

Transnational Care for Aged Parents Left Behind in Uzbekistan: A Case of *Koryoin* Migrants in Gwangju*

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(Abstract) The number of *Koryoin* (ethnic Koreans in post-Soviet states) migrants residing in South Korea is escalating as a result of the combined influence of various push and pull factors. Push factors include high unemployment and an uncertain future for the younger generation following Uzbek independence and the Uzbek government's ethnic-centric nationalism policies. Pull factors include South Korea's high salaries and an immigration policy open to overseas Koreans. Care for elderly *Koryoin* remaining in Uzbekistan after their children migrate to South Korea exhibits transnational characteristics. This study examines aspects of transnational caregiving practices for *Koryoin* elderly parents remaining in Uzbekistan who are cared for by their adult children who have returned to South Korea. The care practices are examined within a transnationally separated extended family network of Uzbek *Koryoin*. The study analyzes factors that influence the transnational care practices of *Koryoin* children in South Korea toward their older parents. Existing research on international migration and transnational families has mainly focused on nations where migrants settle down. Overlooked are the perspectives of elderly parents of migrants. This article aims to understand the following topics from the perspectives of older parents in particular: the emotional influence of children's international migration; transnational life and care practices of migrant children; prospects for the reunification of migrants and their parents. Multi-sited field work was carried out in South Korea and Uzbekistan to achieve these research objectives.

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1. Introduction

1) Research Objectives

Existing studies on international migration have considered ethnic groups or communities as main units of study and have shown little interest in micro-level units of transnational processes, such as families and households (Olwig 2002: 216). In this context, Gardner (2002: 191) stresses the need to pay attention to various transnational activities within households and families, in order to effectively understand the meanings and implications of transnationalism from the perspectives of ordinary people who are involved in international migration. The majority of existing studies on international migration have dealt with issues related to social and cultural adjustment, conflicts, and employment of migrants from the perspectives of receiving countries. Relatively few studies have examined family relations and the connections migrants maintain with their underage children or older parents who remain in the home country.

An increasing number of people are moving to foreign countries for diverse purposes. This phenomenon has led to growing academic interests in “transnational families,” the members of which are separated physically and live in different countries. Practices of “transnational care” among transnational family members are among the emerging topics of interest. According to the existing research on transnational families and transnational care (Al-Ali 2002; Baldassar 2007; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Zontini and Reynolds 2007), “transnational family” refers to a family whose members live far away from each other due to international migration, but still maintain a commitment to common family welfare and a sense of belonging together. Transnational family members are geographically separated. However, they carry out transnational care in a variety of ways. For example, the middle adult generation provides financial support for their children and elderly parents who remain in the home country. Family members offer mutual emotional support via varied means of communication and they visit each other.

Some research on transnational family care in the context of international migration has used the “global care chain” (Dreby 2006; Hochschild 2000, 2005; Parrenas 2001, 2005; Yeates 2009, 2012) concept and combined a wide range of topics including globalization, care, and migration. The researchers have attempted to analyze aspects of

transnational care practices among transnational parents, especially mothers caring for their children who remain in the home country. Furthermore, researchers have focused on the rising number of children who are left with surrogate parents such as grandparents or other relatives, since their real mothers migrated from developing countries in the Southern Hemisphere to work as domestics in developed Western nations in the Northern Hemisphere. More specifically, such research has focused on the maintenance of transnational relationships between mothers and children through practices of “transnational mothering.”

Recent studies in the junctures of international migration, family, and nursing (Baldassar 2007; Baldassar 2008; Baldock 2000; Treas 2008; Wilding 2006; Zechner 2008) underline the importance of carrying out further research on the relationship between adult children who have migrated to a foreign country and their older parents who remain behind in their home country, particularly regarding the issue of transnational care. Elderly parents get separated from their adult children either temporarily or for an infinite period of time as a result of their children’s international migration. A common assumption that care is provided only by those in physical proximity is challenged by the practices of members of such transnational families who offer emotional support to their parents through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and who provide material support through remittances and visits. These transnational care exchanges between older parents and adult children, who live geographically distant from one another across borders, tend not to be properly evaluated in the research on care.

The present research aims to examine various aspects of transnational care practices of Koryoin migrants toward their elderly parents remaining in the home country of Uzbekistan. In this article I refer to specific cases of care circulation, with a special focus on care of elderly parents within extended family networks of Uzbek Koryoin. Baldassar and Merla (2014) claim that transnational care among transnational family members circulates multi-directionally according to “generalized reciprocity.”¹

¹ “Generalized reciprocity” refers to a specific type of reciprocity. An individual provides materials or services to another person without expecting compensation. Generalized reciprocity serves to maintain families in all societies. For example, parents provide material and emotional support to their children, either because they want to do it or because of feelings of obligation. They do not calculate specifics of time invested or forms of returns to be provided by their children.

Examining the care practices of transnational family networks for older parents from this circulatory perspective leads to a better understanding of the various factors such as countries of residence, generation, migrant and non-migrant statuses, and ages of family members giving and receiving care. The research also confirms that financial and emotional care practices of individuals who are involved in international migration flow multi-directionally. Baldassar (2008) claims that transnational care of parents must be comprehended by connecting micro-elements, such as the lives of individuals including the migrants and their families, to macro-structures that influence their lives. He emphasizes that it is necessary to link transnational practices of individuals and families to the contexts, such as region and nation, in which they occur. Building on this approach, I analyze transnational care of Koryoin migrants toward their elderly parents by focusing on the interconnectivity of family members and relatives as micro-level factors, ethnic community and network as meso-level factors, and national immigration policy, welfare, and medical systems as macro-level factors. Transnational care of Koryoin migrants in South Korea toward their elderly parents in Uzbekistan can be expected to be carried out according to “negotiated commitments” that combine variously with micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors.

Around 25,000 Uzbek Koryoin were residing in South Korea in 2015.² Since Uzbek independence in the early 1990s, the number of Koryoin who enter South Korea has been rapidly increasing, especially among younger generation migrants. This is ascribed to push and pull factors: Push factors such as chronic unemployment, low salaries (around 100-150 US dollars for regular full-time jobs), intensification of Uzbek nationalism, and an increasingly rigid Uzbek political system; pull factors include immigration policies of the South Korean government that have offered open immigration for people of Korean heritage through the visiting work visa (H-2) made available in 2007 and the visa for overseas Koreans (F-4)

² Uzbek nationals residing in South Korea in August 2015 totaled 47,134. The number of Koryoin among these numbers was 20,010 including 14,150 Koryoin who hold working visit visas (H-2) and 5,149 Koryoin who hold permanent residence visas F-4 or permanent residence visas F-5. Adding the Koryoin who hold dependent residence visas makes the total number of Koryoin who are residing in Korea to be about 25,000. The number of Uzbek Koryoin in South Korea is surging. There were 6,475 Koryoin in Korea in 2010, 12,325 in 2012, 17,658 in 2014 (Bureau of Immigration and Foreign Policy, Ministry of Justice 2015).

available since 2008.

Adult Koryoin children in South Korea who are living far away from their aged parents invest a significant amount of time and money in providing care for their elderly parents in transnational situations. This research examines the specific processes and practices of transnational care by adult children in South Korea toward their elderly parents. It also accounts for the process of compromise among various factors that influence these caregiving practices. Research on international migration is often conducted by focusing on socio-cultural experiences of migrants in a host country. However, the present research aims to understand the practices and meanings of care provision by adult migrants for their parents from the viewpoint of their home country. I approach the topic primarily through the “perspectives of aging parents” in Uzbekistan in order to understand the following: 1) the emotional influence of children’s international migration on their left-behind elderly parents; 2) migrant children’s transnational lives and care practices; 3) the prospects of reunification of parents and children. Multi-sited field studies were conducted in South Korea and Uzbekistan in order to achieve this study’s objectives.

2) Transnational Families and Transnational Care

Research on caregiving in transnational families gained impetus when the “global care chain” (Hochschild 2000) concept was applied to “transnational mothering” of children in “care drain” circumstances, a result of the international migration of mothers. Researchers who study transnational care (Hochschild 2000, 2005; Parrenas 2001, 2005; Yeates 2009, 2012) apply this concept to argue that a global care chain is formed as women in the Southern Hemisphere move to the Northern Hemisphere to take care of the children of women who work full-time in the Northern Hemisphere. As a result, the children of those women from the Southern Hemisphere are taken care of by surrogate women. This concept assumes a unidirectional movement of care, which flows globally from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern Hemisphere following the chain. The theory emphasizes “commercialization of care,” indicating that care flows in one-direction and the money flows in the opposite direction. The global care chain concept rests on the premise that the migrants and the migrant’s income, which is returned in part as cash remittance to the home country,

move in opposite directions of the chain. Analysis using the global care chain has been widely cited and contributes to the understanding of the political economy of global care by examining commercialization of care in transnational mothering. It is considered to be a useful concept that highlights global structural inequalities based on social differentiations, such as different classes, races, ethnicities, and genders.

However, there are concerned voices regarding the limits of the global care chain concept, more specifically its application to studying care in the context of international migration.³ Baldassar and Merla emphasize that care may circulate among various extended family members in a manner that goes beyond the chain principle. Researchers who stress circulation of care point out that the “care chain” assumes merely a dyadic relationship between two groups of agents, migrants and their left-behind families. The researchers claim, however, that care actually moves multi-directionally and circulates among various extended family members. Researchers who argue for care circulating claim that family members and other relatives of migrants are both providers and beneficiaries of care. And even though circulating care exhibits characteristics of generalized reciprocity, it moves concurrently, diachronically, and asymmetrically (unequally) among members of many different generations. Consequently, care that was provided by an individual to another family member in a specific period can be returned to the individual by different family members in asymmetrical (unequal) form.

The concept of the care chain is premised on the assumption that the chain leads to care drain and will inevitably bring negative results not only to the family, especially parents and children, but also to the sending countries. This negative perspective derives from the assumption that care can only be given or shared by those in close proximity. However,

³ The following section considers examples of criticism of this concept by researchers. It describes female domestic helpers simply as helpless victims of the global economy (Ryan 2011); it gives only partial and stagnant descriptions of transnational care arrangements (Escriva and Skinner 2003); mother and child’s separation belongs to a specific stage in migration and family cycle. In other words, migrating with a child, or leaving the child behind and reunifying in the home country or in the host country, are outcomes of specific strategies used by family units who make choices depending on structural and personal opportunities, resources and confinement factors in the home country and the host country. Regarding this, the perspective of the “global care chain” fails to recognize the agency of diverse migrant family members (Erel 2012; Huang, Yeoh and Toyota 2012).

transnational families can practice transnational care in various ways in the scope of “transnational social fields.” One cannot assume that transnational care is inferior in quality compared to the care that is carried out by those in close proximity. In transnational circumstances, “virtual intimacy” among transnational family members is created via material supports and ICTs. Families also visit the home country for care purposes and maintain a sense of belonging as a family. Therefore, care provision need not be limited to people in geographic proximity. Care practices of transnational families should not be assumed to be unstable in nature.

The care chain concept presumes that a care drain⁴ occurs in all transnational families. “Drain” indicates that the workforce needed to take care of one’s own family members in one’s home country exits the home country when women leave to work as domestic helpers or elderly care workers for family members of employers in foreign countries, especially the wealthy countries. However, not all transnational families experience a care drain. The care chain concept cannot be used to effectively analyze cases of adult international migrant children who work in industries other than the care industry. In these cases, adult migrant children are able to transnationally care for elderly parents who are left-behind by using family and kinship networks spread out in various countries. The care chain concept is, therefore, inadequate for analysis of transnational care relationships of middle-class migrants, skilled migrants, and their left-behind family members, such as children and elderly parents (Dreby 2006; Sorensen and Guarnizo 2007).

Research on transnational care of elderly parents is relatively recent compared to research on transnational mothering. Several studies (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007; Vullnetari and King 2008) that combine research on international migration, family, and the elderly criticize existing research on gerontology and family not only for assuming physical proximity in generational care, but also for conceptualizing family as a private geographically located domain, or as a basic reproduction unit

⁴ The “brain drain” concept, frequently mentioned in the context of international migration, refers to a phenomenon where high-quality human resources move to other countries, especially industrially developed nations, and stay there to work. This can result in serious negative influence of socio economic circumstances in the home countries. As such, brain drain has been one of the most serious problems in developing nations and it has been perceived as an obstacle for development of these nations.

in patriarchal nations. Research (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007; Merla 2012; Treas 2008; Vullnetari and King 2008; Zechner 2008) on adult international migrant's transnational care of elderly parents instead conceptualizes international migration as a complex series of connections extending over a lifetime among dispersed family members and other relatives, rather than as a one-time movement of some individuals to a receiving country. These scholars claim that practices of transnational care toward elderly parents in the home country are one of the most significant examples of interconnectivity among the members of transnational families.

These researchers state that transnational care of elderly parents is carried out through providing emotional support via letters, phone calls, emails, and text messages and through providing material support and by visiting. They state that international migration should not be branded as a situation that brings negative results, such as transnational family fragmentation or weakening of family bonds, as a result of separated elderly parents and children. Instead, the researchers stress the importance of focusing on various methods of transnational care conducted by adult children towards their faraway parents in transnational circumstances.

Research on transnational families that has been carried out in South Korea has mostly focused on "goose families" (*gireogi gajok*), Korean-Chinese domestic workers, and foreign women who married Korean men to move to Korea in search of better economic opportunities. Goose families (Kang Yujin 2009; Kim Seonmi 2009; Bak Gyeonghwan and Baek Ilsun 2012) are created as a result of children's study abroad. Research on goose families deals with fragmented and transnational families. Such research on goose families also addresses the experiences and identity of mothers who live as full-time housewives in foreign countries in order to support their children's study abroad. Research on female migrant care workers (Li 2012; Bak Hongju 2009; Tsujimoto 2012) mainly focuses on Korean-Chinese women and Filipino women and addresses experiences of migrant domestic helpers, transnational family issues, and feminization of migration.

Several research projects have been carried out on the transnational family bond in South Korea. They focus on topics of multinational families and immigrant laborers. For example, research on transnational family bonds of marriage migrant women (Kim Hyeseon 2014; Dan Hyohong and Kim Gyeonghak 2015; Heo Yeongsuk 2013) emphasize that women

who migrate to marry and who are, therefore, transnational family members, maintain their family networks across borders and carry out socio-economic transnational care for family members in their home country. Furthermore, research that examines maintenance of transnational family relationships and care practices of migrant laborers toward their family members in their home countries (Kim Gyeonghak 2014b) underscores that migrant laborers practice transnational care by regular remittance, by emotional support through ICTs, by visiting home country and more. A research study (Chae Suhong 2014) that examined transnational life and family bonds of Korean managers who work in Korean multinational factories in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, is worthy of notice. This research pointed out that studies on transnational families have been focused on migrant laborers and elites, but neglect middle-rank laborers such as factory managers or skilled managers.

Among the few researchers who have studied Koryoin who reside in South Korea some scholars used survey as a method to look at the actual circumstances of migration backgrounds and settlement forms of Koryoin in South Korea (Kim Yeongsul and Hong Inhwa 2013; Kim Jaegi 2014; O Jeongeun, Kang Huiyeong, and Seong Donggi 2014). This research used qualitative data to deal with topics of migration, settlement processes, and return migrations of Koryoin. However, no existing research has dealt with the transnational families and family members who remain in the home countries of the Koryoin who settled in South Korea. In this sense, they have neglected to focus on transnational relationships, especially transnational care between children and elderly parents. As the influx of Koryoin to South Korea escalates, the number of family members remaining in their home countries, especially the number of older parents left behind is gradually on the rise. This study provides a well-timed examination of transnational care by adult international migrant children toward their older parents who stay in Uzbekistan, where the institutional framework for social security for the elderly generation is weak.

2. Research Objects and Methods

Since Uzbek independence, poor economic conditions as well as the new government's rigid political system have forced more than 2.5 million people to leave the country and migrate abroad in search of jobs. Major

immigration destinations of Uzbeks are Russia, Kazakhstan, European Union states, and South Korea. Nearly 85 percent of the Uzbekistan migrants have moved to Russia (Parpiev 2015) and according to the Russian federal migration service, around 2.2 million Uzbek nationals resided in Russia in January 2015. At the end of 2014, the number of Koryoin in Uzbekistan was 182,957. Nearly 75 percent (136,520) of these Koryoin lived in Tashkent city and its surrounds (Bureau of Immigration and Foreign Policy 2015). It is not possible to accurately assess the number of Koryoin immigrants per each migration destination. However, the number migrating to South Korea is increasing. Just as other Uzbek international migrants head for Russia, a large number of Koryoin have migrated to Russia. They move not only to big cities like Moscow, but also to areas such as the Maritime Province and Volga. Koryoin's migration to Russia is ongoing. Researchers like O and colleagues claim that migration to Russia is the dominant pattern among the Koryoin because the criteria they consider important for deciding where to migrate include: frequent use of the Russian language at the destination, the possibility of obtaining a new nationality, likely income increases, and improvement of their social class. Although the younger generation of Koryoin might prefer to migrate to South Korea those who wish to find specialized jobs or white-collar jobs typically choose to migrate to Russia, because they speak the Russian language, and also because their education and career in Uzbekistan are recognized in Russia. Another contributing factor is the fact that many migrants have a vast range of family and relatives residing in Russia.⁵

At the end of August 2015, the number of Uzbek nationals residing in South Korea was 47,134. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 among them, which is around 53 percent, are Koryoin. Uzbek nationals who entered South Korea via an Employment Permit System (E-9) are 16,560, accounting for nearly 35 percent of the total Uzbek entrants. It is difficult to determine the exact number of Koryoin who reside in the Gwangju metropolitan area. This is largely due to the fact that even though alien registration and place of residence registration is obligatory, in some cases

⁵ For example, I met Bak Vladimir, the younger brother of Bak Anatolia, in early January in 2015 in Tashkent. At the time, Vladimir was working as a doctor at a public hospital in Tashkent. In August 2015, Vladimir migrated to Russia, and he is currently working as a doctor in Russia. The second son of Kim Ernest (56) graduated from a school of medicine in Uzbekistan, and he is currently studying in a medical school in Moscow. He is planning to work as a doctor in Russia.

the actual residence differs from the registered address. According to the Koryoin Support Center in Gwangju, approximately 2000-2500 Koryoin reside in the Gwangju metropolitan area in Gwangsan-gu.⁶

“Koryoin Town” in Gwangju has been the area of highest Koryoin population density since the mid-2000s, when many Koryoin began to live in the Wolgok-dong, Sanjeong-dong, and Usan-dong areas of Gwangju. The reason why the Koryoin population density is high in the Gwangju metropolitan area is because there are major industrial complexes there. For example, Hanam-, Pyeongdong-, and Sochon industrial complexes are located in this region. The Koryoin Family Support Center, Saenal Daycare Center, Koryoin Town Community Child Care Center, and Koryoin Town Cooperative are all located in Wolgok-dong. Saenal School, a government-funded school where more than half of students are Koryoin, the Foreign Laborer Healthcare Center, and Koryoin Town’s healthcare coordinating centers are also located in Gwangju metropolitan area. Furthermore, the Koryoin Family Support Center opened in early September 2015, thanks to nearly 240 million won in patronage from citizens and organizations. As we can see from these examples, Gwangju City’s community interest in the Koryoin society is high.

I conducted “multi-sited ethnographic research” to examine the transnational care given by adult Koryoin migrant children in the Gwangju metropolitan area to their ageing parents remaining in Uzbekistan. First, in 2014 I carried out participant observation of Koryoin who attended various events arranged by the Koryoin Family Support Center in the Gwangju metropolitan area, such as Chuseok Koryoin Hanmadang Festival and Koryoin Day. Between June 2014 and September 2015 I also conducted in-depth interviews with members of 10 Koryoin families, who live in Gwangsan-gu. I collected an average of two to three in-depth interviews for each family asking about their immigration processes to South Korea and the transnational care practices toward their elderly parents in the home country. In four out of 10 families, both husband and wife participated directly in interviews. In the remaining 6 families, one person of a married couple participated in the interviews. All of the

⁶ More than 95 percent of the Koryoin residents in Gwangju metropolitan area are from Uzbekistan. Among the Uzbek Koryoin who have an overseas Korean visa (F-4), which obligates residence status reports, 292 Koryoin residents are residing in Gwangju metropolitan area, and about 95 percent of them, which is 276, are residing in Gwangsan-gu.

interviewees had siblings and relatives in Gwangju and in other cities in South Korea.

Two out of 10 families had visit employment visas (H-2). The remaining 8 families had F-4 visas for overseas Koreans. Their period of residence in South Korea had been between a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years. Their average period of residence in South Korea was around three years and 9 months. All married couples of the 10 families lived in Wolgok-dong and Sanjeong-dong in Gwangsan-gu in the Gwangju metropolitan area. Most of them had jobs in Hanam-, Sochon-, or Pyeongdong industrial complexes, while a few people worked as day laborers. The income of the families was not stable. The combined income of married couples averaged 3-3.5 million won per month. Eight families lived in single family houses. One of the 10 families was paying monthly rent for a unit in a small apartment building and another family paid monthly rent in a large apartment building.

I conducted field work for three weeks between December 2014 and January 2014 in Tashkent City and its nearby areas in Uzbekistan to study the elderly parents of 9 families⁷ who had moved to Gwangju. Interviews with the elderly parents were conducted for two to three hours in their own houses. I interviewed not only the elderly parents, but also some of the siblings of either the elderly parents or the adult children who had migrated to Gwangju. By interviewing the elderly parents in their own houses in Uzbekistan, I was able to collect diverse information. For example, I could look into the structure of their houses, family photos on the walls, DVD footage of wedding ceremonies of the adult migrant children, and the 60th birthday parties of older parents. Further, I could check whether they owned computers or not, and look at the rooms in the houses used by the adult children, before they migrated, and more. This information helped me infer the ways they expressed feelings of missing their adult children who had migrated and left them behind.

Out of all the aged parents I studied, the elderly parents of 6 families lived in apartment buildings in Tashkent City. The remaining three families with elderly parents lived in rural villages near Tashkent. The ages of fathers of all families were between 64 and 71, and their average age was

⁷ Out of the 10 families in the Gwangju area, one family was excluded due to the elderly parents visiting their relatives in Russia during my field study period in Uzbekistan. As a result, I studied the elderly parents of 9 families during my field trip.

64. The ages of mothers were between 54 and 78, and their average age was 63.5. Out of 9 elderly parents, 8 were currently receiving pensions from the government. One elderly couple however, was too young to receive this pension, which can be received when they reach the minimum pension age (60 years old for males, 55 years old for females). The amount of the pensions received by the 8 couples ranged between 150-420 US dollars per month, while the average monthly joint pension of the 8 couples was approximately 285 US dollars.

In addition to interviewing the 9 families in Uzbekistan, who are elderly parents of the adult children who reside in Gwangju, I also conducted field research in Arirang Nursing Home, which accommodates the elderly Koryoin who had been forcefully resettled. Arirang Nursing Home is located in Yuqori Chirchik (Siongo area) in Tashkent. In December 2014, 39 Koryoin were accommodated in this institution. I interviewed three elderly among them whose children had migrated to South Korea, along with the vice president of the institution. I was able to collect information on the general background of people in the nursing home and inquire about the stature of this home for the elderly in Uzbekistan. I further interviewed two men and one woman for about two hours regarding their background stories, their thoughts, and their children's thoughts, on their entering the nursing home.

During the Uzbekistan field research period, I conducted interviews with elderly parents of three families whose adult children live in Ansan, Gyeonggi-do. These interviews were conducted in January and February 2015. The interviews with their adult children had focused on topics such as: their opinions of their aged parents remaining in the home country, the children's international migration, transnational care, and plans for family reunification. I followed up on these topics in a second set of interviews I conducted with adult children in Gwangju, between April and August in 2015. What is significant in this research is that the mothers of three of the families I interviewed in Uzbekistan had visited their adult children in Gwangju, and due to this circumstance, I could interview them for the second time in Gwangju. One mother visited Gwangju in order to help with her daughter-in-law's childbirth. Another mother visited Gwangju to comfort her eldest daughter, whose husband had died, and the last mother visited for vacation. I paid attention to the fact, that two of these mothers visited their adult children in Gwangju in order to give emotional support during a family crisis such as childbirth or death. The second interview I

conducted with these parents provided further confirmation as to the notion that care in these transnational families has a cyclical pattern that “crosses generations.” This research followed my research subjects who move transnationally; Koryoin in Gwangju, the aged parents in Uzbekistan, Koryoin in Ansan, and aged parents in Gwangju. This research uses pseudonyms for all the Koryoin for the protection of their privacy.

3. Care Culture of Koryoin Families

Koryoin in the Central Asian region, including Uzbekistan, migrated from the Korean peninsula to Russia’s Maritime Province and other Central Asian regions. They experienced the Soviet Union era for more than 60 years. On top of this, since the 1990s, they had lived in the Uzbek Republic. During these periods, Uzbek Koryoin were influenced by socialist ideology and were also influenced by various ethnic cultures, including Russian and Uzbek ethnicities. However, despite the external influences and changes as a result of interacting with other ethnics, the Koryoin maintained the Korean cultural tradition in the domain of their family and relatives. The Koryoin have a tradition of strong family connections. Jang Junhui (2011: 225-226) argues that the perception of ancestors and family traditions is deeply rooted in Koryoin families. This, he argues, is because they did not have many people to rely on other than their family members once they were deported to Central Asia, where they were classified as a hostile ethnic enemy and had no freedom of movement.⁸

The Uzbek Koryoin society still highly values the kinship bond and tries to pass on the paternal surname, which is related to their preference for sons. Even though Koryoin individuals prefer to live separately from their parents when they get married, they have a strong sense of obligation to care for their aged parents. Thus, even if Koryoin children live geographically distant from their parents, the adult children continue the tradition of providing care for them. They do this, for example, by financially supporting their elderly parents. Their siblings who remain

⁸ (Editor’s note) This refers to the deportation of ethnic Koreans from Far East to Central Asia in 1937 by the Stalin regime.

behind may also live with a parent who is left alone after their spouse dies (Kim Yonghwan 1999: 88-95). Socialism's influence on social expectations of Uzbek Koryoin women has not been huge. Uzbek Koryoin women are expected to focus on their role as a mother inside the family, rather than as a worker outside in society. For example, Koryoin women are expected to focus on cooking meals and doing housekeeping. On one hand, Koryoin men are expected to have a career, work in society, and lead the family. Koryoin parents say that they wish their children would be independent in their lives, rather than caring for their parents. However, on the other hand, Koryoin parents also have a strong desire to depend on their sons when they are old. In the traditional notion of family among Koryoin, sons—the first son in particular—are expected to take care of their parents in their old age. This notion still remains in modern Koryoin society (Yi Jeongok 1996: 141-145).

The Koryoin deportation generation, and the second and third generation of immigrant Koryoin, lived in extended families with their grandparents who were taken care of by their parents. Because they directly experienced this type of parental care, they perceive it as a natural part of filial piety. Most adult children of Koryoin who reside in Korea are third or fourth generation offspring of those who were resettled. Among them, especially those whose parents lived with their grandparents and provided care, a high value is placed on the Korean cultural concept of elderly care. The father of Kim Gregory (male, 33) from the Yuqori Chirchik area (the Siongo area), located in a rural village near Tashkent City, was the second son among five siblings (three sons and two daughters). When his older brother migrated to Russia in the mid-1990s after Uzbek Independence, he (Gregory's father) started to live with his mother. Gregory's parents took care of his grandmother until she died, and experiencing this example has led Gregory to believe that it is his natural duty as the only son in the vicinity to live with his mother.⁹

⁹ Kim Gregory who lives in Gwangju believes that it is difficult to acquire permanent residence in South Korea for various reasons including language requirements. He said that he is planning to buy an apartment in Tashkent with the money he earns in South Korea. One day he will give this apartment to his son, in order for him to live with his parents in Siongo Village and take care of them. Gregory thinks that it is his duty to take care of his parents because his older sister is married to a Korean man, and will continue to live in South Korea, and because his other sister is younger than him, and is a woman.

Adult children of Koryoin believe that paying back the love and care they received from their parents is a natural cycle of care. Kim Anna (Female, 46) lives in Ttetgol in Ansan in Gyeonggi-do. Both parents of Anna used to work as teachers, and now are living in Nirnchirchic, a rural village near Tashkent City. In the Soviet era, teacher salaries were too low to allow the parents to provide a college education for all four children at one time. Anna's mother sold corn and other things in markets to pay for her children's education. She continued to do this work and struggled even after Uzbek independence. Currently, Anna's two sisters live in Tashkent and her younger brother lives in Russia. Anna says it is now the children's turn to provide care for the parents. She said that even though she lives abroad, she feels obligated to offer care for her parents through remittances and international phone calls.

Other Koryoin parents in this research were also expecting their children to take care of them. They especially had such expectations of their sons. The sons also thought it their duty to provide this care for their parents. Koryoin who only have daughters normally leave their property in their will to the child who provided care for them until the very last moment. Regardless, daughters of Koryoin families tend to actively provide care for their parents all together. For example, a Koryoin daughter who has male siblings will supplement her brothers' care by providing her parents with regular emotional support through remittances, gifts, international phone calls, and more. In this research, Son Elena (female, 29), Hwang Lyudmila (female, 49), and Choe Roja (female, 31), who do not have any male siblings, were transnationally taking care of their parents by inviting them to South Korea for short periods of time. They also sent regular remittances to their parents and visited them in the home country.

The strength of Koryoin family and kinship ties is clearly displayed through their rites of passage. Birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, 60th birthday parties, and funerals are considered important in the Koryoin society. In these rites of passage, Koryoin would invite as many families and neighbors as possible, as long as they are able to afford it. Koryoin people say that it is customary for Koryoin grandparents to hold their grandchildren's first birthday party, and the adult children to hold the 60th birthday party for their parents. This is an example of the "intergenerational reciprocity" of care among Koryoin. Out of many rites of passage in Korean culture, the 60th birthday party of older parents is a conspicuous example that reflects the sense adult children have regarding their

responsibility for the care of their parents. Holding a grand 60th birthday party is perceived as a desirable way to practice the care of parents. Therefore, excluding rare cases such as the death of a family member, illness of parents, or when one cannot afford to hold the birthday party, adult children of Koryoin hold a big 60th birthday party for their parents.

One of the main purposes of international migration for Baek Sergey (male, 35) and Hwang Lyudmila (female, 49) who live in Gwangju, was earning the funds to hold their mother's 60th birthday party. The 60th birthday party of the mother of Sergey had been postponed because Sergey's maternal grandmother passed away in the year Sergey's mother turned 60. Sergey explained that raising a great amount of money to hold an even grander delayed birthday party for his mother, was one of the reasons he migrated to South Korea. Lyudmila has two female siblings and she does not have any male siblings. When her mother turned 60, Lyudmila was financially struggling and had to postpone her mother's 60th birthday party. Lyudmila then moved to Kazakhstan, where she sold clothes imported from China. She saved money for about 4 years doing this work, and when her mother turned 70, she held a big 70th birthday party for her.¹⁰

The expression of patronage and respect for parents continues even after the death of the parents of Koryoin. This notion is well reflected in their rituals. Uzbek Koryoin perform a "third-day rite" on the next day after a burial, a "first rite" (also known as "second year rite") one year after a parent's death, and a "third-year rite" two years after a parent's death. After the third-year rite, Koryoin burn the mourning clothes of both men and women. This is called "departing mourning" (*talsang*). After the death of the parents most of the family events that include drinking or dancing such as the 60th birthday parties are withheld until the end of mourning (Kim Elena 2014). This is regarded as honoring the deceased parents.

Bak Anatolia's mother (58 years old) had been delaying taking up an invitation from her eldest son, Anatolia (male, 39), to visit South Korea, out of respect for her own deceased mother, who passed away in 2014. Even though Anatolia tried to invite his mother to South Korea, the visit

¹⁰ Hwang Lyudmila's mother (78), whom I met in Gwangju in March in 2015, has two daughters and no sons. Lyudmila is her second daughter. Lyudmila's mother mentioned that she bragged to other Koryoin that, "even though I only have daughters, they held the 60th birthday party for me." According to her, Koryoin parents who only have daughters sometimes do not get to hold a large-scale 60th birthday party.

had to be delayed, because his mother refused to leave Uzbekistan until the end of the third-year rite. I met Anatolia's mother in Tashkent. She recounted that she refused the invitation of her eldest son to visit South Korea, because, "I have to continue to mourn for my mother's death. I am worried that if I go to South Korea, I will forget that my mother has passed away. That will make me feel guilty."

In Koryoin society, providing care for elderly parents is seen as the duty of family members, especially the children. All of the elderly parents of this study are expecting to be cared for by their children, who will live with them or live close to them. They described that they cannot even imagine living at a nursing home, because they have their own children. Adult children of Koryoin also consider it unfilial to send one's parents to a nursing home and not take care of them directly. Arirang Nursing Home is an institution established for the forced resettlement generation of Koryoin in Uzbekistan. I interviewed Cha Constantine (male, 74), Jo Clara (female, 80), and Choe Ernest (male, 90) who live in this institution. As soon as the interview started, all three of them emphasized that, "my children were against putting me in a nursing home, but I insisted on it." They seemed to be trying to protect the decency of their children who sent them to a nursing home, by emphasizing that they insisted on going there. Their attitude suggests that in Koryoin society, putting one's parents in a nursing home, instead of taking care of them directly, carries a negative social stigma. The children of the three interviewees moved to foreign countries including Russia, South Korea, and Kazakhstan. The interviewees do not have any children or grandchildren who live in Uzbekistan. Therefore, they do not have any child who can take care of them when their spouse dies. For instance, Ernest (male, 90) has two daughters. His eldest daughter migrated to the United States four years ago and his second daughter, who was a dentist, married a South Korean man and moved to Korea three years ago. His eldest granddaughter who did not follow her family to the United States remained in Uzbekistan and took care of Ernest for one year. However, she recently moved to America. After that, his second daughter suggested that Ernest come to South Korea and live with her. Ernest did not want to be a burden on his daughter, so he strongly insisted on entering a nursing home. Ernest's daughter who lives in Korea visits him in the nursing home twice a year, while the oldest daughter in the United States visits him once a year. Both daughters call him every Sunday.

I asked the elderly parents in this research about their opinions on

living in a nursing home. They expressed strong antipathy toward my question and said, “Why will I go to a nursing home when I have children?” According to the vice chief (female) of the Arirang Nursing Home, most elderly Koryoin try to avoid going to a nursing home even when they do not have any children. They would rather adopt a daughter, if they can afford it. As is clearly reflected in the statements of the elderly parents and their children about sending one’s parents to a nursing home, Koryoin believe that it is the children’s duty to take care of their aged parents. Parents may try to emphasize their independence in their old age, by stating that they are trying not to depend on their children. However, their expectation is that their children would take care of them in their old age.

4. Transnational Care Practices toward Aged Parents

Koryoin adult children who migrated to South Korea, leaving behind their parents in Uzbekistan, provide care for their elderly parents in various forms, even though they live far away. The strong emotional bond among members of transnational families and their high level of mutual trust help them overcome various obstacles regarding great physical distance and help them strive to care for each other (Gouldbourne and Chamberlain 2001: 42; Mason 1999: 9). However, it is difficult for adult children who are physically distant from their parents to offer a timely response to their parents remaining in their home country when they are desperately in need of help.

Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding state that transnational care provision is mediated by a logical system within the family network. Families compromise their commitments regarding care provision according to their different potentials (abilities) and culturally expected care duties (2007). Differences might exist between one’s willingness and the actual possibility to provide care. Variables that intervene in the desire to deliver care include: the health of a family relation, available financial assets and time, cultural perceptions such as social expectations for children to provide care for parents. Such factors influence the level of commitment and methods that children, who live in different countries, assume when involved in transnational care practices toward their parents in the home country. The most common methods of transnational care for parents include emotional

support, such as regular phone calls, faxes, letters, emails, and text messages using the mobile communication system; financial support including cash and gift exchange; and visiting the home country or the host country to assist other family members.

1) Financial Support via Remittances

Remittances from transnational migrants does not simply refer to a “money flow,” which is sending a fraction of one’s income from a place of settlement to families in their home country. Remittance is an important transnational care practice of migrants, especially for migrants’ ageing parents and children. Remittances of transnational migrants contribute to improving the living standards and the medical welfare of older parents. Therefore, remittances are perceived as one of the most significant transnational care practices. In countries like Uzbekistan, where employment rates and wages are low, the younger generation of Koryoin faces economic difficulties. Many of them migrate to countries like Russia, Kazakhstan, and South Korea to find jobs. This phenomenon exposes the ageing parents remaining in the home country to an economic hazard. Therefore, their children who live abroad provide financial support to their older parents, either regularly or as possible.

Many elderly parents in this study live in apartment buildings in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Some of them also live in single-family houses in rural villages near Tashkent City. The average amount of combined monthly pension of the elderly couples of 12 families in this study who were living in Uzbekistan was around 285 US dollars. One may be able to cover the cost of basic fees for food and house management with this amount of money. However, this pension is not enough to cover medical bills and other formal expenses. Among these families 9 children were living in Gwangju and three in Ansan. The mother (64 years old) of Han Sergey (male, 37) lives in an apartment in Tashkent City. She receives around 250 US dollars per month as a pension. With her pension money, she can pay for daily living expenses as well as apartment management fees. However, it is difficult for her to pay for medical fees, such as purchasing blood pressure medication. The medical costs for Sergey’s mother are paid with monthly remittances of 150 US dollars sent by Sergey, her son, who lives in South Korea, and by irregular remittances of her two daughters who live respectively in South Korea and Kazakhstan.

Elderly parents suffer from chronic symptoms associated with blood pressure aberrations and diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and neuralgia. As such, the aged parents spend most of their pensions to regularly purchase medications. Without receiving remittances from their children, it would be difficult for these parents to afford a normal daily life. Mother (64 years old) of Song Kseniya (female, 41), who lives in Gwangju, spends a quarter of the combined pension that she receives plus that of her husband to buy blood pressure and heart disease medications. In Uzbekistan public hospitals cost much less than private hospitals, as they offer free hospitalization, but individuals have to pay other fees, for check-ups, prescriptions, and medications.¹¹ Kseniya lives in South Korea and has a brother and an older sister. Her older sister's family migrated to the United States almost 10 years ago, and Kseniya's younger brother owns a computer parts shop in Tashkent. Her older sister's husband is ill and they are struggling economically. As a result, Kseniya's sister cannot send a remittance to their parents. Kseniya regularly remits funds to her parents from Gwangju, and her younger brother also financially supports their parents. Kseniya's younger brother believes that a son should be responsible for providing care for his parents. Therefore, he feels it is his duty to send the allowance money to their parents. Kseniya provides full support to her younger brother when he comes to South Korea to buy computer parts. For example, Kseniya would provide him with accommodations in Korea. She is grateful for her brother who lives close to their parents and provides care directly.

Baek Sergey (male, 35) remits funds to his older brother (39). Sergey asks his brother to take their parents to private hospitals instead of public hospitals for the treatment of high blood pressure and low blood pressure. Sergey sends money to pay for his parent's regular prescriptions and to purchase medicine for the blood pressure problems their parents face. His older brother in Uzbekistan lives close to their parents and he provides direct care. As such, the two brothers divide the roles of parental care.

It is hard for Koryoin couples to maintain a stable combined monthly income higher than 3 million won. Therefore, it is very difficult for them

¹¹ According to Bak Vladimir (male, 39), a doctor in Tashkent, there is a great difference between the medical cost of public hospitals and private hospitals. For example, it costs approximately 1.5 USD to take X-ray photos at government-run hospitals, while the cost is around 15 USD in private hospitals.

to send regular remittances to their parents and afford the expensive cost of living in South Korea. For example, they have to pay for housing, raise their children and provide them with an education. In this research, all of the adult children of Koryoin who send regular remittances to their parents had siblings in foreign countries or have entrusted their own children to their parents remaining in Uzbekistan. Five out of 12 Koryoin families (including the three families in Ansan) send regular remittances between 200,000 and 400,000 won to their parents. The remaining two families entrusted their children to be taken care of by their parents in Uzbekistan. The last three families have siblings who live in South Korea. Bak Anatolia (male, 39) and Kim Elena (female, 34) are married. They work in factories, and their combined income is approximately four million won per month. The couple sends an allowance to Anatolia's parents and also sends the money for child support for their daughter (6 years old) who is living with his parents.¹² Elena sends money for daily living to her mother who lives in Urganch, in Uzbekistan, and who is taking care of Elena's daughter (14 years old) from a previous marriage. Elena's husband, Anatolia, also sends monthly spousal and child support to his ex-wife who is taking care of two children from their previous marriage.

The amount of a remittance, and the amount of one's feeling of obligation to send remittances, varies depending on the individual situation of a sibling set. There is little room for conflict when siblings experience these challenges. In this research, in most cases, sons felt a greater obligation to send remittances to their parents than did their female siblings. In the cases of women who did not have any male siblings, the oldest daughters felt a larger obligation to send remittances than did their younger sisters. Unmarried men and women more actively sent remittances to their parents than did their married counterparts. In general, Koryoin children felt their female siblings, who are married to Korean men, should take care of their husband's parents. Thus, it was the other siblings' duty to provide care for the parents in Uzbekistan.

¹² Bak Anatolia's parents receive remittances from their children. With this money, Anatolia's parents pay for the expense of kindergarten and after-school education of their grandchildren. They are saving the rest of the remittances, because they are planning to give the savings to their children when they return to Uzbekistan. In order to give these remittances to the children, Anatolia's mother has been not only saving the monthly remittances, but she also saved the 500 US dollars, which her son sent in 2013 to pay for the medical expenses of his father.

The remaining seven Koryoin families in this research sent irregular remittances to their parents. They sent remittances only on special occasions, such as birthdays of parents, the Lunar New Year's Day, Chuseok, New Year's Day, and Mother's Day. They also sent remittances in special situations that required urgent cash, for example, when parents fell ill. Adult children who send irregular remittances were in the following situations: they had spent most of their income to pay for a child's overseas education or they had other siblings who work in Tashkent and pay for part of their parent living expenses. Hwang Tatiana's (female, 84) first son, Kim Ernest (56), lives in Ansan, and her second son (52) lives in Pyeongtaek. After Tatiana's sons moved to South Korea, her daughter (56), who is a doctor in Arirang Nursing Home, has been living with her. Tatiana's eldest son is sending her irregular remittances. The irregularity is due to the fact that Ernest also has to pay for his son's tuition and living expenses while he studies in a medical school in Russia. His younger brother understands this situation, and therefore the younger son sends remittances and gifts to her more frequently than Ernest. Ernest is grateful to his younger sister who lives with their mother, and to express his appreciation, he sometimes sends gifts to his younger sister's daughter (18), for example a smartphone.

2) Emotional Support via Means of Communications

Thomas (1993) defined emotional support as "an emotional state in which a person holds interest in another person." He declares that emotional support is different from "a state of practicing care." Children who are geographically far away from their parents cannot take care of their parents physically. Therefore, migrants who live at distant from their family often use ICTs such as international phone calls and Skype, in order to provide "emotional support" to their parents in their home country. It is not easy for Koryoin migrants in South Korea to visit their home countries and take care of their parents. Therefore, Koryoin migrants use ICTs to keep up with the current state of their parents emotional and physical health, or to deliver information to them. In the virtual spaces, migrants can express to their parents that "I am thinking about you," even though they are far away. All Koryoin migrants in this research routinely offered this type of emotional support to their parents.

The frequency of using ICTs for communication differs depending on individuals and families. All of the Koryoin migrants in South Korea of

this research worked during the weekdays. Most of the time, they talked to their parents on weekends. If the parents in Uzbekistan did not answer the phone at the time of the day when they usually do, the children in Korea tried to find out why their parents could not be reached, for example by calling their relatives in Uzbekistan. Choe Pyotor, who lives in a rural village near Tashkent City, talked about his experiences:¹³

My sons and daughters in South Korea call me on weekends most of the time. So I calculate the time difference, and when it is time to get calls from them, I carry around my cell phone. If they cannot reach me, they will call all the relatives who live nearby, and make a “fuss” saying my mom and dad are not answering phones, did something happen. I often get scolded by people around me when I can’t answer the phones. Still, it is nice to know that children are always thinking about us.

As Pyotor described, Koryoin parents feel that their children are interested in them even when their children cause a “fuss” because they did not answer the phone. Choe Roja’s mother, Bak Natalia (57) who lives in Tashkent City frequently receives calls from her three daughters in South Korea, sometimes two or three times a day. Natalia often cries when her daughters call her, because she misses them very much. Natalia and her husband got divorced 18 years ago. After the divorce, Natalia raised her three daughters alone. The three daughters are very precious to her.

My daughters in South Korea called me three times today. They frequently call me, saying they miss their mom. They always say that they like everything in Korea, but they wish they could hug me when they want. I also want to hug my daughters every time I talk to them on the phone, but I can’t. So I cried often. I want to go to South Korea to see my daughters, but I am sick and I can’t take a plane. (Bak Natalia, 57)

Each Koryoin family in Uzbekistan has a different ICT environment. All of the adult children who moved to South Korea own smartphones and computers. However, in the case of 7 out of 12 elderly parents in Uzbekistan (including the three couples who are parents of children who live in Ansan) only one parent has mobile communication devices (three of

13 (Editor’s note) In the original text, the author included the information that Choe Pyotor is Choe Alexandro’s father. In the later parts of the article, Choe Alexandro (male, 31) is referred to quite a few times as a central figure in the family networks.

them had smartphones). The remaining five elderly parent couples own only wired phones. Four among 12 elderly parent couples use the computer to talk to their children on Skype video calls. All four of them live in Tashkent City. Their children installed the computers in their parents' houses for the video calls when they visited Uzbekistan. Parents who use Skype are not familiar with computer devices. On visits to the home country the children have taught them how to use Skype. The parents also get the help of their other children or grandchildren. Family members can feel virtual intimacy by using ICTs like Skype, even though they are physically separated in different countries.¹⁴ By using ICTs, transnational families can talk about their daily life, while looking at each other face to face.

Elderly parents can peek into the daily lives of their children in South Korea via Skype. It helps the parents to feel less worried about their children and also to miss them less. The cases of Baek Sergey (male, 35) who lives in Tashkent and Bak Anatolia who lives in South Korea show how transnational families utilize Skype.

I can talk to my family in South Korea via Skype every Sunday. I am so happy that through Skype I can see my son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. One time, my eldest grandson sang me a Korean song he learned in kindergarten. I couldn't understand the lyrics, but he was so good and I wanted to hug him. I raised my eldest grandson for four years. My son said he lost 15kg in South Korea, and his wife lost 10kg. I could see their weight loss through Skype. It seems like they lost weight because their job is very hard in South Korea. I feel sorry for them, but at the same time in the case of my son, he looks healthier now. He was too heavy when he was here. Now I can be kept in the loop via Skype! The house they live in seems warm, not cold. My grandchildren play inside the house wearing short underwear in the winter. I see everything on Skype. So I am less worried about cold winters there. (Baek Sergey's mother, 65)

In the past we only talked through the phone. Now it feels more realistic since we can look at each other's face via Skype. One time I was talking to my mother on Skype. Her face was weary, so I asked her "Are you not eating well these days?" Then my father showed up next to her and said that she was eating well and I shouldn't be worried. (Bak Anatolia, male, 39)

¹⁴ Petierra (2005) used the term "absent presence" to refer to continuous commitments in daily lives of transnational family members who are separated by borders. He claimed that revolutionary advances in ICTs allowed migrants to be "present in multiple places at the same time" (Kim Gyeonghak 2014:44).

Anatolia, who lives in Gwangju, stated that “Now that we can look at each other’s face it feels more real,” and the mother of Sergey said, “It does not feel like we are separated when we talk on Skype.” Their statements reflect the “virtual intimacy” among transnational family members. Sergey’s mother in Tashkent feels anxious when the internet doesn’t work in her house on the day she talks on Skype. So she urges her husband to fix the internet quickly. If the internet finally doesn’t work, she has to talk to Sergey on the cell phone or send him SMS and ask how he is doing. The contact makes her feel relieved.

Among the people who do not own computers, several elderly parents stated they sometimes get help from their other children or grandchildren who live nearby and own a computer. This way they can use Skype to see their children’s faces. When Song Kseniya who lives in Gwangju wants to see her parents, she tells her younger brother who lives in Tashkent City to bring a laptop to their parents’ house and she talks to her parents through a video call. Like in Kseniya’s case, family and relatives in the home country serve as a transnational network, and connect migrant children in Korea to their parents in the home country. They also indirectly deliver news about parents to children who live abroad. Parents often hide signs of illness from their children who have migrated to different countries.¹⁵ Adult children in Korea can acquire information about the recent state of health of their parents via family and relative networks near the parents. Choe Alexandro’s niece, who is the daughter of the younger sister of Alexandro’s mother, lives in Tashkent. She delivers information about Alexandro’s parents’ health and other information to Alexandro via social network services. Especially, when the parents visit her house in Tashkent, she helps them use Skype to talk to their son in South Korea. Because of differences in the infrastructure of the ICT environment in South Korea and Uzbekistan, the different ways to use ICTs, and the costs, it is common for children in South Korea to contact their parents in Uzbekistan first. As a result,

¹⁵ While Bak Andrey (male, 45) and his wife lived in Gwangju in Korea, Andrey’s mother took care of Andrey’s two daughters for more than 5 years in Andijan, Uzbekistan. Andrey’s parents moved to Korea in 2012. Andrey heard that his mother had been suffering from low blood pressure and diabetes only after she moved to South Korea. Like in Andrey’s case, children want to know about the health state of their parents via ICTs, but parents generally emphasize their good health to avoid creating concerns for their children who live in a foreign country. There are many cases where children learned about their parents’ illness only after visiting Uzbekistan, or when their parents came to South Korea.

information exchanged via ICTs takes a “unidirectional” characteristic; children in Korea contact their parents in the home country, rather than the other way around. However, it should be understood that emotional support between parents and children via virtual reality spaces has a “double-directional” nature of mutual comfort.

3) Visiting the Home Country and Invitations to South Korea

As transnational care crisscrosses regions and nations, it circulates within a vast range of families and friends. However, the circulation of transnational care cannot be considered completely the same as the care carried out in proximity. Providing care at a distance is difficult work that costs time and money, and it can make people exhausted (Baldassar and Merla 2014:22). Adult migrants often feel guilty and apologetic toward their parents, because they cannot visit them frequently and provide meals or nurse them in proximity due to their international migration. Baldassar and Baldock claim that international migrants regularly visit their home country in order to provide a kind of care they cannot provide at a distance. Baldassar and Baldock also stated that migrants can cure homesickness by inhaling the homeland’s air even for a brief period of time. It is common for migrant children to visit their home country to provide care for their parents. However, depending on the situation, it is also common for migrant children to invite their parents to the country in which they have settled so they can live together for a short or long period while providing care.

Visiting the Home Country

Most of the Koryoin residing in South Korea have a visiting work visa (H-2) or a visa for overseas Koreans (F-4). The South Korean government issues H-2 visas and permits five years of residence to Koryoin between age 25 and 60. Koryoin over age 60 who have professional qualifications that meet specific education requirements, or Koryoin who have lived in Korea with an H-2 visa and meet the specific requirements, can receive an F-5 visa. Both kinds of visas allow movement between Korea and Uzbekistan as long as the visa is valid. Immigration policies in South Korea are fairly lax for the Koryoin children who reside in Korea who wish to visit Uzbekistan, and for their parents in Uzbekistan who wish to visit South Korea, especially when compared to the possibilities for other foreigners.

The average period of residence in South Korea for adult children in this research was approximately 3 years and 9 months. During this period, they had visited Uzbekistan 1-3 times. Uzbek nationals who live overseas were required to change their passport by 2015. Because of this, many Koryoin immigrants visited Uzbekistan in the past 2-3 years. Furthermore, many migrants visited Uzbekistan to participate in the rites of passage of their family members. They could have simply sent monetary gifts rather than travel to Uzbekistan for occasions such as first birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, and 60th birthday parties of family members. However, they chose to fly to their home country despite their busy life in South Korea, in order to be with their parents. Kim Ernest (male, 65) who lives in Ansan visited Tashkent in early 2014 to attend a family gathering for the purpose of celebrating the birth of the first grandson in the family. Bak Victor (male, 55) visited Tashkent to attend his nephew's wedding at the end of 2014. He indicated that attending the wedding "was an excuse" to be with his parents, who he hasn't been able to visit for 2-3 years. Victor brought clothes, Korean futon mattresses, an electric rice cooker, and other gifts from Korea for his parents. His younger brother lives near their parents and takes care of them. Victor recounted his visit to Uzbekistan in the end of 2014:

My mother's diabetes worsened. She had to amputate one leg in August 2018. I could not get vacation from my work, so I couldn't go to Tashkent. I was really sad. I am the eldest son in the family, but my younger brother who lives in Tashkent handled the mother's surgery. The only thing I could do was send them a part of the hospital cost. I always felt apologetic toward my mother. My nephew said he is getting married, so I went to Tashkent, but actually I went there to tell my mother how sorry I am, and to comfort my mother who lost one of her legs.

Both husbands and wives of Koryoin married couples have full-time jobs. As a result, it is difficult for them to visit their home country without a special reason. Therefore, they visit Uzbekistan when they have to change their passport, in the case of serious illness or death of parents or other family members, or to attend major rites of passage, such as weddings. Choe Alexandro and Choe Roja are married. They visited Uzbekistan for the first time since they moved to South Korea to renew their passports. They indicated their minds and bodies felt comforted following the visit to Uzbekistan. They spent time with their parents for two to three months,

which is the time it takes to change passports and issue a new exit visa.¹⁶ They could also eat their parents' food. Alexandro and his wife bought a used-car for Alexandro's father, because Alexandro's mother could not easily walk because she was suffering from severe arthritis.

My father visited Gwangju in 2013. He stayed in my house and my two sisters' houses for three months. His visit made me miss my mother even more. I did not see her for a long time. I went to Uzbekistan to change my passport, and I felt sad to see my mother who now could not freely move around because of the pain and arthritis in her leg. In order to help my mother to get around more easily, I bought a used-car for my father. I wanted to help my mother to go to places more easily. I wanted to reduce the burden I feel in my mind because I am not close enough to help her myself.

Invitation to South Korea

Various factors need to be considered when adult children who settle in South Korea plan to visit Uzbekistan with the purpose of providing direct care for their parents. When a migrant visits the home country, the advantage is that they can meet their parents and other relatives. However, it can also be disadvantageous to visit the home country. For example, it costs a great amount of money for a whole family to go to Uzbekistan and return to South Korea. Moreover, if only one person of the couple is going to visit the home country, the remaining person has to take care of the children alone. Besides, there are not many jobs that give a long vacation. When migrants decide that it is more beneficial and practical to invite their parents to their migration destination than for them to visit the home country, they invite their parents to South Korea. This allows children to

¹⁶ An exit visa is required for Uzbek nationals who travel to another country. The Uzbek government claims that they issue an exit visa in order to protect Uzbek citizens from terrorist attacks. However, the opposition party and human rights organizations criticize the government, arguing that the actual purpose of the exit visa is preventing its citizens from contacting foreign powers, especially to stop anti-establishment figures from leaving the country. The exit visa is valid for two years. It costs around 25 US dollars to issue an exit visa. Uzbek nationals who try to exit the country without an exit visa can be sentenced to paying a heavy fine or imprisonment up to 10 years. As an exception, Uzbek nationals who go to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), for example Russia, do not need to have an exit visa. Some sources say that it takes approximately two weeks to issue an exit visa. However, in most cases, it takes more than 20-30 days. As a result, Koryoin migrants whose exit visa expired after two years need to stay in Uzbekistan for at least one month, in order to receive a new exit visa.

provide long or short term care to their parents in proximity. The parents who do not have any children living in Uzbekistan, or the parents who have serious illnesses, are especially invited to South Korea by their children.

Bak Anatolia and Kim Elena (34) are married. They settled in Gwangju with the help of Elena's older sister who has been living in Gwangju since 2008.¹⁷ Elena's mother (58) who lives with Elena's younger brother (22) in Urgench, Khorezm in Uzbekistan was diagnosed with uterine cancer in 2012. The two daughters believed that medical technology in South Korea was more advanced than in Uzbekistan, so they invited their mother to Gwangju to get surgery for uterine cancer in Chonnam National University hospital. It did cost a lot of money for the daughters, because medical insurance was not applied to their mother's surgery. However, Elena, her husband and her sister's husband worked in factories to pay for the cost of the surgery. Elena's older sister quit her work temporarily to take care of her ill mother. The surgery was successful, and Elena's mother returned to Uzbekistan after being taken care of by the two daughters in Gwangju for four months. Early June in 2015, Elena's mother visited Gwangju again, planning to return to Uzbekistan after five months. Her two daughters and their husbands paid the entire cost of her mother's visit to South Korea.

There are also many Koryoin parents who visit South Korea not because of urgent situations such as illness, but for tourism and vacation. Kseniya Song's mother visited Korea to stay in Kseniya's house for around 6 months. Kseniya's husband (71) had gone away to Kazakhstan to work on *gobonjil* (seasonal farming) with his younger brother. He does this every year between the end of February and early December. One week after Kseniya's mother's arrived in South Korea, she started to work day labor jobs. For example, she worked in pear, blueberry, and aronia farms almost every day except rainy days.¹⁸ Kseniya is concerned about her mother who

¹⁷ Elena's older sister and her sister's husband have been living in Gwangju since 2008. They could settle in Gwangju with the help of their friend of 30 years who married a Korean man. Elena and Anatolia first moved to Gwangju in 2011 with the help of Elena's older sister and her husband. Anatolia and Elena stayed in Elena's older sister's house for four months, until they got a place of their own and moved out. This example shows that care is stretched beyond kinship to friends and circulates in the context of international migration.

¹⁸ A day labor service company, which has its office in Koryoin Town in Gwangsan-gu,

works very hard every day. Kseniya tried to stop her taking these part-time jobs, but Kseniya's mother told me there is a purpose to her part time work that she has not yet shared with Kseniya.¹⁹

My daughter is worried that I will get sick from working too much. She must still not know the reason of my hard work. I told this only to my son in Tashkent via international phone call. I will try to save as much money as possible while I am in Gwangju, and return to Uzbekistan. My husband does farming (*gobonjil*) in a half hectare of land in Kazakhstan. We gain very little profit from this work. In some years, we have almost no earnings. Both my husband and I like agricultural work. My two younger sisters and a younger brother have Russian nationality. They raise tomatoes, cucumbers, and other crops in greenhouses in Rostov, Russia, and they sell these crops to Russian cities. They said that the work is not too hard, and the profit is good, and they told us to come there too. My siblings told me that they will help us a lot as we resettle. For 500,000 rubles (approximately 9 million Korean won), we can purchase three greenhouses plus a small house for us to live in. I think we can purchase the greenhouses if we combine our arable land in Kazakhstan, the small amount of savings we have, and the money I can save from working in Gwangju. This is my last dream. I really want it to happen. (Hwang Tatiana, female, 68)

Tatiana feels grateful for her daughter and daughter's husband who invited her to South Korea and provided an opportunity for her to actualize her "last dream." Kseniya was concerned that her mother might find it uncomfortable to live with them in South Korea. Therefore, before her mother came to South Korea, Kseniya moved to a new house. She used to live in a two story house (monthly rent was 400,000 won) that had two bedrooms and a living room. Her new house is in a small apartment

introduces jobs to older generations who do not work in factories in pear, blueberry, and aronia farms in the Naju and Moonpyeong areas in Chonnam. These day labor jobs take approximately 12 hours per day including transport time, and the wage is between 60,000-65,000 won per day. More than 30-40 Koryoin are sent to work in farms every day. They also sometimes work for events such as 2015 Gwangju Universidade. Recently two more service companies opened their offices in Koryoin Town. They provide stable part time jobs to Koryoin. Day labor jobs are especially highly welcomed by older generations who need allowance money. They call this work *areubaiteu* (part-time job).

19 I interviewed Hwang Tatiana, Kseniya's mother, when I met her and her other family members at the end of December 2014 in Tashkent. Tatiana visited Gwangju in June 2015 to meet her children, and I had a chance to interview her again in August 2015. When I met her for the second time, the interview was conducted in a much more intimate atmosphere, compared to the first interview in Tashkent.

building (monthly rent 530,000 won) and has three bedrooms and a living room. Kseniya's monthly expenditure on housing was increased as a result of her mother's visit. On top of this, Kseniya was worried that her mother might get lost outside, so she bought a second mobile phone for her mother. Kseniya frequently checks her mother's location.

I wish my mother would just rest in South Korea until she leaves. But she takes every part-time work that is available. I don't know what she is trying to achieve by working so hard and making money, but since she insists... I told her that I will give her allowance money, so she should not spend any of the money she earns here and can take it back to Uzbekistan. Actually, after my mother came to South Korea, it's like I have one more child, three instead of two. I call my mom during the breaks at my work, and if she doesn't answer, I feel so worried that she might be lost outside, I can't focus on my work. I asked my mother about it later on, and she said that she leaves her phone at home in order to avoid losing it. Before my mother goes back to Uzbekistan, I am going to make her get a medical check-up, which is provided by the Koryoin citizen support center. She had one two years ago as well. (Song Kseniya, female, 41)

Kseniya moved to a new house for her mother's visit. She also bought a new phone, and she provides her mother with medical check-ups.²⁰ She tries to provide plenty of care while her mother is visiting. It is also clear that when Kseniya's mother visits Kseniya for a short period, it is mutually beneficial for Kseniya and her mother. The mother helps with cooking, laundry, and other housework on days she does not work part-time jobs. Mutually beneficial care between parents and children can be frequently discovered during the family separation and reunification process in the "family development cycle," which starts when adult children migrate to a foreign country. In the early period of the international migration of adult Koryoin children, it is common for the man in the family to move to South Korea alone. His wife and children will join him later on. It is also common for Koryoin wives to join their husband alone, leaving their children behind with their grandparents. Elderly parents in Uzbekistan in

²⁰ Hwang Tatiana states that getting medical check-ups in South Korea where medical technology is more advanced than Uzbekistan is "reliable and I do not have any doubt about the result." In the check-up from two years ago, she heard that her kidneys and stomach are not in a good condition, and she was prescribed medicine. She heard that there is a small bump in her kidneys, and she want to check on the kidneys in future check-ups.

five families²¹ in this study are taking care of the children of their sons and daughters who moved abroad. The adult children of two families in Gwangju also left their children to their grandparents in Uzbekistan for a certain period, and they later brought the children to Gwangju. Elderly parents who take care of their grandchildren for their adult children who live abroad are care providers, rather than care receivers who unidirectionally receive care; a clear illustration that care crosses generation and circulates inside a family.

The most common reason that makes the elderly parents in Uzbekistan cross the borders with the purpose of providing care for their children abroad is childbirth both of their own daughters and daughter's in law in South Korea. Many young pregnant Koryoin women can be seen around Koryoin Town in Gwangsan-gu, Gwangju metropolitan area. Shin Joya (female, 58), the chief of the Koryoin Family Support Center in Gwangju, states that the birth rate of young Koryoin migrant women in South Korea is gradually increasing. It is because Koryoin women trust the medical technology in South Korea. It is also because they can give birth in Gwangju for a very small price, which is a result of a medical support agreement between the Koryoin Family Support Center and gynecologist offices in Gwangju, for example, the *M* gynecology office. The mother of Choe Alexandro visited Gwangju in 2015 to help her daughter-in-law give birth. Her daughter-in-law was estimated to give birth in early July, and to help with her postnatal care and infant care Alexandro's mother²² stayed in Gwangju and returned to Uzbekistan around the end of September the same year. Alexandro purchased flight tickets for his mother, and also purchased a car to provide convenient transport for his mother during her stay in South Korea, because she cannot easily walk.²³

²¹ Two elderly mothers are taking care of their daughter's children from a previous marriage, or the children of the daughter who got divorced. Three elderly mothers are taking care of the children of their adult children who live in Gwangju.

²² I conducted an in-depth interview with Choe Alexandro's mother in Alexandro's house during my field study period in Tashkent, which was three weeks between 2014 and 2015. Out of coincidence, I met her again in Gwangju in August 2015. And I was able to interview her again. It was Alexandro's mother's first visit to South Korea, and she told me about things she brought from Uzbekistan to help her daughter-in-law give birth, postnatal care methods of Koryoin, her plans during her stay in Korea.

²³ Choe Alexandro is planning to live in South Korea permanently. He was planning to get a Korean driver's license and buy a car. He bought a car earlier than his original plan, because of his mother's visit. All four siblings of Alexandro live in South Korea,

When parents who visit South Korea to assist with childbirth of their family members are finished with their care of the family, they usually get day labor jobs and save significant sums of money before they return to their home country. Kim Gregory's parents visited Gwangju to help her eldest daughter give birth to two children, and they stayed in their daughter's house for nearly one year. Gregory's mother (63) cleaned motels in South Korea. His father (63) worked in industrial complexes, and they were able to return to Uzbekistan with a good amount of savings. Gregory's father who I met in Tashkent in December, 2014, described his experience:

My eldest daughter married a South Korean man. She said she is going to give birth, so with my wife I went to Gwangju. Near the end of our stay in Gwangju, we worked to earn money and we returned home. In Uzbekistan, even young people have a hard time finding employment. But in Korea, even old people like us can find jobs and that was nice. My wife worked hard cleaning the offices and motels, and I worked in factories. I felt like people underestimated me because I am a little bit old. But I was a technician during the Soviet Union period, and they finally approved my skill. The money we saved in South Korea really helped our life in Uzbekistan. If I was only a little bit younger, I would have liked to go to South Korea again for work. (Father of Kim Gregory, 63)

Parents help their children during their "life crises," such as childbirth. Children support their parents' long or short visits, and provide them with work opportunities. This is another example showing that within a transnational family, care crosses generations and circulates, mutually benefitting both the parents and children. However, during the parents' stays in South Korea, there is the possibility of intergenerational conflict, especially between the elderly parents and their adult children or children's spouses. Therefore, both older parents and adult children need to be patient. The mother of Kseniya expresses gratitude for her daughter and son-in-law who had been considerate toward her during her visit.

Since I came to South Korea, my son-in-law and daughter never fought in front of me, and I really appreciate that. I could only help with their housework when I could not go out to work. For example, I prepared meals or did the laundry. Other than this, I couldn't give them any significant help,

and his parents are planning to move to Korea in 2016.

but still they never fought in front of me. Also, my grandchildren cared for me a lot, and I appreciate all of them. Actually, I do not feel comfortable in their house because it is not my home, but I do not show it. I have known my son-in-law since he was a child, so I am not particularly uncomfortable around him, but still the relationship between son-in-law and mother-in-law is like this.

5. Practice of Transnational Care of Elderly Parents and Perceptions of Parents who remain in the Home Country

1) *Negotiated Commitments*

Research on transnational care should attend to interconnectivity among various analytical levels. Baldassar (2008) claims that transnational care is practiced according to negotiated commitments, which reflect a combination of micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors. Micro-level factors may include individual choices, based on cultural concepts, regarding obligations of transnational families and relatives, and provision of care. Meso-level factors encompass communities and NGOs that support care provisions, ethnic networks, and processes of community settlement. Macro-level factors can consist of the accessibility to communication infrastructures, migration visas, medical insurance, national policy on care service, society's policy on settlement and migrant inclusion, as well as migration policies.

Micro-level factors that are connected to the transnational care of parents in Uzbekistan include: Koryoin families' life histories, transnational kinship networks across different countries including Uzbekistan and South Korea, resources, and the time available for a migrant to send remittances and make visits to the home country. Furthermore, the cultural perception of Koryoin on the elderly and their care is also an important factor. Examples of macro-level factors, are types of visas issued for overseas Koreans, the transport and ICT infrastructures of South Korea and Uzbekistan, the medical system and pension policy of Uzbekistan, applicable range of medical insurance in South Korea, and similar structural phenomena. Activities of organizations such as Uzbekistan's Koryoin Association, the Koryoin Cultural Association, and the Koryoin Family Support Center in Gwangju metropolitan area can be considered as meso-level factors. It is not likely that meso-level factors in Uzbekistan and

South Korea will influence transnational care. Therefore, in most cases, transnational care of adult children toward their ageing parents in Uzbekistan is practiced according to the result of a compromised commitment; a combination of macro-level factors and micro-level factors. Currently, there is no community or institution that supports the social welfare of the older generation of Koryoin in Uzbekistan except the Arirang Nursing Home. Institutions in South Korea, such as the Koryoin Family Support Center in Gwangju City, both directly and indirectly support the older generation of Koryoin who stay in South Korea, for a long or short period, by providing them with medical support²⁴ or by introducing them to job opportunities.

Kim Elena's mother, who stayed in Gwangju in August 2015, had surgery for cancer in South Korea two years ago. She revisited South Korea to get a post-operation checkup. She is currently taken care of by her daughters. This kind of transnational care is a result of a combination of micro-level and macro-level factors. Micro-level factors may include her daughter's thought that superior medical care should be provided to the mother and that the responsibilities should be split among family members. For instance, Elena, her husband, and her sister's husband worked to earn money, while Elena's older sister nursed the mother. Macro-level factors include the difference in medical technology advancements between Uzbekistan and South Korea as well as Korean immigration law and systems that allow ethnic Koreans to migrate to South Korea relatively easily.

Song Kseniya and Han Sergey are married and they settled in Gwangju in February 2012. Kseniya's older sister (43) migrated to America in 2002 and she opened a flower shop. Kseniya's sister's husband has been ill, and

²⁴ Several adult children in Gwangju and their parents who visit them in Korea are outside the boundary of the medical system. Accordingly, the Koryoin Support Center in Gwangju established a medical support agreement with several larger hospitals in the Gwangju metropolitan area, thus reducing the medical fees for Koryoin patients with serious illnesses who do not have medical insurance. Furthermore, the Koryoin Support Center utilizes its own media Nanum Broadcasting, as well as other social network services, to raise money among the citizens of Gwangju, to cover the costs of surgeries for Koryoin families who cannot afford a large sum of medical fees. Koryoin who live in Gwangju participate in these fundraising works even though they are usually not able to donate a large sum of money. In this sense, the Koryoin Family Support Center and the Gwangju Koryoin community's influence on care practicing can be considered as meso-level factors.

they are economically struggling in their life in the United States. As a result, they have not been able to send money to Kseniya's parents. Since Kseniya's sister moved to America, she has never visited Uzbekistan. Her family obtained US citizenship, and for them to visit Uzbekistan, and stay in their parents' house, they must prepare a great number of documents. Because of the complicated policy in the United States regarding US citizens' visits to Uzbekistan and her family's economic situation, Kseniya's sister has not visited Uzbekistan since her family moved to the United States.²⁵ However, in 2013, for the first time since she moved, she was able to visit with her mother when she went to the house of her younger sister, Kseniya, in South Korea, a country US citizens easily can visit. Her mother was staying in her younger sister's house and through this, many family members were able to meet at the same time in Gwangju. During her three weeks of stay in South Korea, Kseniya's sister was able to spend time with her mother for the first time after a long separation. For this reason Kseniya's sister decided to go to South Korea instead of Uzbekistan to meet with their mother. The micro-level factor, which consists of the immigration history of Song Kseniya's family and a macro-level factor, such as U.S. travel policy, jointly influenced her decision.

Han Sergey (37), Song Kseniya's husband is older than his other two siblings, two younger sisters. The family of his eldest sister migrated to Gwangju in 2011, one year earlier than Sergey. Sergey and his wife received a lot of help from Sergey's sister when they first moved to Gwangju and settled down. Sergey's youngest sister married a Kazakhstan Koryoin man, and now lives in Kazakhstan. Sergey's mother is originally from Kazakhstan as well and she married an Uzbek Koryoin man (Sergey's father). Her husband died in 2011, and currently she lives alone in Tashkent. Due to this, Sergey feels obligated to take care of his mother who lives alone. He wanted to invite her to South Korea, but his mother lost her Koryoin birth certificate, which is necessary to issue a visiting work visa (H-2) or visa for overseas Koreans (F-4). Without these visas, it is not

²⁵ Foreigners who visit Uzbekistan via a tourist visa should register themselves within three days of their arrival. Moreover, they can only stay in hotels. Foreigners who want to stay in the house of local people are required to acquire other types of visa, such as a business visa. However, it is complicated to obtain this kind of visa, as it requires the submission of various documents. The Uzbek government controls the movement of its citizens through the exit visa, and it also controls the flow of foreigners who enter Uzbekistan.

easy for her to stay in Korea for a long period of time. Sergey always feels sorry and guilty with respect to his mother, because he cannot live with her due to these structural issues. As such, he feels powerless about not being able to invite his mother to South Korea. Sergey's mother visits Kazakhstan more often than Korea, even though Sergey and his sister live in Korea. This is because his mother can meet her other family members and the youngest daughter there. Sergey's mother was residing in Kazakhstan in August 2015, to take care of her pregnant daughter. Sergey and Sergey's sister regularly send remittances to their mother from South Korea, and call her,²⁶ while the youngest sister, who lives in Kazakhstan, frequently visits Uzbekistan to visit their mother who lives alone. Through the younger sister in Kazakhstan, Sergey and his older sister in South Korea can learn about the recent state of their mother.

The family connection of Kim Elena, Song Kseniya, and Han Sergey's families are maintained in the "transnational social field." This shows that the combinations of different level factors let families negotiate the practice of care for their parents. Micro-level factors, including family and kinship networking across South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Russia as well as other countries; the children's ability to provide money and time for the actual care needed; diversification of care labor depending on physical distances (for instance, children who live close by can provide direct care, whereas children who live at distance can support with capital); as well as the cultural concept of obligatory care. Macro-level factors include law and immigration policies of different nations, the national medical system, international affiliations, and particularities of national systems.

2) Perception of Older Parents on International Migration

Understanding what international migration of adult children means to their elderly parents, from the perspective of elderly parents, helps in figuring out the elderly parents' perceptions of different issues including international migration, separation from family, transnational family connection and care, family reunification, and more. Elderly parents who

²⁶ When I met Sergey's mother (64) in Tashkent, she showed me photos of her grandchildren in kindergarten sent by her son in South Korea. She said that her son and daughters call her often, and also send her photos of her grandchildren. She mentioned that she wants to live in South Korea, but that she unfortunately has problems getting a visa.

are left behind experience emotional pain from being separated from their family members as a result of the children's international migration. However, they perceive international migration as an inevitable choice that will help their children to overcome the difficult circumstances they are facing. Because they miss their children, older parents often form new routines or habits, for example, "staring at the children's photos." As the children stay abroad for an elongated period of time, elderly parents consider not only material support, such as remittance, but also emotional support, such as phone calls and video chats, to reflect their children's interest in them. Even though they do not know exactly when their children will return to their home country, they have a hope that one day the family can all live together in the same country. However, if a brighter future awaits their children and grandchildren in the country they migrated to, the elderly parents control their emotion and their care expectations, accepting the situation, knowing that their children cannot promise their return to the home country.

Push factors of international migration of adult children of Koryoin include Uzbek ethno-centric nationalism and the weak economic conditions of Uzbekistan, where the employment rate and wages are low. Under these circumstances, parents cannot deter their children from migrating to South Korea. Choe Alexandro's father (71) says, "There are no jobs in Uzbekistan, and also wages are very low. But the cost of living is mounting, and it's hard to afford it. So I could not stop my sons who wanted to go to South Korea." Baek Sergey's mother (65) says, "There is only one room in the house of my son. He has two children, so he should earn money to buy a bigger house. There is not much possibility in Uzbekistan for him to make money, so I did not try to stop him when he said he is going to South Korea." Children's inevitable decisions to go to South Korea are a huge event that brings great sadness to elderly parents. Choe Roja's mother, whose three daughters one by one moved to South Korea, cried every time a daughter left Uzbekistan. "I wasn't sure if it is really happening, or I am dreaming." She cried alone for 6 months after her daughters left her, because "My daughters do not speak Korean, and they moved so far away, we won't be able to meet each other easily." Elderly parents left behind tried to get over missing their children who moved to South Korea in various ways in their daily life. For example, every morning, Choe Alexandro's father opens the door of the house in which his youngest son, Alexandro, and Alexandro's wife used to live in. Then he speaks out,

“Hello son,” looking at the photos of his son hanging on the walls in the house. The mother of Sergey and the mother of Roja especially miss their children when they are alone at home. They talk to themselves looking at the photos of their children and grandchildren. Kim Gregory and Bak Anatolia’s parents stare at the faces of their children in the DVD footages of the weddings or 60th birthday parties when they miss them. When Sergey’s mother misses her children and grandchildren, she looks around the large apartment rooms where her son and his wife used to live, thinking back to the time they all lived together. She would also look at the photos of her children and grandchildren in her smartphone. All of these daily habits were formed when their children left to go to South Korea. The elderly parents frequently feel the absence of care as a result of their children’s migration. The mother (84) of Kim Ernest has been living with her married daughter and her granddaughter, since the two sons moved to South Korea. Before Ernest went to Korea, he used to visit his mother, who lives alone, every week, solving problems in her daily life. Ernest’s mother says that she feels the absence of her son most strongly when her apartment’s electricity or pipes get broken.

When my son was here, when the electricity or pipes were broken, he immediately came to my house and fixed them. When these things break down now, I miss my eldest son even more than usual. He used to visit me at least once a week. On the days he came to see me, when I hear the sound of his car, I looked outside the window. Now it won’t happen anymore, I really feel sad, my heart aches. (Mother of Kim Ernest, 84)

Natalia, Roja’s mother, has three daughters who live in South Korea. Natalia passed out because of her high blood pressure 10 years ago. Since then, her health has not been good. She has to get blood circulation injections more than three times per year. Luckily, there has been no emergency case since her daughters migrated to Korea. However, in an emergency, the only person who would be able to call a doctor and an ambulance for Natalia would be her 19-year-old granddaughter (the eldest daughter of Natalia’s daughter who got divorced). Natalia divorced her husband 22 years ago, and she raised her daughters by herself. She loves her daughters very much, and she most strongly feels the absence of her second daughter, Choe Maria (32). Maria used to live close by, and she took care of Natalia very well.

My eldest daughter is still immature. She makes many mistakes, and she is also very jealous. She has to be responsible for these things, but she hasn't changed even though she is older now. My second daughter Maria was always the most reliable child. She especially took care of my health very well. When my second sister moved to Busan, I was really sad. However, Maria calls me and my granddaughter three times a day, and checks up on my health. My youngest daughter Choe Roja is still young, and I cannot rely on her too much. (Bak Natalia, female, 57)

Natalia's daughters regularly send money to Natalia to pay for her living expenses. However, Natalia feels more comforted by the phone calls she gets from her daughters every day. When she gets phone calls from her daughters, she can feel that her daughters "think of me." Other older parents also stated that, even though they cannot receive direct care from their children, they feel that their children are "interested in me," when the children provide transnational care, for example, by calling them or by sending remittances. Older parents who are remaining in Uzbekistan have a hope that one day, their children will return to Uzbekistan, and they can all live together. Some older parents had vague estimates on when their children will return to Uzbekistan. The mother of Kim Ernest believes that the reason her eldest son is working in South Korea is to pay for the costly tuition and living expenses (tuition for one year is approximately 6 million won and monthly living costs around 1 million won) of her grandchild (the second son of Ernest), who is studying in a medical school in Russia. She believes that when her grandson finishes his studies, Ernest will come back to Uzbekistan. However, when I met Ernest in Ansan in January 2015, he said that when his second son finishes his study in November of 2015, he will invite his oldest son and his wife to South Korea, to live together for at least 5 years more. He said that he transferred most of the money he earned in South Korea to Russia and was not able to save any money. Like Ernest, most of the adult children had not decided on a specific time to return to Uzbekistan. Koryoin migrants who had F-4 visas, which allow the visa holders to easily extend their residence in South Korea, did not have a reason to try to return quickly to their home country. Koryoin migrants themselves did not want to return fast either. Kim Ernest is planning to invite his mother to live in South Korea, because his younger sister, who has been taking care of the mother, was asked to move to the United States by her American husband.

The parents of Kim Gregory in Tashkent assumed that their eldest

daughter and the youngest daughter, who married South Korean men, will continue to live in South Korea. However, they believed that their son Gregory will live with them. They thought that even though they cannot predict exactly when their son will return to Uzbekistan, he will return in the near future. However, Gregory who lives in Gwangju does not have any plans to return to Uzbekistan anytime soon. He sends his son (6) to a regular day care center, which is run by Koreans, instead of Saenal Day Care Center run by the Koryoin Family Support Center, where his son used to go to.

I always felt bad that my son could play with my older sister (who is married to a Korean man)'s children, because my son cannot speak Korean. My son started his elementary school education in South Korea, and he will continue to receive higher education in Korea. So he has to be good at Korean language. He played with other children who speak Russian in Saenal Day Care Center, so he could not learn to speak Korean. I want my son to live in South Korea, conditions are so much better here, and I want him to get lots of education.

Gregory's statement suggests that he is going to live in South Korea for a long period of time in order to give his son an education in a better environment. Most of the Koryoin elderly parents I met in Tashkent, including Gregory's father, perceived South Korea as a wealthy country with a good social system. Also, older parents pay more attention to the news related to South Korea since their children live there. For example, they said that they were very concerned about their children upon hearing news related to crises in South Korea such as the Yeonpyeongdo Incident.²⁷ They said that in this kind of critical situation, they would like their children to quickly return to Uzbekistan. However, if their children and grandchildren have a brighter future in South Korea than in Uzbekistan, where economy does not seem to be turning up, they will have to accept the reality that the children are likely to stay in South Korea.

Some Koryoin children, whose siblings live in South Korea, plan to invite their elderly parents in the home country to live with them in South Korea. However, older parents are usually satisfied to maintain a

²⁷ (Editor's note) It refers to an artillery engagement between two Koreas on the border island, Yeonpyeong-do, on November 23, 2010, initiated by the North Korean side. Two South Korean civilians and two marines were killed when North Korea shelled the island.

transnational relationship with their children while living in Uzbekistan, rather than following the children's suggestion to move to South Korea. Some older parents said they do not want to live in South Korea because they do not speak Korean, also because the weather is different. They do not want to be vagabonds in South Korea, where it is difficult to get a permanent residence or nationality. They viewed their transnational life, for example, receiving transnational care from their children, or visiting the children in South Korea to help with child care and other matters as a circulation of care, which is a part of the "life cycle of a family." However, it is also true that an increasing number of Koryoin elderly parents are moving to South Korea to help their children, for example to take care of the grandchildren. The prospect is that a growing number of Koryoin elderly will spend their elderly life in transnational social fields, within the context that requires a care exchange between adult children and their older parents. For instance, older parents would help with their daughters or daughter-in-laws' childbirth and take care of the grandchildren.

6. Conclusion

Care provision of adult children of Koryoin who migrated to South Korea toward their elderly parents remaining in Uzbekistan has transnational characteristics. Even though Koryoin were significantly exposed to Soviet Union's socialism policy and interacted with people of other ethnicities such as native Uzbeks, the importance of respect for parents and family connections were rigorously maintained in Koryoin society. In Uzbekistan, where medical and social welfare policies for the elderly population are not good, taking care of elderly parents is a role maintained by family and relatives. In the context of international migration, transnational care of elderly parents who remain in their home country, is commonly practiced through remittances, emotional support, visiting each other, and invitations to South Korea.

Regular and irregular remittances practically contribute to the lives of elderly parents who only receive small pensions. The remittance helps them to pay for medical fees, rites of passage, such as the first birthday parties, weddings, 60th birthday parties, welfare fees, and adds to an improvement in living standards. Also, Koryoin elderly parents perceive their children's regular emotional support in the form of international

phone calls, video chats, social network services, text messages, and sending photos as significant transnational care. It is not easy for Koryoin migrants to visit Uzbekistan, since travelling consumes a considerable amount of money and time. However, migrant children try to visit their home country and provide direct care to their parents when they get a chance. For example, they visit their home country to participate in the rites of passage, or to manage paperwork related to migration. Furthermore, a growing number of aged parents are invited to South Korea and receive their children's care for short and long periods, as their children stay in South Korea for a long time. Especially, there is a notable increase in the number of elderly parents who visit Korea in critical times for their family, such as serious illnesses of their elderly parents, childbirth, and other life crises or celebrations.

This study attempted to examine how the care of older parents is structured and compromised in transnational situations. In the context of international migration, transnational care activities toward parents who remain in the home country are compromised among family members based on a combination of different factors. For example, micro-level factors include migrant children's ability to provide cash and time, the challenges for transnational families who are separated in different nations to provide parental care, and the extended family network in Uzbekistan. Macro-level factors include law and migration policies of different nations that influence travel across borders, the current state of international relations, as well as the state of medical and welfare systems in other countries.

Furthermore, this research attempted to understand the emotional influence of children's international migration on their parents, issues related to family reunification and transnational older life, from the point view of elderly parents remaining in Uzbekistan. Currently, the number of elderly parents who join their children in South Korea, as a part of the life cycle of a family, is gradually on the rise. This reflects the intergenerational character of family care that is mutually beneficial.

This study sought to take a different view from the existing studies on transnational care that have been conducted based on the "global care chain" concept, which views international migration as a "problematic event" that negatively influences family unity. In the context of international migration, it should be noted that care circulates inside a network of extended family and relatives, regardless of generation, resident

countries, ages, or whether a person is a migrant or not. From this point of view, the international migration of the Uzbek Koryoin, that has engendered transnational care of parents and the challenges of family reunifications are not considered negative events that harm family unity. Instead, these phenomena can be interpreted as strategic decisions made by the Koryoin, as they weigh different resources and constraints in South Korea and in their respective home country in light of their desires to maintain a sense of family belonging.

Clearly, one of the most significant factors influencing the reciprocal care circulation of adult children and elderly parents is the macro-level factors, including South Korea's immigration policy that is open toward ethnic Koreans from other countries. The Koryoin Family Support Center in Gwangju metropolitan area, the local support groups, and the local government²⁸ are showing great interest in the Koryoin population. Their interest is linked to the increase in numbers of Koryoin adult children who reunite with their older parents in South Korea, and form a "multi-generational" family. A growing number of Koryoin families are reuniting with their family members in South Korea according to the life cycle of the family. Koryoin support organizations claim that social welfare for Koryoin should be extended, as the Koryoin population in South Korea is rapidly expanding.²⁹ Koryoin transnational families are strategically coping with the necessity of providing transnational care for their elderly parents while being physically separated. However, this does not mean that the care issues of Koryoin transnational family members should be left in the hands

²⁸ In September 2015, the new building of "Koryoin family support center" opened by receiving donations of nearly 250 million won by workers, citizens, and local governments in Gwangju Metropolitan. The number of Koryoin children entering the school mid-way has surged, and currently not only the "Saenal School", a government-funded educational institution, but also the regular elementary schools in Gwangsan-gu accept these Koryoin children. Although the specific form of legal support for Koryoin is not completely clear yet, a legal basis was created for the local government to use its financial resources to officially support Koryoin people; the Gwangju Metropolitan Koryoin residents support ordinance was enacted in 2013.

²⁹ In 2013, as a result of the combined support of the private sectors and local governments, the "Gwangju Metropolitan Koryoin resident support ordinance" was enacted for the first time in South Korea. Koryoin support groups operating in Ansan and Gwangju Metropolitan City are accordingly demanding the rapid passage of the "special law for Koryoin" in the policy debates related to the "support of overseas Koreans for their residence in Korea." The groups are also asking for the expanded social welfare for Koryoin through this special law.

of only the Koryoin families. Maintaining a family bond, such as caring for elderly parents in a transnational situation, requires a lot of time and financial resources. With it comes various emotional pain as well.

Recently, there are not many Koryoin families in Uzbekistan who do not have a family member who migrated abroad. The “transnational family” has become a typical form of family in the Uzbek Koryoin society. One of the important elements that contributes to maintaining a solid connection among Koryoin transnational family members is the cultural force of “transnational care,” which circulates within the transnational family and kinship networks (Kim Gyeonghak 2015: 62). In South Korea, there is a growing number of multigenerational Koryoin families. Among these families, grandparents provide care for their grandchildren and receive care from their adult children. However, there are also elderly parents who want to return to Uzbekistan. They want to move back to their home country for many reasons, such as the inability to speak the Korean language; limited social interactions in South Korea; intergenerational tension regarding family resources and authority; or the difficulty of adapting to an unfamiliar new world. There are also many cases of Koryoin families whose underage children in Uzbekistan and parents in South Korea were able to reunite. However, in many cases, the reunited families are separated again because of laws and policies in South Korea regarding overseas Koreans.³⁰ As mentioned above, transnational care for elderly parents and children can be actively practiced in various ways by Koryoin transnational family members. It is crucial to recognize individual and structural level constraints that might cause material or emotional difficulties for the practice of care in Koryoin transnational families and to promote supportive infrastructure at the macro- and meso-levels.

³⁰ Kim Baler (male, 52) in Gwangju City obtained the F-4 visa. He invited his four children in Uzbekistan to South Korea and reunited his family. Under current Korean law, Koryoin who have reached the age of 19 should return to their home country. When they reach the age of 25, they can get a Work Visit visa (H-2) or F-4 visa and come to South Korea. When Kim Baler's son, Kim Vlajik turned 19 years old, he had to move to Uzbekistan alone, even though all of his family members were living in Korea. All of Vlajik's family members thus had to experience the pain of separation again (Yi Cheonyeong 2014: 28).

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