

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF KOREANS AND THE KOREAN COMMUNITY IN CHINA\*

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*This paper examines the background and trends of the overseas migration of Koreans, which started in the late 19th century because of economic, political, and social conditions in the Korean peninsula. Major characteristics and problems of Korean communities overseas are also discussed using China as an example.*

### INTRODUCTION

Korean society is characterized by homogeneous ethnic identity and culture, with a 5,000 year history. Its territory changed several times, and the current territory was demarcated about 500 years ago. Due to its geographical location and ethnic homogeneity, Korea developed into a self-sustained, closed society. There were invasions from China and Japan once in a while, but their impact on the culture and society was negligible. Although literary classes studied Chinese classics, and Chinese scripts were used in teaching and official documentation, the Korean language, which is unique in the world and easy to learn how to read and write, has persistently functioned as the sole real communicable language in Korea. Geographically, Korea borders Manchuria, and accordingly some movement of the population is expected to have existed between northern Korea and southern Manchuria for some time. But the movement of a significant volume began to occur only in the late 19th century. One of the important reasons for this low migration might be the tight control of northern regions by the Korean government for national security to prevent uprisings in the region. In addition, China, prohibited the cross-over of Koreans into southern Manchuria, since the region was considered the sacred home of the royal family of the Ching dynasty. Thus, no visible Korean community is known to have formed outside the Korean territory until the late 19th century.

Koreans residing overseas nowadays are estimated at about 5 million,

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TABLE 1. KOREANS RESIDING OVERSEAS, 1995

Area/Country	Permanent	%	Temporary	%	Total	%
Asia/Pacific	2,633,115	53.3	90,805	31.3	2,723,920	52.1
China	1,926,017	39.0	14,381	5.0	1,940,398	37.1
Japan	659,323	13.4	37,488	12.9	696,811	13.3
Others	47,775	1.0	38,936	13.4	86,711	1.7
North & Latin America	1,817,238	36.8	147,512	50.8	1,964,750	37.5
United States	1,661,034	33.6	140,650	48.5	1,801,684	34.4
Canada	71,241	1.4	1,791	0.6	73,032	1.4
Latin America	84,963	1.7	5,071	1.7	90,034	1.7
Europe	486,481	9.9	40,750	14.0	527,231	10.1
CIS	459,026	9.3	2,119	0.7	461,145	8.8
Germany	17,494	0.4	11,708	4.0	29,202	0.6
Others	9,961	0.2	26,923	9.3	36,884	0.7
Middle East	340	0.0	9,016	3.1	9,356	0.2
Africa	1,171	0.0	2,145	0.7	3,316	0.1
Total	4,938,345	100.0	290,228	99.9	5,228,573	100.0

Source: *Koreans in the World: Annals*, Seoul: The National Unification Board, 1996.

which is equivalent to 10% of the population of South Korea, or 7% of the total population in the Korean peninsula, indicating that a series of out-migration waves of Koreans from the peninsula has taken place during the last one hundred years. The largest Korean community is found in China, particularly in the northeast region, Manchuria. Koreans in China number about 2 million, and most of them are living in Korean communities. Korean ethnic groups in the United States are reported to be about 1.66 million,<sup>1</sup> but they are known to live scattered all over the country, though a number of Korean communities are found in some major cities. The most noticed of them is Korea Town in Los Angeles. Japan and the CIS have sizable Korean populations, too, which number 660 thousand and 460 thousand respectively. Koreans in these countries live together in Korean communities. Next to them is Canada, which has 71 thousand Koreans, and 85 thousand Koreans reside in Latin American countries, as shown in table 1.

<sup>1</sup> The figure was compiled by the Korean Embassy based on data provided by the Council Generals in the States, and is known to have grossly over-reported. According to the 1990 census, the Korean population was enumerated as 799,000. (Barringer and others, 1993: 39) If the number of immigrants and the gain by natural growth are added, Koreans are expected to number about 1.2 million as of 1995.

## INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF KOREANS

*Early Movement*

Korean movement across the national boundary of significant volume was first noticed, as a result of a series of extremely poor harvests in the northeastern provinces during the 1860s. Many destitute farmers had no option but to leave the country to find a fertile land in nearby Manchuria and Siberia. This particular incident is regarded as the beginning of the Korean settlement both in China and Russia. Ease of security and control in the Korean peninsula, almost a virtual vacancy of those areas bordering on Korea, and the loosened Chinese check of foreign entrants in southern Manchuria, the so-called sacred region of the Ching dynasty, may be important factors in the migration of Koreans in the region. The lack of security control in Korea can further be explained by a series of political turmoils in the later half of the 19th century, which included subsequent peasant uprisings all over the nation and culminated in the *Dong-hak* peasant war in 1894-95. In this period of economic difficulties and political turmoil, Japan and the Western powers staged a hegemony struggle in Korea, which resulted in the fall of Korea into the hands of Japan. In a word, Korea as a nation was desperate to survive and its people were destitute everywhere. Labour migration of Koreans to Hawaii and Mexico in the beginning of the 20th century, which mark the first generation of Koreans in the American continent, was also formed in this environment.

According to fragmented data, about 9,000 Koreans were reported to move to the maritime provinces of Siberia during the 1860s, and the number of Koreans in Russia increased to 28,000 in 1900, 54,000 in 1910, and 107,000 in 1923. (Kwon H-Y 1996, pp. 37-56) Although the background and the period of establishing Korean settlements are almost identical between Russia and China, the volume of emigration to China was much greater. The number of Korean residents in Manchuria was reported at 77,000 in 1870, and reached 200,000 in 1900 and 220,000 in 1910. (Kwon T-H 1996, pp. 42-49) Due to the long distance and the nature of contract labour migration, the number of Koreans moved to Hawaii and Mexico was very limited. Only 7,394 Koreans were reported to land on plantations in Hawaii and 1031 in Mexico during the three years of 1903-05 (Kim and Patterson 1974, p. 90; Chun K-S 1996, p. 41).<sup>2</sup> In short, about 1.5% of the Korean population

<sup>2</sup> Migration to the American continent ceased in 1906 due probably to the pressure of Japan. Among the emigrants to Hawaii, there included 755 females and 447 children under age 14,

moved out of the country during the later half of the 19th century. In considering only northern bordering regions where the most of migrants were originated, the proportion of emigrants was expected to have gone up to more than 10% of the total population.

One thing which is clear from the above observation is that poverty was the major factor to drive Koreans out of the country in the late 19th century, which indicates the presence of severe population pressure at that time. The pressure might have been intensified by a series of poor harvests as was the case in the 1860s in northern Korea. But historical population figures attest that the pressure had built up gradually for more than two centuries until it culminated in the middle of the 19th century. The growth of population destroyed the balance of land and population, and the results were chronic shortages of food and the spread of sociopolitical unrest throughout the country. In a word, the Malthusian dilemma was the major force working behind the early overseas migration from Korea.

#### *Emigration in the Colonial Period*

The occupation of Korea by Japan in 1910 opened a new road to overseas migration in Korea. Japan emerged as a major destination of Korean emigrants during the 1920s. The exploitation of Korean agriculture by Japan created a large continuous stream of migrant movement from rural villages. With limited job opportunities in Korean cities due to under-development, most migrants had to leave the country, mostly either for Manchuria or Japan. These patterns of emigration lasted until the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945, though the major destination of migration shifted between Japan and Manchuria and the volume of migration changed from time to time in relation to the economic conditions of Korea, the labor policy in Japan, the Japanese invasion of China, and the Japan's waging of World War II.

During the first ten years after the Japanese occupation, there was a rush of Koreans to Manchuria to organize an independence movement or to escape from poverty. The estimated number was more than 320 thousand, while those who moved to Japan were only 33 thousand. Migration to Japan began to accelerate, whereas that to Manchuria dwindled greatly in the 1920s: During the 1920s, Koreans moving to Japan numbered 340 thousand, compared to 125 thousand to Manchuria. The movement to Japan, which mostly originated in the southern part of Korea, was due to fact that

and Christians and fighters against Japanese invasion were known to form a significant portion (Kim and Patterson 1974).

Japanese industries favored Korean laborers because of their low wages. In the 1930s, the volume of migration grew substantively, and the destination was equally divided between Japan and Manchuria. During 1936-40, a sudden increase of emigration was observed, both to Japan and the Manchuria. In this period, the Japanese government adopted different policies on the emigration of Koreans between Japan and Manchuria. They developed a policy to curb Koreans movement to Japan to avoid conflicts with Japanese laborers arising from the mass employment of cheap Korean laborers in Japanese industries. On the other hand, movement to Manchuria was not only encouraged but also organized on a massive scale in order to develop newly invaded Manchuria as an agricultural base of Japan. But Japan's waging of war against China, and subsequently the world, in 1939 resulted in a virtual halt of migration to China. On the contrary, a large number of labor draftees were shipped to Japan to fill the labor shortage in Japan due to the military draft of Japanese youth during the war. Through this migration process, the overseas Korean population has grown rapidly. The growth was facilitated in later years when their natural growth potential increased sharply. The number of Korean residents in Japan grew to 238,000 in 1928, and was reported to have grown to 800,000 in 1938 and 1,882,500 in 1943. In Manchuria, the Korean population was enumerated as 459,400 in 1920, 607,000 in 1930, 1,450,400 in 1940, and 1,658,600 in 1944, as shown in table 3. By adding the residents in Russia, the overseas Korean population was approximately 3.7 million, about 12% of all Koreans living elsewhere, at the end of Japanese rule in 1945.

There had been a continuous flow of emigration to Siberia by 1937, though the volume was very limited. The Korean population in Russia was 100,000 in 1923 and increased to 170,000 in 1927. An estimate based on official figures predicted that the population would reach 200,000 in 1936. According to an unofficial count, however, about 250,000 Koreans were

TABLE 2. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MIGRANTS TO JAPAN AND MANCHURIA, 1910-45

Year	Japan (Park)	Manchuria (Kim)	Net Emigration (Kwon)
1911-15	970	150,074	
1916-20	33,976	174,595	
1921-25	138,290	24,200	
1926-30	200,330	101,404	235,300
1931-35	262,424	175,511	395,900
1936-40	456,483	565,229	893,400
1941-45	739,244	—	

Sources: Park, J-I (1957, pp. 22-31); Kim, C. (1965, p. 31); and Kwon, T-H (1977, p. 184).

known to have resided in Russia in the late 1920s (Koh S-M 1990, p.13). In the late 1930s, the emigration of Koreans to Russia ceased and the Soviet Union began to forcibly displace the majority of Koreans in the bordering maritime provinces to far away Central Asian regions like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to segregate them from their fellow Koreans in the Korean peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

The emigrations of Koreans to Japan and Manchuria had one thing in common in their characteristics: Both were caused by deterioration of agriculture and the resultant extreme poverty of average Korean farmers due to ruthless agricultural exploitation by the colonial regime. But there were important differences in the migrant characteristics between Japan and Manchuria. Migrants to Japan mostly originated from the southern agricultural areas, and were employed in construction fields, factories, and mines, as bottom layer laborers in Japan. They were an ethnic minority, often considered as untouchable, living in slums on the outskirts of the city. Contrary to Japan, the movement to Manchuria was an agricultural migration to introduce farming on virgin land. Koreans formed the dominant ethnic group in the areas where they were settled, and accordingly, lived in Korean communities segregated almost totally from Manchurians and Chinese. In a certain sense, they were pioneers in their destination. If we characterize the life of Koreans in Japan as complete subordination to Japanese people and society, that in Manchuria was a series of fights not only against the natural environment, but also against the Japanese invasion and the exploitation of absent Chinese landlords. Probably due to this difference, Koreans in Manchuria could develop strong community solidarity, unlike in Japan, and the return movement of Koreans from Japan had been much greater than that from Manchuria after the independence of Korea in 1945.

#### *Korea 's Liberation and Its Effects*

The defeat of Japan in World War II resulted in the liberation of Korea together with its division into two political entities; that is, capitalist South Korea and communist North Korea. Japan's defeat created a massive flow of repatriation and return movement from Japan and Manchuria. It was estimated that more than 1.4 million Koreans, or 70% of Koreans, were repatriated to Korea from Japan, and among them, 1.35 million entered South Korea. Such a heavy influx of population into South Korea is easily

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the major reasons for the displacement, see Koh S-M (1990, pp. 28-29).

explained by the fact that the former movement to Japan mostly originated in the southern part of Korea. Return migration from Manchuria occurred at a much smaller scale for the longer history of emigration to Manchuria and their agricultural settlement after migration. The total number of returnees from China was estimated at 700 thousand, about 40% of the Korean residents, and 400 thousand people, or 60% of the returnees, were assumed to have entered into South Korea. The majority of them consisted of the former migrants from the southern farm area, but there was a significant number of returnees with of North Korean origin. A common feature of the return migration between Japan and Manchuria was that more recent movers, single migrants without family, and less successful settlers were more likely to return to Korea. This contributed to some extent to the formation of more stable Korean communities in both Japan and China after World War II.

The development of the Korean community in Japan and China took a completely different path after the war, depending upon their respective government policies on ethnic minorities. China adopted a policy of accommodation by granting them partial autonomy and a right to keep and develop their own cultural heritage, including language. On the contrary, Japan's policy on Koreans has been non-accommodation, segregation and discrimination. New China accepted Koreans in their territory as their citizens from the beginning, but Japan refused to grant citizenship to Koreans living in Japan, though many of them were taken forcibly to fulfill a duty as the Emperor's subordinates. Social discrimination and prejudice against Koreans have prevailed strongly in Japan, unlike in China where Koreans were often treated as an exemplary ethnic group for their hard work, high educational aspiration, respect and care for the elderly, and so forth. Besides the state policy on ethnic minorities, spatial segregation of Korean settlements might have been the major contributing factor to ease tension with Han majority in China.

Korean communities in Japan and China have shown a marked contrast in their unity. In China, Koreans identified themselves with North Koreans, and thought North Korea as their motherland until the mid 1980s. With increasing exposure to South Korea and its development during the last ten years, their national identification has shifted. Now, most Koreans in China tend to think of South Korea as motherland. One interesting thing is that such a drastic change in attitude does not appear to have caused them an identity crisis or confusion at all. Community unity is strong as ever, and no divisive factions developed in line with the political confrontation in the Korean peninsula. The situation is totally different in Japan. The Japanese

government forced Koreans to choose their nationality between South and North Korea. Well organized communist groups took the initiative to persuade them to take North Korean nationality. Further, it was much easier or natural for Koreans to register themselves as *Chosun-in*, meaning North Korean, rather than *Hankuk-in*, referring to South Korean, because they were called *Chosun-in* during the colonial period. Consequently, Korean society in Japan divided into two parties, the majority *Chosun-in* and the minority *Hankuk-in*. They became hostile to each other as tensions increased between South and North Korea. In recent years, many Koreans transferred their North Korean nationality affiliation to South Korea, but the division is still destructive and constitutes part of everyday life of Koreans in Japan.

### *Migration to the New World*

A new wave of emigration erupted in Korea in the 1960s. Migration to or from nearby countries was sealed. Instead, various kinds of long distance movement toward the new world began. The Korean government adopted a policy to encourage and assist emigration of its people in 1962 as a means of controlling population, alleviating unemployment, earning foreign exchange, and acquiring knowledge of advanced technology. The government arranged labor contracts with various countries including West Germany, Thailand, Uganda, and Malaysia (Kim and Yu 1996, p. 371). Among them, the most important was the movement of miners and nurses to West Germany between 1963-78. The total number of contract migrants to Germany was about 21,000, and most of them settled in Germany and other Western countries after the expiration of the contract. The government, also, drew up an ambitious plan to organize massive agricultural movements to Latin American countries. Under this scheme, the government assisted family-unit emigration to Brazil and Argentina started in the early 1960s. The government purchased uncultivated forest land for reclaiming in farm and community settlements. But the farming was a total failure, and virtually all migrants deserted the land and left for big cities. Later, emigration to Latin America was often used as a gateway to the United States and Canada. One important feature of these organized migrations is that most migrants had middle class backgrounds with high levels of education and little experience in the required jobs, except for nurses. Extreme poverty still prevailed in Korea, and many people were desperate to escape from the hopeless home country by all means, including irregularities such as buying qualifications.

The Korean War broke out in 1950 and lasted three years. The United

States led the United Nations forces to help South Korea. Throughout the war, South Korea and the United States built close ties as allies, and consequently, Koreans were given opportunities to emigrate to the States. Following the war, three types of Korean emigrants to the US were distinguished. The first was the emigration of women who were married to American soldiers. The second was the movement of students to get advanced degrees. Most of those early students did not return to Korea after study, and this kind of so-called brain drain was considered the most important migratory movement of Koreans to the States. In addition, there was the movement of orphans caused by the war, mostly mixed blooded children of American soldiers and Korean women deserted due to strong social prejudice in Korean society. But the volume of migration was very limited until the late 1960s, when the new American Immigration Act was in effect. According to immigration statistics, the total number of student migrants by 1965 was about 6,000. The soldier accompanied women totaled 37,000 during 1950-64, and orphans adopted by American families numbered 6,300 between 1955-66 (Choe and Park 1996, p. 66). The student migration was male dominant, while the girls outnumbered boys among the orphans. In a word, emigration to the U.S. after the Korea War was overwhelmingly female dominant.

The annual number of Korean migrants increased steadily after the Korean War. It reached 2,000 in 1964 and 3,800 in 1968. The tempo of growth accelerated after 1969 with the implementation of the new Immigration Act, which was revised in 1965 to abolish the national origin quota system and to adopt a new immigration structure based family ties and employment skills.<sup>4</sup> According to the immigration statistics, the number of Korean immigrants totaled 6,000 in 1969, 14,300 in 1971, 22,900 in 1973, 30,900 in 1977, and 32,700 in 1981. It peaked at 35,800 in 1987 (Choe and Park 1996, pp. 67-71). The U.S. census counted the Korean population as 70,000 in 1970 and 800,000 in 1990, showing an increase of eleven times during this 20 year period. The early movers were mostly individual migrants, but the growth of migration from the late 1960s was accounted for by an increasing proportion of invited migrants by families and relatives. The proportion reached 91% in 1977. In other words, social characters of Korean immigrants in the U.S. changed drastically around 1970. The degree of female dominance was reduced. Also observed were the relative concentrations of migrants in terms of religion and place of origin in Korea; that is,

<sup>4</sup> According the 1952 Immigration Act, the annual immigration quota for Koreans set as 105 persons.

Protestants and refugees from the North Korean communist rule. Korean families in the States are well known for their family oriented values and relatively large family size. Their educational level is higher than both the Korean and American averages. Koreans keep high aspiration for children's education, and a relatively higher proportion of Korean workers engage in professional occupations and self-employed retail business compared to white Americans. About 90% of them reside in metropolitan areas (Barringer and Cho 1989). But, the American dream has waned rapidly among Koreans in the States, as well as in Korea, with the development of the Korean economy and the intensification of ethnic conflicts in American society. As a result, the number of Koreans migrating to the States began to decline in the 1990s, and the volume of return migration is increasing.

#### CHARACTERS OF KOREAN COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF CHINA

Korean communities in various countries have different backgrounds in formation and adaptation to their respective social, political as well as natural environments. Accordingly, we may assume that their characteristics are markedly different from each other, but they are known to share some basic social characteristics. For example, Koreans everywhere enjoy traditional Korean food, such as *kimchi*, *bulkogi*, cold or hot noodles, bean curd, soy bean sauce and paste, and chili-bean paste. Korean women are easily identified by their traditional costume, at least on special occasions. Family and kinship ties are very strong and operate as a basic network in all social domains. Education is most highly valued for success in the world, and parents are usually devoted to their children's education. Thus, the level of educational attainment of Korean descendants is one of the highest among various ethnic groups. It is well known that many Koreans migrate to the U.S. for their children's education and future by sacrificing their own career and life. In a word, Korean communities overseas usually reveal distinctive cultural traits in their behavior and thinking. Nevertheless, Koreans feel a strong crisis in many countries, and the fear of community dissolution in the near future is frequently expressed in most overseas Korean societies. Now let us examine the case of China as an example to understand the distinctive features and to examine the prospects of Korean communities overseas.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Korean population in China had grown

<sup>5</sup> The discussions below were summarized freely from Han and Kwon (1993) and Kwon T-H (1996).

markedly during the Japanese colonialism in Korea. The population was reported at 220,000 in 1910 and increased to 1,660,000 in 1944. But a return movement took place among Koreans in China with the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945 and the Korean population was reduced to about one million. The number of Korean minority population has grown continuously since then, and recently reached two million. But the tempo of population growth has slowed down significantly since the early 1980s, due to a rapid fertility decline (see table 3). When the population change by migration and natural growth are decomposed, the former are the most important features of population change for Koreans in China until the late 1940s. Most Korean migrants to China headed for Manchuria, but the degree of concentration within the region had been reduced during the Japanese colonial period and increased immediately following Japan's defeat in World War II. As illustrated in table 4, most Koreans still reside in three northeastern provinces of China which comprise Manchuria. Particularly, Yanbian autonomous region comprises 43% of the Korean population in China, and thus act as the center of Korean Chinese. Since the establishment of New China, the growth of the Korean population in China has been determined by the difference between births and deaths, and their

TABLE 3. THE TREND OF KOREAN POPULATION IN CHINA, 1910-90

Year	Population	Growth rate	Year	Population	Growth rate
1910	220,000		1944	1,658,572	3.35
1912	238,403		1953	1,120,400	
1915	282,070	3.36	1964	1,339,600	1.62
1920	459,427	9.76	1982	1,765,200	1.53
1925	531,973	2.93	1990	1,923,361	1.07
1930	607,119	2.64			
1940	1,450,384	11.24			

Source: Quoted from Kwon Tai-Hwan, *Koreans in the World: China*, 1996, pp. 47-77.

TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF KOREAN POPULATION IN CHINA, 1982 AND 1990

Area	1982 Population	%	1990 Population	%	Growth rate
Total	1,765,240	100.0	1,923,361	100.0	1.07
Manchuria	1,733,967	98.2	1,868,377	97.1	0.93
Jilin	1,104,071	62.5	1,183,567	61.5	0.87
(Yanbian)	654,706	42.8	821,497	42.7	1.06
Liaoning	431,644	24.5	454,091	23.6	0.63
Heilungjiang	198,252	11.2	230,719	12.0	1.90
Others	31,273	1.8	54,984	2.9	7.05

Source: *The 1982 and 1990 Population Census of China*.

migration within China has been negligible.

Korean communities in China have undergone a process of continuous adaptation to the changing sociopolitical environment during the last one hundred years. Koreans first settled down in the southern part of Manchuria bordering on Korea, called Kando at that time and Yanbian nowadays. They cultivated land and introduced rice farming there. During the Japanese colonial period, Koreans underwent various hardships. They had to fight against a harsh natural environment, that is, coarse land, local endemic diseases, and a lack of water supply. More difficult was the struggle against the oppression and exploitation of the Japanese. They were ruthless and treated Koreans like slaves. They confined Koreans to Korean settlements and conducted tight surveillance on them. In the late colonial years, Japan brought Koreans in groups for land cultivation into the remote and sparsely populated parts of Manchuria, and kept them in a military-like compound. Their everyday life was tightly controlled. Early individual migrants enjoyed more freedom, but they had to encounter the exploitation of Chinese land owners who were protected by Japanese police as a means of controlling Koreans. Various documents show clearly that Koreans were totally destitute and their life was nothing but miserable. Under these circumstances, however, Koreans founded many schools for the education of children and to prepare them for the future independence movement against Japanese colonialism. Korean society became self-conscious, culturally homogeneous, united, and thus a base of the Korean independence army. They are still proud of the history of their fierce battles against the Japanese army.

Japan's defeat in World War II and the subsequent political struggle in China brought about a restructuring of Korean society in China. About 40% of the Korean population returned to their homeland, and the return migrants were highly selective among late emigrants who had largely originated in the southern part of the Korean peninsula and sent to remote areas in Manchuria. Accordingly, the concentration of Koreans in Yanbian area was strengthened. During 1944-53, the Korean population was reported to decrease from 1,659,000 to 1,120,000, but the proportion of Koreans living in Yanbian region increased from 39% to 50%. Koreans helped the communists in the civil war immediately following Japan's retreat, and, as a result, the establishment of New China in 1949 opened a new opportunity to Koreans. Yanbian area was granted the status of an autonomous region for the Korean minority. Thus, the ethnic identity of Koreans was recognized and the use of Korean language was accepted as official in the public domain, including education and broadcasting. Most Koreans began

to own farm land for the first time in their entire lives through land reform. Their life-time dream was realized by the grace of New China and they became loyal to the communist party and state. Accordingly, most Koreans welcomed and were proud to get citizenship of China.

But, the impact of various political events has never passed by the Korean community. Struggles against the rightists in the late 1950s, the conflicts with Soviet Union around 1960, and the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 caused great sufferings to the Korean people.

Korean intellectuals and ethnic leaders were openly denounced and often put into jail as regional nationalists or Soviet/North Korean spies. It is frequently said in Korean communities that the Korean were the greatest victim of the Cultural Revolution. The following reform and open-door policy provided Koreans with new visions and environments. The improvement of relations between China and South Korea, the resultant growth of economic and cultural exchange, increasing opportunities for Koreans in China to visit South Korea, and the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992 meant to Koreans in China the opening of a new horizon in their world. In this period of societal transformation, Koreans have manifested substantive changes in their value orientations and patterns of behavior. At the same time, worries about the possible disappearance of the Korean community in near future are growing.

Koreans in China have never lost their ethnic and cultural identity, despite the replacement of generations and the profound social as well as political changes during the last one hundred years. In a word, Korean Chinese are characterized by cultural consistency. Korean dishes and food tastes still prevail. Women in traditional dress are often seen in Korean communities. In villages, they live in houses whose design originated in northeastern Korea. Even in cities, the residential area of Koreans is segregated from that of the Han majority, and has a distinctive appearance. In short, Koreans and Korean communities can be easily identified at a glance.

It is often mentioned that the common language is one of the most important factors at work behind this strong ethnic identity and cultural consistency. Language is not simply a means of communication, but also a basic determinant of the mode of thought and behavior. It is also considered to be the basic symbol of a given ethnicity and culture. In China, Korean language is persistently used as the main medium for communication and education. Koreans conduct various literary and academic activities in Korean language. They have published novels, poems, essays, books,

magazines and newspapers mostly in Korean, because this is the only language which enables them to express fully their hearts and emotions. Koreans have built an emotional community with the help of the Korean language.

Confucian elements in Korean culture, such as respect for learning, familial values, and bureaucratic/professional occupations still prevail strongly. Because of high educational aspiration, Koreans have achieved in China the highest level of educational attainment among 56 ethnic groups, including the *Han* majority. Unlike in Chinese communities, education has been regarded as the most important indicator of social prestige, and thus, knowledge has been treated as the most important asset, even in Korean society in the Cultural Revolution era. Despise on commerce and manufacturing began to wane gradually in the mid 1980s. But parents still favor professional jobs and high ranking government positions as desired occupations for their children.

Traditional kinship systems did not develop in New China due to the ideological rejection of kinship values. The kinship ideology is, however, found to operate widely in Korean communities as a basic principle of networking. Most people live in nuclear families and the level of fertility reached a below replacement level in the late 1970s, one decade earlier than in the case of South Korea. Although Koreans are allowed to have more

TABLE 5. BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES OF YANBIAN KOREANS, 1990

Items	Urban area	Rural area
(1) Everyday language		
Korean	74.2	95.7
Chinese	14.0	1.9
Both	11.8	2.5
(2) Preferred school for sons		
Korean schools	65.6	81.9
Chinese schools	28.4	13.0
No preference	6.0	5.1
(3) Preferred food		
Korean food	74.9	88.2
Chinese food	7.3	4.8
No difference	17.8	7.0
(4) % Wearing traditional costume		
Men	11.2	20.4
Women	64.0	75.4

Source: Han S-B and Kwon T-H. *Koreans in Yanbian, China*. 1993.

than one child, few young couples want to have two or more children. Still, everybody weds when they are grown, but the age at marriage has deferred continuously, and a late marriage currently prevails. In sum, family structure has undergone significant changes, but the traditional patterns of family relationship did not change much. The family is structured on the basis of vertical ties between parents and their offspring, rather than horizontal relationships between husband and wife. Parents take it for granted to sacrifice themselves for the success of children, and children duly pay respects to parents in turn. Strict role differentiation and segregation in the life world are observed between husband and wife. As an extension of the traditional familism, respect and good care for the elderly are regarded as virtues in the Korean community. All these features are known to be distinctive to the traditional Korean culture.

The Korean minority is highly reflexive and self critical to their behavior patterns, which are often called ethnic characters. This tendency is regarded as an expression of strong ethnic identity, which is reinforced through with the neighboring *Han* majority. The comparison is usually made to reveal weak points or negative aspects in Korean characters. These include excessive consumption, concern on appearances, lack of perseverance, dependency, anxiety over face saving, avoiding difficult jobs, and lack of long term perspectives. On the other hand, such items as high aspiration for education, creativity, pride in cultural heritage, and filial piety are listed as strong points. Korean men are usually depicted as lacking self-control, while women are described as being devoted to the family. It is typical for Korean men to get drunk everyday, to chain-smoke, and to be idle at home, whereas women work hard to take care of family members and household chores. Women frequently undertake street merchandising or run a tiny store to help the family economy. Considering it face loosing, men rarely engage in those activities. In other words, men are trapped by the culture of face, whereas women entered, and are mostly successful in, new areas which are traditionally looked down upon. Thus, entrepreneurship appears to have developed first among women in Korean society in China. The patterns of behavior of Koreans in China can be generalized as outer-directed in behavior and judgment, strong adaptability to the changing environment, persistent sex differentiation, and marginal men like characters.

## PROSPECTS OF KOREAN COMMUNITIES IN CHINA

To foresee the future of Korean communities, it is necessary to review the

directions of recent changes. Korean communities in China have been subject to continuous changes and severe suffering, but the depth and width of changes during the last ten years are not comparable to any period in the past. Change has taken place in every sector of society, and society has undergone a process of overall transformation. The important forces of transformation include drive for modernization, partial adoption of a market economy and population change.

Population is considered to be a basic element in viewing the future prospects of Korean communities in China. The population of the Korean minority has increased without disruption since the founding of New China in 1949. As a consequence, the fear of community dissolution due to population reduction has not been an issue at all. But the situation is changing. The fertility of Korean women was below replacement in the late 1970s, and the Korean minority population is expected to enter a era of rapid decline in 20 years. Socioeconomic changes in China do not support any projection of substantive fertility increase in the years ahead. Nowadays, many elderly Koreans worry about the disappearance of Korean communities due to a rapid reduction of its population. However, the response of the young generation to this concern is rather cool.

The prospect for population movement of Koreans leads us to the same conclusion. It is widely acknowledged that collective settlement with little migration was a key factor in the development of strong solidarity among Koreans in China. But, the life world of Koreans has greatly expanded geographically as well as socially in recent years. An increasing number of Koreans leave Korean communities and move to various cities all over China. In addition *Han* people are moving into the Korean regions. Some Koreans, particularly Korean women, move to South Korea by marriage. In short, Koreans are more and more scattered, and Korean villages and residential areas are in the process of cooptation by the *Han* population. If the emigration law of South Korea is relaxed to accept more Korean Chinese, the dissolution of Korean society in China will be facilitated.

The expansion of the life world means for Korean Chinese more involvement in and acceptance of *Han* culture. Recently, the utility of the Korean language has been somewhat heightened due largely to the increasing economic cooperation between Korea and China and the growing number of tourists from South Korea. Korean Chinese are often employed as intermediaries in business deals, helpers in factories, and tour guides. But the Korean language does not do any good for the success and upward mobility of Koreans in Chinese society. It is frequently heard in the Yanbian area that Koreans are handicapped in work and promotion because

of their language. In cities, a growing number of parents send their children to Chinese schools for their future, and many Koreans take this as an indicator of the gradual dissolution of the Korean community in China.

Changes in the Korean community are noticed widely in economic and industrial activities, too. A growing number of Koreans enter into private businesses, indicating a fast growth of entrepreneurship among Koreans. The Young generation leads this trend, and therefore, agricultural dominance in the Korean community will soon disappear. Economic success is what Koreans most value nowadays because of their growing feeling of helplessness in politics with the intensified control on ethnic minorities in China after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, economic opportunity is very limited for Koreans, and their relative economic status is known to have declined since the mid 1980s. Their best hope is now assistance from South Korea. In other words, dependency on South Korea will grow in every domain of life except politics and administration. The influences are noticed in arts, popular culture, values, education, technology, rituals, and elsewhere. In fact, Koreans in China have never been assimilated into Chinese culture and society, despite their history of settlement over three or more generations. They can be said to have lived in a cultural island. Accordingly, contacts with their fellow Koreans in South Korea should have a more realistic and significant impact on the lives of Koreans in China. They criticize South Korean people and society as immoral, vulgar and capitalistic, but look after them. The Korean community in China was socially well integrated in the past. Although there were some group conflicts, these have mostly subsided. But various new kinds of social conflicts began to surface recently, and are intensifying. Normative conflicts are found among generations and between men and women. Class conflicts are noticed between the new rich and the poor. In the process of development and change, anomie is observed widely. Community solidarity is loosening and important symbols of cultural identity are disappearing. These phenomena are often taken as symptoms of the dissolution of Korean society in China.

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