

Social Dynamism of the Korean Diaspora in Contemporary Kazakhstan

-Focusing on the Definition and Classification of the Korean Diaspora-

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Place of fieldwork: Kazakhstan
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Research background

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, as a newly independent nation-state, has made great efforts for the country's development. It is the nation's most important issue, which has caused several problems for Kazakhstan.

What is noteworthy is the migration phenomenon, represented by the rate of increase in the outflow of population from Kazakhstan. However, such a phenomenon hardly occurred in the Korean-Kazakhstani society, rather, there was an influx of population into the Korean-Kazakhstani society.

The similarity of the dynamism of the Korean diaspora in Central Asian countries depends on each country's specific factors. It depends on external factors such as the form of national integration in each country and internal factors such as Korean society's social acceptance. In order to understand the influx of population in the Korean-Kazakhstani society, it is necessary to consider the factors that contributed to it.



Map1: Kazakhstan

Table1: Basic information on Kazakhstan

公用語	カザフ語、ロシア語
首都	アスタナ(最大の都市:アルマトゥ)
大統領	ヌルスルタン・ナザルバエフ
人口	16,967,000人(2013年)
面積	2,717,300(9位)
GDP	35兆2,752億テンゲ
独立 (ソビエト連邦より)	1991年12月16日

Research purpose and aim

While researching the background, I noticed that there have been no special changes in the population of the Korean-Kazakhstani society, despite the Kazakh ethnic group-centered Kazakhization. Therefore, I hypothesized that the factors influencing the changes in the population are related to the receptive response of the Korean society for national integration.

In this study, I aim to consider the characteristics of the process of national integration in Kazakhstan, and to then clarify how the Korean diaspora accepted this process. Eventually, I want to expand the research to the dynamism of the Korean diaspora in contemporary Kazakhstan.

Results and achievements of fieldwork



Photo1: The first settlement after forced migration, Ushtobe-a



Photo2: The first settlement after forced migration, Ushtobe-b

For the fieldwork, I visited the main institutions of the Korean-Kazakhstani society, such as the Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan, Koryo Ilbo (Korean newspaper), a Korean theater, a Korean television station, a Korean radio station, a Korean school, and the Korean Cultural Center. I contacted the representatives of these institutions and conducted interviews with them.



Photo3: The general meeting of the Korean Cultural Center

The representatives suggested that the Kazakh ethnic group-centered Kazakhization in the Korean-Kazakhstani society progressed in various forms. Above all, the birthplace of Korean Kazakhstani and their self-identity affected their acceptance of the process. Therefore, it was important to define the meaning of “Korean” and to classify Koreans according to their hometown. This study examined the identity of Koreans as well as Korean Kazakhstani.

The results of the survey are twofold. The first one is about the classification and definition of “Korean.” “Korean” is a name that people gave themselves. I was looking for a historical perspective on why they call themselves as Koreans (Koryo-saram).

Further, the Korean diaspora can be classified by region as follows:

Koreans of the Maritime Province who migrated there, Koreans of Central Asia who were deported there in the Stalin era, and stateless Koreans who migrated to the former Soviet Union after its collapse.

The second is about the relation of the Korean-Kazakhstani society with Kazakhization and the relationship between Koreans and the Kazakh ethnic group. In the interviews I conducted, many Korean Kazakhstani claimed that they were raised by Kazakhstani. They mentioned that they have expressed their gratitude to the Kazakh ethnic group, as this group had shared their bread with them and supported them when they were deported. The Kazakh ethnic group also highly regards Korean Kazakhstani. Moreover, there is some sort of partnership between the Kazakh ethnic group, which had a nomadic culture, and the Koreans, who had an agricultural culture, involving role allocation.

In addition, young Korean Kazakhstani think that they need to learn Kazakh if they want to live with the Kazakh ethnic group in Kazakhstan. Likewise, they are very receptive to the relationship between a Korean Kazakhstani and the Kazakh ethnic group-centered Kazakhization.

Implications for future research

I discussed the definition of “Korean” and provided a regional classification of the Korean diaspora to expand the research to the dynamism of the Korean diaspora in contemporary Kazakhstan. It was the first step of my research. In the future, to gain wider perspectives on this subject, I need to conduct a more precise and detailed investigation. I then need to further consider the relationship between Kazakhization and the Korean-Kazakhstani society. The results can be reflected in the doctoral thesis.

In addition, in order to consider the contemporary Korean Kazakhstani’s identity, it would be necessary to study the relationship of other ethnic groups with Korean Kazakhstani.