, "Comparative Analysis of Inter-Ethnic Marriages," 51.

In the 1930s endogamous marriages remained the norm in Kazakhstan, especially among ethnic Kazakhs who adhered to local Islamic traditions (*adat*) and Shari'ah law and who, given their indigeneity, did not feel the same pressure to acquire Russian that the Korean newcomers did.[20] Still, even as early as 1936, 272 Russian women wedded Kazakh men, and the number of intermarriages between Kazakhs and Volga Tatars, who were also Muslim and were well-regarded by Kazakhs, increased to 358.[21] The local situation was characterized by wide choice in the ethnicity of marriage partner, which had not been uncommon in rural areas before this period.[22] Ukrainians, Germans and Jews in Kazakhstan who intermarried, on the other hand, primarily did so with Russians.

According to statistics from 1936, Kazakhstan was then one of seven republics in which mixed marriage rates (13.1%) exceeded the Soviet Union's mean (12.5%);[23] together with its Central Asian neighbors Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan was also a republic in which interethnic marriages were becoming increasingly common in urban areas. In 1936, of a total of 41,607 marriages registered in the republic (30,180 rural; 11,427 urban), 5,462 were interethnic, with rates of 11.4% (3,452 marriages) in the countryside and 17.6% (2,010 marriages) in urban areas.

In the late 1930s, Koreans appear for the first time in the documentary records of marriages of Ush-Tobe and Kyzyl-Orda, two cities that received a high proportion of deportees. In 1938, 18,525 Korean households were deported to Kazakhstan; records from 1938 and 1939 show that 12 marriages involving Koreans took place in Ush-Tobe and 37 in Kyzyl-Orda. Two of the marriages in Ush-Tobe and seven in Kyzyl-Orda were interethnic; that interethnic marriages took place so soon after resettlement suggests rapid mixing for the Korean population.[24]

The statistics for interethnic marriages among Koreans during the years for

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20. N.P. Borzykh, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR v seredine 1930-kh godov" [Interethnic marriages in the USSR in the mid-1930s], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 3 (1984), 101–112, 110.

21. Ibid., 94.

22. G.N. Kim, *Istoriia immigratsii koreitsev*, Vol.1, 199.

23. N.P. Borzykh, "Rasprostranennost' mezhnatsional'nykh brakov v respublikakh Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane v 1930-kh godakh" [Prevalence of mixed marriages in the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the 1930s], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 4 (1970), 92. The others were Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

24. L.S. Tolstova, "Natsional'no-smeshannye braki u sel'skogo naseleniia Karakalpakskoi ASSR (k voprosu o sovremennykh etnicheskikh protsessakh)" [Interethnic marriages among the rural population of the Karakalpak ASSR (on the question of contemporary ethnic processes)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 3 (1985), 64.

Table 1a-e. Total Marriages of Koreans and Percentage of Interethnic Marriages

a. Alma-Ata

	Total	Interethnic	%
1937–1939	-	-	-
1940–1946	64	37	57.8
1951–1952	49	14	28.5
1962–1963	124	36	29.0
Total	237	87	36.7

b. Kyzyl-Orda

	Total	Interethnic	%
1938–1939	37	7	18.9
1940–1945	186	38	20.4
1950–1955	270	20	7.4
1960–1965	379	62	16.4
Total	872	127	14.6

c. Taldy-Kurgan

	Total	Interethnic	%
1937–1939	-	-	-
1940–1945	111	8	7.2
1950–1955	59	3	5.1
1960–1965	59	6	10.2
Total	229	17	7.4

d. Ush-Tobe

	Total	Interethnic	%
1937–1939	12	2	16.7
1940–1946	54	10	18.5
1950–1955	169	22	13.0
1960–1965	142	12	8.5
Total	377	46	12.2

e. All four cities in total

	Total	Interethnic	%
1930s	49	9	18.4
1940s	415	93	22.4
1950s	547	59	10.8
1960s	704	116	16.5
Total	1,715	16	16.2

which we were able to record data from the 1930s to the 1960s by the four cities individually and aggregated are reproduced in table 1 (above).

One reason for the seemingly low frequency of marriages recorded among Koreans in these cities in the 1930s and 1940s relative to the total population was because the resettled Koreans lived mainly in collective and state farms in rural areas.[25] Even into the early post-war years, though theoretically required by law, not all marriages in fact were registered in civil records. Many chose religious marriage registration, which eliminated the need for a trip to civil offices, or simply did not register at all. Koreans brought up according to traditional customs likely either did not perceive the need for registration or ignored regulations.

For this reason as well, the overall extent of increase in interethnic marriages among Koreans throughout Kazakhstan is not clear. Civic offices may have received a disproportionate number of such marriages, as the need for registration may have been perceived as more pressing when members of two different ethnic communities were joining. Nonetheless, patterns of note can be established. In all the cities surveyed but Taldy-Kurgan, an increase in interethnic marriages for Koreans was marked. According to data from the Alma-Ata archives from the largely wartime 1940–1946 period, urban Koreans actually outmarried more frequently than not, 58.8% vs. 41.2%.[26] This fact becomes particularly striking when one considers that 94.5% of Kazakh marriages, by contrast, registered in the republic were monoethnic.[27] In Taldy-Korgan, the proportion of mixed marriages varied, perhaps due to the reduction of the urban Korean population that resulted from dispatching qualified personnel to help implement the Korean "Far Eastern Policy": many Korean professionals (economists, lawyers, military officers, etc.) proficient in Korean were members of the Communist Party and the Communist Youth Organization and sent to North Korea between 1946–1955 to aid in building socialism in North Korea. There they engaged in training and worked as advisers and teachers. It is quite possible that this internationalized, outward-looking segment of the population who were members of the Party were precisely those who would have been more likely to be willing to marry with members of other ethnicities.

Researchers regularly note gendered differences in rates of intermarriage for

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25. By January 1, 1939 there were 70 separate Korean collective farms in Kazakhstan, located in eight regions of the country: Kyzyl-Orda, Alma-Ata, North Kazakhstan, Guriev, Karaganda, Kostanai, Aktobe, and South Kazakhstan. Koreans lived in 8,037 households, totalling 35,724 people. See Kan, *Istoriia koreitsev Kazakhstana*, 88.

26. Registry of Marriage Registry Office archives, Alma-Ata, 1940–1945.

27. N.P. Borzykh, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR," 110.

Table 2. Korean Interethnic Marriages by Gender, 1937–1965

City	Total	Men	%	Women	%
Alma-Ata	87	64	73.6	23	26.4
Kyzyl-Orda	127	105	82.7	22	17.3
Taldy-Kurgan	17	13	76.5	4	23.5
Ush-Tobe	46	37	80.4	9	19.6
Total	277	219	79.1	58	20.9

various ethnic groups, a global trend that held true in the former Soviet Union.[28] As noted above, interethnic contact from early on led to marriages between Koreans and Russians. Korean men were significantly more likely than women to outmarry generally, in part because of their greater exposure to interethnic contact; a striking 79.1% of all interethnic marriages among the Korean community in our data set involved men. This general trend was apparent in all cities surveyed (Table 2), and stands in stark contrast to, e.g., the United States where exogamy among ethnic Koreans is much more common for women: according to census data from 2000, only 40.0% of marriages for U.S.-raised ethnic Korean women are endogamous, whereas the figure is 63.2% for men.[29] This difference also underscores the particularity of US popular media imagery that is often critiqued for its emasculation of Asian American masculinity. The contrast with the former Soviet Union is stark. One might also note here, for example, that the godfather of rock music in the ex-USSR and an icon of youthful male rebellion (such as it was), was Viktor Tsoi, the offspring of a marriage between Robert Tsoi, a *Koryo saram* engineer born in Kyzyl-Orda in 1938, and an ethnic Russian schoolteacher.

Ethnic intermarriage in the former Soviet Union had its own particular cast. As Susukolov observed, "the indigenous men of Central Asia and the Caucasus often intermarried. Women from the European republics of the USSR, however, were no less likely and sometimes more likely than men to enter into mixed

28. K. Kh. Khanazarov, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki—odna iz progressivnykh tendentsii sblizheniia sotsialisticheskikh natsii (Iz opyta konkretno-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia)" [Interethnic marriages—one of the progressive trends of convergence of socialist nations (from the experience of concrete sociological research)], *Sotsialnyie nauki v Uzbekistane* [Social Sciences in Uzbekistan] 10 (1964): 26–31; Ia. S. Smirnova, "Natsional'no-smeshannye braki u narodov Karachaevo-Cherkessii" [Intermarriages among the peoples of Karachaevo-Cherkessia], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 4 (1967): 137–142; Tolstova, "Natsional'no-smeshannye braki."

29. C.N. Le, "Multiracial Asian Americans," in *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, ed. Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing), 848.

marriages."[30] In contrast, Muslim women, including Kazakhs, and Koreans seldom intermarried, and although there is minor variation among the four cities we surveyed, the general pattern holds steady.[31] Other socioeconomic factors are at play in these gender disparities. The older generation of Koreans continued to influence marriage choice among their children and grandchildren, exhibiting more control over females, as traditionally they were expected to be in the care of a male, either father, husband, brother, or son.

Until the 1960s, the work of Kazakh and Korean women was largely confined to the domestic sphere. Their low level of employment in the general labor force further inhibited the growth of mixed marriages. For the most part, Korean women remained economically dependent, which limited their autonomy in multiple spheres of life, including choice of marriage partner, and contributed to cloistering within a monoethnic environment. Pressure on women to maintain ethnic purity, lower mobility, and greater dependence on family were not atypical in many ethnic groups in the Soviet Republics.[32] According to data from Alma-Ata, Korean women who were neither working nor studying married fellow Koreans with much greater frequency: within this group rates of endogamy reached fully 90.0%. From the 1960s, however, Korean women's presence in secondary and higher educational establishments grew and those with academic degrees emerged in greater numbers in the USSR.[33]

We also tabulated data according to age of marriage drawing on Alma-Ata city records, distinguishing two cohorts: those who married before turning 25, and those who married at 25 years or older in the 1940s (Table 3) and the 1950s and 1960s (Table 4). Interesting differences emerged there as well.

It appears that during the 1940s women married at a younger age, perhaps

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30. Susokolov, *Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR*, 94–95.

31. S.M. Abramzon, "Otrazhenie protsessa sblizheniia natsii na semeino-bytovom uklade narodov Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana" [Convergence process between ethnicities as reflected in the households of peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 3 (1962), 24.

32. See, e.g., A.G. Trofimova, "Materialy otdela ZAGS o brakakh kak etnograficheskii istochnik (Po dannym raiona imeni 26 komissarov, g. Baku)" [Proceedings of registrar of marriages as an ethnographic source (based on the data of the 26 Commissioners District, city of Baku)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 5 (1965): 114–121; Iu. A. Evstigneev, "Natsional'no-smeshannye braki v Makhachkale" [Ethnically mixed marriages in Makhachkala], *Soviet Ethnography* 4 (1971): 80–85; A.E. Ter-Sarkisiants, "O natsional'nom aspekte brakov v Armianskoi SSR (po materialam ZAGS)" [On the ethnic aspect of marriages in the Armenian SSR (based on the registrar)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 4 (1973): 89–95; and A.S. Gadzhibalaev, "Natsional'no-smeshannye braki v Azerbaidzhane i ikh rol' v etnicheskikh protsessakh" [Ethnically mixed marriages in Azerbaijan and their role in ethnic processes], PhD candidate diss., Baku, 1992.

33. G.N. Kim and Eng Sob Sim, *Istoriia prosveshcheniia koreitsev*, 159.

Table 3. Distribution of Korean Marriages by Age in Alma-Ata, 1940-1946 (Total = 64)

	Under age 25		Age 25 and over	
	Total	%	Total	%
Men	27	42.2	37	57.8
Women	50	78.1	14	21.9

Table 4. Distribution of Korean Marriages by Age in Alma-Ata in 1951, 1952, 1962, and 1963 (Total = 173)

	Under age 25		Age 25 and over	
	Total	%	Total	%
Men	82	47.4	91	52.6
Women	124	71.7	49	28.3

in part because they remained more susceptible to pressure from parents and relatives; by far the majority of women married before turning 25. While still true in the 1950s and 1960s, average marriage age appears to have risen; in particular our data show a rise in the percentage of women who outmarried after age 25 from 21.6% to 30.0%. As the small sample does not allow certain interpretation, this trend deserves attention in future research.

Differences also appeared in the prior marital status of Koreans who intermarried as opposed to those who married a fellow Korean. In 7.4% of cases in which two Koreans were marrying, men were involved in a second (or later) marriage, but only 3.7% involved women. 13.5% of exogamous marriages, however, involved men who were remarrying and 5.4% involved women.[34] In other words, Koreans who were remarrying became notably more likely to marry a non-Korean; furthermore, Korean men entering into a remarriage were roughly twice as likely as Korean women to have a spouse of another ethnic group. This statistic likely reflects a conservatism within the community and a traditional stigma against divorce, especially for women. It is worth noting in this regard, however, that the prevalence of divorce for Koreans with those from a given ethnic group largely mirrored the proportion of marriages with that ethnic group and do not suggest a particular cultural clash or affinity with any particular group after marriage has occurred.

More than 100 ethnic groups, of whom Russians were the most numerous, were living in Kazakhstan by the1950s. As one might expect, and as we have

34. Ibid.

already indicated, the directionality of mixed marriages in Kazakhstan was hardly neutral with respect to the diverse ethnic mosaic that composed the population. Social, economic and cultural factors played a significant role. While this finding is unsurprising, the particularity of local dynamics and relative desires for exogamy merit attention. Marriage between members of other ethnicities and Russians became among the most numerous examples of unions, and in greater proportions than one might expect from a random mixing of the populations. The phenomenon bespeaks both a willingness to participate in the socialist experiment that was the developing Soviet Union under Russian leadership and that Russians had become dominant in the major cities.[35]

A critical approach here would also note that indirect discrimination remained prevalent in society, and that the government responded slowly in tackling the problems of oppressed groups. Consequently, Koreans, for example, adopted strategies of survival and adaptation both collectively and on an individual level;[36] an inherent pragmatism and penchant for individualism that developed in the *Koryo saram* community in response to circumstances pushed them to assimilate and work toward achieving stability in society. For many, interethnic marriage proved an important route of assimilation. In particular, intermarriage with Russians held out the potential, especially for men, of improving social status by becoming Russified, and thereby "Sovietized," more rapidly. One's offspring would naturally become more fluent in the Russian language, more adept in Russian cultural mores and take part in the social capital of one's ethnically Russian spouse.

While Korean males disproportionately married Russian women, over the period under discussion the range of ethnic groups with which Korean women intermarried was more varied. In the four cities sampled between 1937 and 1965 (Table 5), interethnic matches occur most frequently with Russians (Korean men: 70.0%; Korean women: 45.6%) and second most frequently with Ukrainians (Korean men: 11.4%; Korean women: 5.3%). Intermarriage with Kazakhs took third place overall (9.0%). Here, however, the directionality of intermarriage is strikingly reversed: only 5.3% of exogamous marriages for Korean men were with Kazakh women, but 26.3% of Korean women's

35. A.B. Kalyshev, "Mezhnatsional'nye braki v sel'skikh raionakh Kazakhstana (po materialam Pavlodarskoi oblasti 1966–1979gg.)" [Interethnic marriages in rural areas of Kazakhstan (based on the data of the Pavlodar region between 1966–1979)], *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* no. 2 (1984): 71–77.

36. T.V. Volkova, "Rossiiskie koreitsy: k voprosu o samoidentifikatsii" [Russian Koreans: on the issue of self-identification], *Ethnographicheskii Obzor* no. 4 (2004): 27–42.

Table 5. Korean Intermarriages by Ethnicity of Partner, 1937-1965

		Kazakh		Russian		Ukrainian		German		Other		Total
			%		%		%		%		%	
Total	M	10	4.6	154	70.0	25	11.4	3	1.4	27	12.3	219
	F	15	26.3	26	45.6	3	5.3	1	1.8	13	22.8	58
Total		25	9.0	180	65.0	28	10.1	4	1.4	40	14.4	277

interethnic marriages were with Kazakh men. If outmarrying, Korean women were thus approximately five times more likely to partner with Kazakhs than Korean men were; this striking discrepancy can be explained in large part by characteristics of the Kazakh community, which also exhibited greater conservatism in its treatment of its women and expectations that they would marry a Muslim. Other examples of intermarriages are filled out by a miscellany of ethnic groups: Volga Tatars at 4.0% of the total (Korean men: 5.3%; Korean women: 1.8), Germans at 1.4% (men: 1.6%; women: 1.8%), and Belarusians at 1.1% (men: 1.1%; women: 1.8%). Marriages to a smattering of other ethnicities including Jews, Buryats, Mongols, Chinese, and Bashkirs comprised 9.4% of the total (men: 7.9%; women: 19.3%).

It is worth noting that Alma-Ata exhibited particular variety in the ethnicity of marriage partners: in the early 1940s, intermarriage for Koreans occurred with six different ethnic groups, but by the data gathered in the 1950s and 1960s, this number had increased to twelve. Characteristically, as with the national sample, Korean men who outmarried were overwhelmingly more likely to pair with Russian women (and, again, to a lesser extent Ukrainian women, but also increasingly with Tatars and Jews) while Korean women's intermarriage choices were more diverse. Cases of Korean men pairing with Kazakh women in the 1940s were most frequent in Alma-Ata. In Taldy-Kurgan and Ush-Tobe, where Russians were dominant and Kazakhs few, no cases of Korean men marrying Kazakh women appeared in our sample at all. Among Korean women who outmarried, partnerships with Kazakh men were most frequently seen in Alma-Ata and Kyzyl-Orda. A dip occurs in our data for the years sampled for the 1950s, in which not a single case of mixed marriage with Kazakhs was recorded for either men or women in Alma-Ata, although this may simply be an anomaly from the small size of the data set. Otherwise, however, striking differences were not observed between the four cities surveyed.

In the 1960s, with the expansion of bilingualism and the higher educational and socioeconomic status of Koreans, interethnic marriages continued to grow more frequent. In the first half of the decade, exogenous marriages of Korean

men appeared in the following order: Russian (76.9%), Kazakhs (11.5%), and then Ukrainians, Germans, and Chinese (3.8% apiece), whereas for Korean women intermarriages were now occurring with Russians (70.0%), which shows striking growth. One might surmise that this has to do with Korean women's increasing access to education and employment outside the home. Intermarriage with Russians was followed by marriages with Kazakhs (20.0%) and other ethnicities in small numbers (Mongols, Koryak, etc.). Here what is most notable is simply the colorful, highly multicultural mosaic of society in Kazakhstan that had already developed a half-century ago, long before the term multiculturalism came to be bandied about in Europe or the United States, let alone South Korea itself.

Conclusion

As a result of political, social and economic policies within the republic of Kazakhstan, significant changes in population size and overall ethnic composition occurred in the mid-twentieth century. The first settlers of the Korean diaspora retained elements of their traditional culture, but were increasingly integrated into the multiethnic Soviet environment. Due to the demographic catastrophe of the 1920s and 1930s, the deportation of ethnic groups, and World War II, the period from 1937 to 1965 is characterized by a dynamic development of interethnic marriages. Choice of marriage partner's ethnicity was affected in many ways by the migration policy of the state, a policy that aimed to send human resources for the construction of industrial facilities and for developing virgin land in Kazakhstan.

The dynamics and structure of Korean marriages were influenced by the ethnic composition and migration flows of the population of Kazakhstan. The generally kind treatment that Koreans received from the Kazakhs after deportation made them disposed to remain in the republic that took them in. Moreover, the situation for Koreans improved more quickly than that of other oppressed peoples (such as Germans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks) in that they could move within the republics into which they had been resettled, and over time they acquired special permissions and an ability to move beyond the boundaries of these republics. With improvements in their legal status after the death of Stalin, they could enroll in universities, and, albeit with limitations, occupy positions of responsibility. Although 1937–1965 continued to be marked by a high degree of endogamous marriage for Koreans, with the emergence of a wide range of choice in marriage partners, intermarriage increased.

Even within Kazakhstan itself, those of European descent held higher status than the indigenous Kazakhs. Koreans neither actively sought to enter the communities of Central Asians nor saw a particularly greater affinity with them, because in that period the Soviet Union itself as an entity, with Russians as a dominant group, took precedence over indigenous ethnicities. Korean men, more mobile and economically independent, partnered with Russian women in significant numbers. The proportion of intermarriages by ethnic group for Koreans was influenced at one level by the overall demographic mosaic. More particularly, marriage rates of Koreans with Russians were disproportionately high not only because Russians were the major ethnic group of the USSR but also the group with whom Koreans were able to communicate most easily. The urbanized *Koryo saram* community demonstrated a zeal for social mobility through mastery of the Russian language, economic independence, ready sociability, and hard work.

What in conclusion might the data unearthed here suggest about the current situation for marriage patterns of ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan? In post-Soviet society, the inhabitants of Kazakhstan have moved to occupy a key position within Central Asia and knowledge of the Kazakh language has assumed increasing importance. Many Koreans in the former USSR still outmarry, and at least in some cases, do so in part to promote their opportunities in the social sphere. Although outside the parameters of our discussion and a question on which we have not yet gathered firm data, anecdotal evidence clearly suggests that since the collapse of the Soviet Union intermarriage with Kazakhs has become disproportionately more popular and that older Koreans at times encourage youth from the community to marry Kazakhs as offering a more promising future. The Korean community continues to confront divergent pressures: further assimilation within Kazakh society has become desirable precisely at a time when the influence of South Korea is growing substantially within the country more broadly as a result of business investment and the Korean Wave, rendering Korean identity itself a source of pride. While the contours of future demographic change within the Korean community in Kazakhstan is hard to predict, it seems certain that such change will continue to offer an intriguing window into the Korean diaspora experience for many years to come.