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Title: **Koreans in Latin America: cultural interactions and new understanding.**

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Introduction

Currently, Korea has more than 6 million people living outside the peninsula.¹ According to the Migration Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commerce of the Republic of Korea, in 2005 there were 107,161 Korean residents in Latin America.

Korean immigration to Latin America began, though not on a large scale, in 1903 when the first shipload of immigrants arrived in Mexico. In 1957 and 1958 some former POWs founded the Korean communities in Argentina and Brazil. Finally, since 1960 contingents of emigrants have arrived in a more continuous way and most have settled in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.

The immigrant communities in all these countries share similar characteristics as a result of being part of a diaspora.² They formed around family structures whose influence spread beyond the home serving as a base for the migration chain and for business activities. The family and the church which form centres for the transmission of memory, language and cultural habits down the generations are at the heart of the migratory phenomenon

The concentration of the immigrant population in large cities such as Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo and Asuncion allows for the construction of frameworks of belonging that secure the formation of a unified Korean identity. This unity is based on cultural symbols, values and rules of behaviour produced in these new contexts. The larger, more concentrated and organised these communities are, the more capacity they have to maintain and produce cultural frameworks based on an ideal of continuity with Korea.

A high degree of re-emigration is also worth noting, in many cases to other locations in Latin America, but the symbolic link to Korea is always maintained. This deterritorialised symbolic relationship gives these emigrants a considerable creative potential in their movements.

¹According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commerce (2005) there are 2,439,395 Koreans in China, 2,087,496 in the USA, 901,284 in Japan, 532,697 in CEI, 198,170 in Canada, 107,162 in Latin America and 640,276 in Europe.

² I base myself here on Michael Bruneaux (2004) who sets out four basic conditions for the existence of a diaspora: 1) the population under consideration must be dispersed in a variety of locations; 2) the choice of emigration destination must be based on migration chains which link the migrants with those already established; 3) the new immigrants must avoid assimilating into the destination society and continue to identify strongly with their country of origin. This implies the existence of associative structures by means of which traditional forms of community life can be reproduced.; 4) The dispersed immigrant groups must maintain relations among themselves, their country of origin and other centres of immigration. Also Brubaker Rogers (2005) identify three elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora: dispersion in space, homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance.

The Korean Diaspora in Latin America³

Pre-1910 immigration

The first groups of immigrants came contracted to work in Hawaii and Mexico. These first immigrants were motivated by the hunger prevalent in the peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century as well as its political situation. This led to a group of merchants exporting Korean labour to other parts of the world. At the same time the growth of sugar production and a shortage of labour caused the government of Hawaii to introduce policies favourable to immigration. From 1850 large numbers of Chinese and Japanese started to arrive and from January 1903 the first Koreans, who totalled about 7400 by the end of 1905. They had been legally recruited from a variety of cities and went to work on the sugar plantations. Some of these first immigrants rapidly made their way to California in search of better economic and social opportunities. (Son Young Ho, 1988) Many of these first immigrants were from the north of Korea and had converted to Christianity previous to their arrival, thus facilitating the formation of ethnic-cultural communities in their new home. By April 1905 a Koran Evangelical Association, which included a number of different churches, was already in existence (Lee Kwang-kyu, 2000).

The fate of the first Korean immigrants to Mexico⁴ was to be quite different. On the 15th of April 1905, 1031 of them, 802 men and 231 women, arrived at the port of Salina Cruz on their way to Mérida where they were divided up among 22 henequen plantations. Unlike those who went to Hawaii, they had been recruited in an irregular manner as a result of which they had arrived without Korean passports. The plantation owners rapidly reduced the new arrivals to something approaching slavery. The Korean government tried to find a diplomatic solution for this situation but was unable to as a result of the Japanese invasion and occupation.

The workers regained their freedom when their contracts expired at the end of 4 years but received no offers of other employment. Without capital to set up their own businesses they took up a variety of different options: some stayed in Yucatán while others went to Hawaii and the United States (Wayne Patterson, 1993).

In 1921, motivated by exaggerated tales of the good life on the island of Cuba, 300 Koreans made the crossing. Of this group only 40% formed part of the original group which had arrived in Mexico in 1905, the rest had been born in Mexico of mixed marriages. Its rapid dispersion to different parts of the island and the difficulties in communication with other Korean communities in Mexico and in the United States meant however that the language and traditions of Korea were rapidly lost by the new arrivals (Ruiz Raúl y Kim Marta, 2000).

According to the statistics, in 1947 about 2,000 Koreans were living in Latin America. At the end of the Korean War to this number was added a number of North Korean former POWs who chose to go to Brazil and Argentina rather than return home. 50 years later, 98,852 Korean residents⁵ will be registered in the continent.

³This study is based on material gathered during a study of Korean immigration in Latin America which was carried out over a period of seven years (1998-2005) which included field work both in Latin America and Korea. It is also based on in-depth interviews, a survey administered to Korean university students in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina as well as a survey of the relevant bibliography.

⁴ The new Korean immigration to Mexico was analyzed by Kim Hyong-Ju (2005)

⁵ Kwon Tai-Hwan (1997)

Movements after 1960

The 1960s were the scene for emigration policies implemented by the Korean government which were intimately related to changes which were taking place in the country itself at the time. These new migratory flows contributed to the consolidation of existing new communities and the formation of new ones.

According to Kim Il Soo (1981) these new policies and consequent emigration can be explained by a number of factors centring on the need to control and address the questions arising from population growth caused by the introduction of modern medicine and improved nutrition as well as the growth of internal migration and repatriation. According to Kim, 2.3 Koreans returned home at the end of the WWII and a million fled to the South from the North.

To address this new situation two basic types of policy were implemented: one of vigorous birth control and the other of strong encouragement for emigration, principally to the United States, Canada, South-East Asia, Australia and New Zealand. However, "... only a few nations were willing to accept limited numbers of Koreans; some Latin American nations accepted Koreans with a view to settling them in remote areas while Germany accepted miners and nurses as migrant workers."⁶

Apart from direct government policy, a number of other factors may have a role in accounting for emigration from Korea in this period: the repressive policies of the military government, the unstable political and military situation on the peninsula, the discrimination suffered by those of North Korean origin⁷, the activities of Christian missionaries who acted as promoters of the migratory chain, the fact that the majority of the early emigrants were North Korea, who seemed to have a greater inclination to turn to Christianity⁸ as well as being more inclined to emigrate as a result of the discrimination they suffered in the South.⁹ We should also recall that the great majority of the first Korean emigrants, at the start of the twentieth century to the United States and later to Latin America, were already Christians before they left their home country (Kim, 1977; Kim, 1981; Shin, 1977; Min 1992, 1998; Gil 1997).

Arriving in Latin America

After the Korean war the UN forces gave North Korean POWs the option of either returning to the North or emigrating to a neutral country. Those who chose to leave

⁶Kim Il Soo, 1981, p 48

⁷"The North Korean refugees in the South were more vulnerable to the sharpening of the political and military between North and South (...) the Northern refugees were disproportionately "expelled", as a result of political and economic instability, from their native country. There are no statistics to prove it but North Koreans comprised 50.6% of the 423 who emigrated to Latin America between 1962 and 1968 ... a large number of these reemigrated to the United States." Kim Il Soo, 1981, p35.

⁸"For some reason North Koreans accepted Christianity more readily than those in the South, First because of the constant discrimination to which inhabitants of this region were subjected by the Yi Dynasty and which in turn led to insurrections and revolts. Second, the North Koreans were exposed to more egalitarian values which made them more ready to accept Christian teachings" (Kim, Hyung Chan 1977, p 48)

⁹Kim Il Soo (1981) also observed this phenomenon in the Korean community in New York. "Because of their marginality in their homeland, North Koreans with Christian backgrounds became primary candidates for emigration when such opportunities became available" (p 308).

Korea had to wait for two years in a UN camp in India before being allowed to move on. 57 of these chose to come to Argentina and Brazil (Lee Kyo Bom, 1990).

In 1960, planned emigration to Latin America began. According to Kim Ill Soo (1981) it was to bring 30000 Koreans to Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia. The objective was to set up agricultural settlements. Small groups arrived at these settlements over the following decades. In 1985 investment-based emigration to Argentina began to be promoted.

In this decade the Korean government promoted “group migration” for families to establish themselves in rural areas. As we shall soon see however, these agricultural settlements did not prosper because the majority of the immigrants had no experience of rural life and the areas chosen for settlement lacked basic infrastructure as well as health and education services. For this reason the new settlers moved to cities such as São Paulo in Brazil, Buenos Aires in Argentina and Asuncion in Paraguay and devoted themselves to commercial activities.

So, from 1962 small, isolated groups of immigrants began to set themselves up in Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile. From the outset this wave of immigration was characterised by overland remigration between these countries.

The motives for the choice of Latin America were various and included the size of the continent, its richness in natural resources, its tranquillity and good quality of life, especially educational opportunities for children (Mera, Carolina, 1998). It must also be recognised that for many immigrant families Latin America represented a first step towards the “American Dream”, eventual re-emigration to the United States (Park, Kyeyoung, 1997).

In 1964 302 people of Korean origin arrived in Bolivia and in 1965 they were joined by 282 more. The majority of these families re-emigrated to Argentina or Brazil (Lee Kyo Bom, 1990).

The first official wave of immigrants arrived in Brazil in 1962 and continued until 1966, with the support of the Korean government. “Each family received a subsidy of 200 dollars and was allowed to take up to 3000 dollars with it”.¹⁰ In 1963 a group of military families unhappy with government policy arrived, as well as Protestant groups from the urban middle-class with a good level of education. As had been agreed with the government, they went to agricultural regions. Among the final groups who arrived in 1966 were 70 Catholic families who settled in Colonia Santa María in Tibagi District. During the 1970s only Korean technicians, either university graduates or with a work contract were allowed, to enter the country. This led to the clandestine entry of immigrants via Paraguay and Bolivia. They acquired legal residence in the amnesties of 1980 and 1988 (Galetti, 1995). As was mentioned above, the immigrants’ lacked experience in rural life and this combined with droughts and disease tended to push them from the countryside to the cities, where families’ network had an important role. According to Choi Keum Joa (1991) “For Korean people family is the symbol of race and identity group preservation”¹¹. The urban spaces contribute to the preservation of the identity group.

¹⁰ Galetti Roseli, 1995, *Migração de estrangeiros no centro de São Paulo: coreanos e bolivianos*. TV Educativa/UNICAMP.

¹¹ Choi Keum Joa, 1991, *Alem do Arco Iris, a imigração coreana no Brasil*, MA Dissertation at University of São Paulo, Brasil.

In Brazil as in Argentina, once settled in urban areas the immigrants devoted themselves to the textile business. The choice of this activity is due to the fact that it did not require a large amount of initial capital, language skills or previous experience. This business soon began to prosper, especially after 1975. “The clothing industry is the basis of the survival of the community in São Paulo. Information from the Brazilian Korean Association indicates that 50% of the community is involved in the wholesale clothing trade, 15% in the retail trade, 20% own clothing manufacturing businesses, 5% are in sales and only 1% is in the professions”.¹² The majority of the Korean population in Brazil is settled in the São Paulo area. In 2005, out of a total population of 50269, 49642 live in the city. A similar pattern can be observed in the Korean population in Argentina and Paraguay which is concentrated in Buenos Aires and Asuncion.

The first ship carrying Koreans arrived at Buenos Aires, Argentina, from the port of Pusan in 1965. Many of the families who arrived that year settled in Campo Lamarque, Rio Negro Province on land that had been acquired for them by the Korean Overseas Development Corporation. This body bought land in various Argentine provinces for agricultural activities. Even during this period however a few individuals started to settle in the city of Buenos Aires. Between 1970 and 1978 about 500 families arrived to settle in rural areas but, as has already been mentioned, these projects did not prosper and they eventually moved to the large cities.

In 1985 an agreement was signed in Buenos Aires regulating the entry of Korean immigrants to Argentina. Between 1984 and 1989 more than 11000 entry permits were granted and it is estimated that the total number of Korean immigrants reached 30000 by the end of this period, which also saw a significant growth in the number of community associations, churches and newspapers. Those who came in these years were almost exclusively from Seoul and Pusan, arrived by airplane, had investment capital and were leaving a modern and industrialised country.

We can see that therefore that significant Korean immigration began in the 1960s, grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s with an increase in the number of businesses, community associations, Korean language publications, churches and restaurants. Finally, the 1990s saw a growth in the quality of but a reduction in size of the Korean community. No new immigrants arrived and many left as a result of the growing political and economic crisis at the end of the decade. (Mera, 2005)

The number of Koreans in Argentina reached a peak of 42000 in 1990. From then on the number began to descend to 32069 in 1997, 25070 and 15500 in 2003. The numbers are rising once more however with a figure of 19171 in 2005 rising to 22,000 today. Those who left Argentina in these years were either of families re-migrating to Mexico, Australia, the USA and Korea or school or university students moving to the USA or Canada to pursue their studies.

The Korean community today – mainly based on the immigration of families – makes its living mainly from the textile business and has a strong network of ethnic solidarity. It also has associations based on identities related to Korea such as school and university affiliation and regional origin. There are also associations based on the community’s life in the Argentine context such as the Association of Korean Residents in Argentina, commercial bodies as well as school and university groups, among others. The community also has a bilingual primary and secondary school as well as its own

¹² Galetti Roseli, 1995, p. 139

medical centre. This social network has greatly facilitated the participation of community members in Argentine education, economic and cultural and professional life. It is also the space where older norms and values are adapted to the new context and a new bicultural identity is negotiated, always marked by the experience of difference.

In Paraguay the initial immigrants also settled in the countryside where the Brazilian and Argentine experience of failure and movement to the city was repeated. The first group of 65 people arrived in Asuncion on the 22nd of April 1965 and the total by the end of the year was about 1200. According to Chon Kyong Su (1996), they went to Paraguay and Bolivia because it was easy to gain entry to but from the outset the intention was to settle in Argentina and Brazil, nations to which many travelled overland. According to Lee Kyo Bom (1990) of the Korean residents in Argentina between 1966 and 1969 "...one in three came from Korea, the rest from Paraguay".¹³ Remigration from Paraguay to Argentina increased in 1968 and 1969 and later during the 1970s. Between and 1970 and 1978 a total of 2000 are estimated to have made the move (Lee Kyo Bom, 1990) and overall, the available sources indicate, about half the Koreans who came to Paraguay eventually moved on to Argentina or Brazil. They left because of the immediate negative impression Paraguay made on them and the news of the creation of a Korean Evangelical Church in Buenos Aires also had an influence. Both these factors strengthened the initial tendency to see Paraguay as a stepping stone to Brazil, Argentina or the USA.

Those who remained in Paraguay worked mainly as poultry farmers. A paradigmatic case is that of Mr. Ku, who as a result of a lack of appropriate knowledge, disease among the birds and the climate went bankrupt twice. He moved to Brazil where he was able to save enough money to return to Paraguay and try again. On this third attempt he was successful and in 1975 established Colonia Tacuara and diversified and expanded his activities to include fruit farming.

Colonia de San Pedro, set up on land bought by the Korean government 132km from Asuncion also failed initially. Of the nine families who settled there in 1981/2 only two managed to achieve some success as farmers while the other seven ended up moving to Asuncion. Finally in 1985 three families had their bid to buy the land over ten years accepted. The failure of rural enterprise rapidly led to the streets of Asuncion filling with Korean street traders and in due course the search for better opportunities in other countries.

In Peru there are about 1000 people registered with the Peruvian consulate. The majority of these people did not come directly from Korea but remigrated from countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Paraguay. In 1970 a group of 10 families formed the association of Korean Residents in Peru which has since broadened its activities to include business and commercial help to its members. The community also has an education centre where classes are held on Saturdays in a bid to transmit Korean culture down through the generations (Sumalavia, 2005). As in the Korean communities in other Latin American countries there is a high degree of religious activity based around the Catholic and Evangelical churches, churches which serve social and cultural as well as religious purposes. According to Sumalavia (2005) parents strongly believe in passing on their customs and culture to their children and for many of them, Peru represents a stepping stone to the USA.

¹³ Lee Kyo Bom, 1990 p. 57

In Chile immigration started at the end of 1970 and in 1980 an agreement was signed by Chile and South Korea which exempted Koreans who wished to settle in Chile from visa requirements. During the 1980s many of the Korean families who arrived either moved on to other countries or returned to Korea. By the 1990s however a small community had finally come into existence, by 1997 it amounted to 350 families, about 1500 people in all (Stoehrel, 1997). Though the adults have not learned Spanish the younger generation has integrated better and all of them go to school or university.

According to Cortés (2005), the Korean immigrants have brought a new dynamism to the history of migration in Chile. They have settled in districts traditionally associated with Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese businessmen popularly known as “los turcos de Patronato” and have become economically active in areas traditionally associated with the Chinese community just as Chinese immigrants did at the end of the 19th century at the height of the nitrate boom and from the 1970s to the present day. The arrival of Koreans in the Patronato district coincided with the decline of the Arab community in that area.

The Korean community is mainly made up of small businessmen in clothing and commercial textile production. They used to buy used production machinery in their home country and import it for use in Chile but the rise of cheap mass-produced textiles in Asia has produced a tendency away from manufacture towards importation and sale.

Aspects of Integration in Latin America

In most cases the immigrants brought with them professional skills – some were historians, others architects, chemists, engineers etc. – which they did not use in their new business lives.

The first generation did not study Spanish and started to work immediately, which impeded their cultural integration. Their children however study in the best schools – public in Argentina, private in Brazil, Paraguay and Peru – and a large proportion go on to a local university or to one in the USA or Korea. In many cases the 1.5¹⁴ generation gave up their studies to help their parents at work in commerce or industry.

As a way to briefly analyse certain aspects of the integration¹⁵ of Korean communities in Latin America I will now examine data gleaned from a survey addressed to Korean university students in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.¹⁶

The survey shows that the community in Brazil is more integrated than that of Argentina, to the extent that it may be in danger of losing its original culture. In Brazil community members prefer Portuguese for communication with their friends and parents and have a positive view of Brazilians. Paraguay is the country with the least

¹⁴ Here I refer to children who arrived with their basic education completed in Korea. The second generation consists of those who were born outside Korea which in turn can be divided into those who arrived in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

¹⁵ The term “integration” implies the loss immigrants culture while “integration” takes account of the cultural pluralism sought after by modern societies.

¹⁶ Gustavino H.; Mera C. y Piovani J.I., 2000 “Integración e identidad: un estudio comparativo de la segunda generación de inmigrantes coreanos en los países del Mercosur”. Survey carried out at HANA 2000, Sierra de la Ventana, Argentina on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of July, 2000. It should be pointed that all the students surveyed had relations with Korean associations and/or churches. However, the study allowed us to make some comparisons between the various countries.

degree of integration, where the customs of the older generations are most consistently maintained, Korean is preferred to Spanish and there is the most negative view of the local population. Argentina falls somewhere in between; the percentage who speak only in Korean to their parents is lower than in Paraguay but much higher than in Brazil. Korean Argentinean university students are bilingual and their opinions about the local population show a degree of ambiguity. While students from Paraguay show a very negative opinion, and those from Brazil show a highest valuation regarding the local population.

The Korean Brazilian students had serious difficulties with the Korean language and as a result it was very difficult for them to communicate with Paraguayan Korean students who spoke poor Spanish and less Portuguese. It was common to see Argentine Korean students trying to bridge this communication gap with “portuñol”.¹⁷ These different levels of language skills was borne out by the survey which, although it showed a high level of participation in the education system by all (both the 1.5 and second generations), it also showed that Brazilian and Argentine students had a better grasp of Spanish.

70% of Korean Brazilians and Argentine Koreans worked and studied at the same time, only 40% of the Paraguayan Koreans did so, part-time and in family businesses. In Argentina, although employment in the family business predominated, 18.8% had stable jobs not linked to their parents’ activities. In Brazil, the majority worked in the family business but a large minority, 46%, did not. This may well be explained by the fact that Brazil has an industrialised and expanding economy (by comparison with the other two countries) thus permitting a more rapid entry to the labour force. In countries where this is not the case, like Argentina, the family business may provide a necessary refuge. In this context it seems legitimate to hypothesise that a growing economy will provide more opportunities for integration the second generation both in terms of jobs and opportunities to move beyond the circle of family and community.

There were also differences with regard to education; while in Argentina the majority attended public universities and had a positive view of such institutions, in Brazil and Paraguay most went to private universities.

We can thus state that the Korean communities in Latin America have integrated into their receptor societies without assimilating; they retain a strong sense of belonging related to their Korean identity based on a significant community life which permits that identity’s reproduction. We can also see that many of these communities congregate together in districts which they mark with their culture. The churches are the institutions charged with recreating the group identity based on certain values related to its origin. The capacity to reproduce identity can be seen in the formation of new generations who share this sense of belonging

The success of integration depends on the area concerned. The evident success achieved in the economic area has turned out to be more complex and contradictory in the cultural and recreational fields as it is hard to maintain a bicultural model in societies where an assimilationist view still predominates. In Argentina the bicultural model can be seen at its strongest whereas in Paraguay Korean education prevails sustained by a negative view of the local culture. In Brazil the young people tend to give priority to local education and values.

¹⁷ Mixture of Spanish and Portuguese.

The existence of the 1.5 generation testifies to the existence of the diaspora. The people in this group have a sense of identification with each other that transcends their place of origin whether that be Brazil, Argentina or the USA. They internalise a set of values which relates that of their society of origin, their receiving society and their life group. This integration is part of the complex of human relations in which these people circulate daily.¹⁸

It must also be realised that in many societies in which they have settled, Korean communities have a negative image which has influenced their relations with the local population, in general very negative. In this situation the communities tend to positively re-evaluate certain aspects of their origin and treat them as ideals. Identification with Korea, language, food, “race”¹⁹, blood and history are particularly relevant here. They are narrative constructions that articulate the continuity and discontinuity of certain values and patterns of behaviour of the country of origin in the global and local space. In this sense, we notice that national and ethnic identities are hard to coexist. Brazil is famous with the most tolerant policy toward minorities than Argentina and Paraguay. Then in Brazil Koreans have a more positive ethnic identity and a high self confidence than in the others countries.

The movements of groups of Koreans display certain fundamental features which allow us to speak of a diaspora. Firstly an identity related to Korea is reproduced in spaces of memory which are the diaspora communities, local sites in dialogue with originary identities. As Bruneau (2004) points out, a diaspora is always faced with a dual problem; on the one hand, of integration into a variety of different countries, on the other, the conservation of its transnational identity in a great number of states. For this reason the construction of memory based on common roots and linked to the territory of origin but above all a “metaphorical space” made up of the network of places where the diaspora communities are located.

High levels of mobility and re-emigration

Korean immigrants are characterised by a high level of mobility and re-emigration, both of families and individuals. From the outset they have had experience of multiple movements; from Paraguay to Argentina and from Argentina to Brazil or vice versa, from Bolivia to Brazil or Argentina and later to Canada or the USA. In fact, the people who make up the communities in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, USA, Canada, Korea and Spain have friends and family at other points of network made up of routes and having multiple entry points. These movements have two basic causes:

1) One was already implicit in the decision to leave Korea. This is the case of those who chose to come to Latin America in the 1970s. These were people for whom Latin America was only a stepping stone to their final objective.²⁰ The influence of the

¹⁸ From field work carried out in Seoul in 1998/1999 it can be stated that young people who have lived abroad have a greater sense of identification with each other than those of their own age raised exclusively in Korea.

¹⁹ From an interview with people of Korean origin.

²⁰ This line of thought is taken further by Park Kyeyoung (1997) in her work on the Korean community in New York in which she states that the immigrants left Korea not because they could not survive there but because they dreamed of “America”. This dream was particularly relevant for those immigrants who set out between 1965 and 1976. “In Korea this is described as American fever” and has to do with much more than economic success. In this regard Park makes reference to the concepts of “anjong” (stability,

American cultural model will be present in all the migratory movements from Korea to Latin America. We should here recognise that all Korean migrants had experienced in their country of origin the transition from an agrarian society to one ever more industrialised, urban and westernised with a growing middle class.²¹ It is also the case that in Korea, with the exception of students and the more critical intellectuals, the USA has a positive image. In general the inhabitants of the peninsula have a positive view of modernisation and democracy inculcated in them by the education system and American Christian missionaries who taught that all are equal in the eyes of God, an idea essential for democracy. (Pak Kwon-Sang, 1982) Koreans also have direct access to information about the USA from missionaries, soldiers and businessmen resident in the country as well as from friends and family who have emigrated there.

2) Other movements were caused by conditions in the destination countries. The internal situation in many Latin American countries in the 1970s encouraged remigration to the USA or Canada. It must be remembered that this decade was characterised by violence between groups from the right and left and security forces who acted outside the law as well as frequent bouts of economic chaos leading to hyperinflation. In Argentina for example, economic chaos reached a new peak in 1989 with the crisis that obliged President Raúl Alfonsín to leave office. Residents of Brazil also experienced hard times in 1981 and again in 1991 with high rates of inflation and a general sense of instability. At these points remigration to the USA and Canada occurred as well as a higher degree of movement within Latin America. It should be remembered however that some of those who left returned when the crisis abated.

According Kim Ill Soo (1981) the immigrants of the decade 1960-1970 who arrived first in Latin America and Germany ended up resettling in the USA. Park Kyeyoung's study (1999) claims that immigrants who had come to the USA from Brazil and Argentina had spent between 15 and 23 years in Latin America, a claim which makes the stepping stone hypothesis more difficult to sustain. We can see therefore that while in some cases those who went to Latin America did so in transit to Canada and the United States, other cases of re-emigration can be accounted for by factors internal to the countries of Latin America, in particular, economic and political crises.

As can be seen from Table 1 the Korean population has a high level of mobility throughout the continent. Taking for example the period 1999-2001²² we can see that 6178 people left Argentina and 4222 left Paraguay, a total of 10400, while during the same period 8656 people arrived in the continent. This means that we are talking about 19056 people on the move between those who were already in Latin America and the new arrivals. In the same period 17121 people arrived in Mexico²³ and 1181 in Brazil a

settlement, security) and chagigage katchi (establish a small business) acquire great importance, play a key role in the process of integration and help make sense of life in America.

²¹ According to Kim Ill Soo (1981) one of the psychological consequences of the economic success enjoyed by Korean society was an intensifying consciousness of social mobility among those who did not achieve the social status they desired and so looked to the USA as a place where such status might be achieved. .

²² In the 1990s Argentina went through an unprecedented period of rising unemployment and flexibilization of labour, which, added to a succession of economic crises caused a general impoverishment of the population and a widening of the gap between rich and poor. The economic, political and social crisis of 2001 was the culmination of this process and caused the emigration of a large part of the Korean community.

²³ For more detail about the process in Mexico see Kim Hyong-Ju, 2005.

total of 18302 so more than 90% of those on the move relocated to other countries on the continent. The 754 remaining surely went to Guatemala and Chile.

Finally we should point out that there are many sorts of movement involved here: those who set out from Latin America to establish themselves in the USA or Canada, those who left but came back a short time later, those who arrived with the intention of a temporary stay but ended up staying and who came to stay but did not find the conditions they expected and emigrated for a second time. This was a complex dynamic process involving re-emigration and further movements after the initial uprooting that also constituted part of it.

Table 1: Korean Residents in Latin America²⁴

Country	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
Total	98,852	102,806	111,462	105,643	107,162
Brazil	44,201	46,916	48,097	50,250	50,296
Argentina	32,069	31,248	25,070	15,500	19,171
Mexico	2,168	2,379	19,500	17,200	14,571
Paraguay	10,278	10,412	6,190	7,097	5,803
Guatemala	2,051	4,128	5,456	7,943	9,943
Chile	1,470	1,487	1,509	1,870	1,858
Peru	1,774	810	919	953	788
Ecuador	959	762	720	728	766
Bolivia	718	977	709	758	563
Dominican Republic	582	584	588	477	431
Honduras	687	759	461	415	491
Colombia	427	646	428	433	440
Costa Rica	291	295	385	476	464
Others (12)	968	1486	1430	1543	1577

Final Reflections

Migration as a social process has to be considered in terms of a number of variables; economic, social, political and cultural which involve the individual, the family and the broader group in which it is immersed as well as the various receiving societies and particularly the relations established between all of these.

In this study the focus has been on the relation between the phenomenon of remigration and multiple locations that form part of the Korean diaspora identity and it has been argued that this identity is the product of local immigrant communities in relation to their place of origin which permit these movements and assure their success. Ethnic identity is constructed with the contributions of different waves of immigration produced by and related to the policies of the Korean state which depending on prevailing historic circumstances could be more or less active.

We have seen re-emigration takes place between the countries of Latin America and also to Canada, the USA and Korea, circulation being a constant element of the diaspora. The possibility of settling in various countries exists because of the material support offered by the existing communities but also because of the psychological security produced by the adhesion to shared values which allows to speak of immigrant

²⁴ Information from the Migration Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commerce 2005

identities or floating identities.²⁵ Furthermore, local identities can constitute useful resources such as in the case of Latin American Koreans in the USA who have developed a positive notion of the “floating self” and made use of their Latin American identity as a resource that other Koreans do not have (Park Kyeyoung, 1999).

The idea of diaspora supposes a strong anchorage in the destination society indicated by the creation of territorial markers (places of memory) which protect the link between local identity and the symbolic chain of connection with country of origin. Thus the existence of Argentine Koreans in Mexico or the USA, Brazilian Koreans in the USA or Canada and American Koreans in Korea itself and so on into an infinite range of possibilities. The Korean diaspora is characterised by the flexible timetable of its members the length of whose stay in each place depends mainly on its possibilities of economic and cultural growth. There is a great variety of possible itineraries and there are also families that transnationalise²⁶ themselves, the parents staying in Korea and the children moving to Korea or elsewhere.²⁷

Finally, the phenomenon of return is worth noting as it appears to be ever more common among young people who return to Korea from the USA, Canada, Argentina and Australia for postgraduate study or to work in the professions they received qualifications in, in their various countries.²⁸

Multiple movements are part of the process of reconfiguration of identities called “immigrant identities” involving the movement of subjectivities in globalisation. The Korean immigrant communities are a paradigmatic case of this; adaptable to varying local realities they always maintain a central core of tradition and identity recognisable in any part of the diaspora. The population of the diaspora has sufficient cultural and iconographic capital to reproduce itself and overcome the obstacle of distance. This cultural capital lives in shared memory.

This possibility of movement is the product of the mechanism creates an “ideal Korean identity” which gives security and support in different local realities. We have seen how the 1.5 generation perceive themselves as different from their peers in other countries; they know however, that they are the product of the same experience, that of living between two cultures.

The emergence of identities such as Korean American, Korean Brazilian and Korean Argentine occurs when groups of Koreans from different backgrounds decide to share their lives, space and sense universe in a new settlement. From this springs a new ethnic community, as has been said previously, product of the constructed “Korean identity” created by community institutions and the local situation. This process, much more complex and multiple than has been possible to show here, is called “migrant identities”

²⁵ See Park Kyeyoung (1999) and Mera Carolina (2004)

²⁶ Transnationalisation is a theoretical approximation to the logic of globalisation by which families escape the control of Nation States and can live in two or more places at a time between material reality and social representations. (Sassone, 2002)

²⁷ In her study of Rio Negro Koreans in Rio Negro, Argentina, Alcira Trinchero, 2006, states that they maintain a vast network of communication and solidarity between Lamarque-, New York, Brazil, Los Angeles, Bolivia, Mexico, Buenos Aires, General Roca and Korea, which involves the children of the Argentine and North American Argentine communities. The use of information technology is obviously fundamental here.

²⁸ “Young overseas Koreans return for better jobs” in Newsreview, Korean’s weekly news magazine, July 19, 1997.

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