

Koreans and the Poly-ethnic Environment in Central Asia: The Experience of Eurasianism

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1. Koreans in the poly-ethnic milieu and the formation of a Korean meta-nation

Korean immigration, which has taken place during the last 150 years, has led to the fact that by 2000, the number of overseas Koreans amounted to about 5 700 000 persons. Today Koreans live all over the world: in more than 140 countries. If the intensity of their migration is taken into account, then in the near future the number of Koreans outside the peninsula will be comparable with the population of the Republic of Korea or the DPRK.

Adapting and assimilating in an alien ethnic environment, Koreans from different countries acquire more and more traits that distinguish them from each other and transform their initial ethnic characteristics. An increasing quantitative dispersion of the settling of Koreans and the increasing qualitative differentiation within it lead to new processes in the evolution of Korean ethnicity. As Koreans settle throughout the world and as they assimilate in various countries, *Korean identity begins to take various forms and already cannot be reduced to ethnic characteristics that exist on the Korean Peninsula.*

Ethnic communities and ethno-social organisms can have different historic forms whose evolution results in the formation of *nations* as stable ethnic formations. However a nation is not the final form of the evolution of ethnic communities and ethno-social organisms. For example, in federative states such as the former USSR or the USA, new supra-national communities (Soviet and American peoples) not reducible to a certain nation ? say, to Russians or other ethnos ? were formed. Ethnoses, which settled all over the world and formed large foreign diasporas (Jews, Armenians et al.), have also adopted supra-national characters. For instance, there are more Armenians outside Armenia than in the country itself. Today one can also speak about the formation of a *supra-national Korean ethnic community* (Koreans of the North + Koreans of the South + Korean overseas diasporas). In the future, by forming into a more or less *stable* formation, this “supra-national” community could signify a new stage in the evolution of the Korean ethnicity ? a *meta-nation* stage as an aggregate of affined but culturally differing ethnic groups historically belonging to one nation.

In connection with the process of divergence from the peninsula, an anxiety is expressed in Korea about the fact that the ethnic identity of overseas Koreans experiences a “serious crisis” . Often diasporan Koreans hear reproaches that they are insufficiently “Korean” , that their language and customs are incorrect, etc. It is necessary to realize that the peculiarities of the Korean Diasporas are reality and that they should be perceived as such. Moreover, from the point of view of diasporan Koreans, transcending the frameworks of a mono-ethnic consciousness is not a deficiency but a virtue that opens new horizons of consciousness and perception of the world. This provides an opportunity not only to build relations with “the other” , but also to include “the other” as its own organic element, thus rendering consciousness open and externally oriented.

The transformation of an ethnic culture and consciousness does not necessarily present a crisis. No ethnic culture stands in one place. It develops and is influenced by other

cultures, except in the case of isolationism, as manifested in Korea until the 19th century. True, Koreans of the CIS have lost much of the culture of their forbears. But they've created their own, unique *culture of Eurasian Koreans*, of which they can be rightfully proud. It can be called a crisis only from the standpoint of a statically understood "Korean identity" .

2. On the ethno-cultural identity of Central Asian Koreans

One of peculiarities of the formation of ethno-cultural identity of Koreans in the former USSR, in contrast to Koreans from the peninsula, is their poly-ethnic environment. We can speak about the identity of Koreans living in mono-ethnic (homogeneous) and poly-ethnic (heterogeneous) societies. For instance, North Koreans and South Koreans live in a homogeneous mono-ethnic (Korean) environment where all people are Koreans. In China and Japan, where there are large Korean diasporas, it can be said with certain reservations that in these countries the process of adaptation took place in *homogeneous but alien ethnic* (Chinese or Japanese) environments. In the USA and the former USSR the process of assimilation of Koreans went on in a *heterogeneous alien ethnic* environment. Thus, the life of the Soviet Koreans passed in constant contacts with representatives of dozens of peoples (all in all, more than 120 peoples lived in the USSR), and this determined the *flexible* psychological attitudes of Koreans towards their ethnic environment, as well as the *flexible* models of their behavior.

Under the conditions of an alien ethnic environment, there inevitably transpires the transformation or loss of many components of culture, which are preserved in a homogeneous Korean environment. Soviet Koreans, having lived in isolation from Korea over the course of 4–5 generations, certainly are different from Koreans on the peninsula by their language and mentality, values, ideals, outlook, behavior, customs, traditions ? all to a greater degree than Korean diasporas in other countries, such as China, Japan, the USA, Western Europe, etc.

The degree of difference between Koreans from Korea and diasporan Koreans in the former USSR is so great that it presents the basis for singling out a *new ethnic formation* ? "Koryo saram" together with other similarly forming new communities (Koreans in Japan, USA, etc.).

The cultural genetic pool of Eurasian Koreans is a *synthetic* one ? i.e. it is the synthesis of Korean, Russian, Soviet, Central Asian and European cultures. This is especially typical of intelligentsia and the youth. For Eurasian Koreans the following are characteristic:

- the essential transformation of the cultural genetic pool (i.e., the transformation of the initial socio-cultural characteristics of Korean ethnicity);
- the elapsing of this transformation in a poly-ethnic (heterogeneous) environment;
- the transition of the mother tongue from Korean to Russian language;
- the adaptation to cultures essentially different from traditional Korean culture;
- the transcendence of the frameworks of mono-ethnic consciousness (Eastern type) and the formation of a Eurasian one;
- a high level of acculturation and assimilation;
- the dynamism and intensity of the above listed processes;
- a high level of achievements in various fields of life.

Sometimes it is easier for CIS Koreans to understand the psychology and behavior of the Russian, Jew, Georgian, Uzbek or Kazakh than the Korean from Korea. Vasilisa the Beautiful and Ivan the Fool from Russian tales, Khodja Nasretdin from Central Asian oral works, Pavel Korchagin from the novel by Soviet writer Nikolay Ostrovsky, D' Artanyan from the novels of Frenchman Alexander Dumas, Aivengo from the novel by the English writer Sir Walter Scott, Gadfly from the novel by American writer Etel Lilian Voinich, characters from tales by the Brothers Grimm, by Charl Pero, and by Hans Christian Andersen are more familiar and closer to us than those created by Choon Hyang or Hong Gil Dong.

An ethno-social survey covering 170 respondents was carried out in 2000–2001 among the Koreans of Uzbekistan. The results of the survey clearly demonstrate the synthetic nature of the ethno-cultural identity of Uzbekistani Koreans.

Let us take, for instance, their language. According to the data of the All-Union census (1989) 55,8% of Koreans named Korean language as their mother tongue, 43,8% – Russian, 0,3% – Uzbek, 0,6% – other languages. Does this data mean that for the majority of Koreans of Uzbekistan Korean language is really their mother tongue, i.e. they think in it, speak and write?

First, when Uzbekistani Koreans say that they know Korean language, by this they mean *kore mar*? a form of the Yukchin dialect (Northern Hamgen) of Korean, whose roots go as far back as the 15th century and which was preserved as a result of prolonged isolation from the then-fledgling Korean literary language. *Koryo mar* is the language of Koreans of the oldest age groups that exists mainly in an oral form, functioning only in the family-domestic sphere and influenced by Russian and Turkic languages. R. King points out that as a result of Russian language's influence, sounds, endings and archaisms, which are absent in standard Korean language, appeared in *kore mar* speech. Kho Song Moo gives numerous examples of *kore mar* replenishing its lexical stock by borrowing from Russian and Turkic languages. Besides that he writes: "The influence of Russian language is not limited only by the lexicon: it can be observed in various expressions, especially in the use of verbs. In many cases, expressions are formed by way of a direct translation from Russian into Korean". Uzbekistani philologist O. Kim, who attracted attention to the peculiarity of the language of the Soviet Koreans as far back as in the 60s, wrote: "We collide here with the facts of the mixture of languages, which approaches paradox but are ordinary in the speech of Koreans. This especially strikes the eye when Koreans speak among themselves." Soviet Koreans, who communicated among themselves in *kore mar*, while meeting Koreans from the Korean Peninsula discovered that they practically did not understand Korean literary language, which seemed to be a foreign language to them.

Secondly, many Uzbekistani Koreans who named Korean language as their mother tongue, meant that it is the mother tongue of the Korean nation, though they themselves, perhaps, know it much worse than Russian or Uzbek language? or do not know it at all.

And thirdly, it is necessary to bear in mind the category of Koreans who recognize all things "Korean" as native only from the spirit of 'patriotism', irrespective of the fact how these "native" things are really present in their life. If we shall take into account the year that the census was conducted? 1989, the year, when a Korean movement that caused the splash of ethnic self-consciousness started to arise? then the wish of Uzbekistani Koreans to emphasize their ethnicity can be understood.

However to name a language one's mother tongue and one's objective mother tongue are two different things. To the question: "In what language do you think?" 85,4% of the respondents named Russian language, 7,9% – Korean, 0,6% – Uzbek and 0,6% – other languages. 5,5% of the respondents thought in Russian and Korean language to an equal extent.

Just as with language, such parameters characterizing the culture of Uzbekistani Koreans as cuisine, songs, singers, writers and poets, and rites found reflection in the questionnaires.

89,6% of the respondents used Korean cuisine in their diet. At the same time, 63,4% of the respondents used Uzbek cuisine, 61,6% – Russian, 11,5% – Caucasian and 11,5% – cuisine of other peoples. It is necessary to note that the *Koryo cuisine* of the *Koryo saram* is not identical to the cuisine of Korea. Partially it is exactly the same cuisine (for example, "pab", "tubu", "kongnamul", "kandyan", "dvenchayn", "sokogi kuk", "pechu kimchi"), partially ? similar ("kuksu", "kekogi", "oi kimchi", "mu kimchi"), and partially it has no analogues to the cuisine of Koreans on the peninsula (for example, "carrot cha" ? a salad of pickled carrot, "pigodya ? steamed pasties), though among Koreans from the CIS as well as peoples surrounding them this cuisine is regarded as "Korean". This case can really be regarded as such if behind the meaning "Korean" one recognizes not only patterns of culture of the Koreans on the peninsula, but also of diasporan Koreans.

The cuisine relates to stable components of culture. When one turns to the spiritual culture of the *Koryo saram*, its larger estrangement from traditional Korean culture is revealed.

To the question: "What songs do you sing?" only 18,3% of respondents pointed to Korean songs, while 90,2% pointed to Russian songs. When the respondents were asked to name 5 favorite songs, 71,8% named Russian or Soviet, 19% – foreign, 6,6% – Korean and 2,6% – Uzbek songs. When the respondents were offered to name their 5 favorite singers, 65% of them named Russian and Soviet performers, 25,3% – foreign, 2,6% – Uzbek, 4,5% – Korean singers from the CIS and 2,6% – Korean performers from Korea.

Regarding literature, the preferences of Koreans in Uzbekistan are as follows: 60,8% named Russian and Soviet writers and poets as their favorites, 32,2% – foreign, 3,9% – Central Asian, 2,1% – Korean authors from the CIS and only 1% – writers from Korea.

Among their favorite holidays, Uzbekistani Koreans named the New Year (89,6%). This is followed by the 8th of March, or Women's Day, a holiday absent in South Korea (47%), the New Year according to the lunar calendar (41%), and the 9th of May, or Victory Day over fascist Germany in the Great Patriotic War (World War II), a holiday which is also absent in South Korea (20%). And only 7,3% of the respondents cited such primordial Korean holidays as Chusok and Ovol Tano.

Uzbekistani Koreans' attitudes towards Korean traditions and habits are also different from the attitudes of Koreans on the peninsula. Among the respondents, 31% always followed Korean customs. There is also a small stratum (3,7%), that never follows them. But the majority of Koreans (63,4%) follows them sometimes. But they also sometimes

follow Russian customs (65,2%) and Uzbek ones (65,8%). There were interesting responses to the question “What is your attitude to the fact that your children in the future will not follow Korean customs?” The answers divided up fifty-fifty: 51,8% had negative attitudes to that, while the rest were either positive (22%), or indifferent (23%).

Thus, the data from the survey on the cultural identification of Uzbekistani Koreans can be summarized as follows: regarding the spiritual culture of Koreans in Uzbekistan, one’s “Korean” beginnings do not occupy the role of first violin at all.

A question arises: Are we Koreans at all? The majority of the respondents (86,5%) felt themselves as such. However the survey also revealed the existence of a stratum of persons who either do not feel themselves as Koreans (6,2%), or find difficulty saying who they are ? Koreans or not (7,3%).

Which origin (Korean, Russian or Uzbek) dominates the ethnic nature of Uzbekistani Koreans? 54,8% named their Korean component, 37,2% – Russian and 8% – Uzbek. However the Korean origin is comprehended by koryo saram as not belonging to the culture of Korea. Thus, to the question, “Who do you feel you are: Russian Korean, Uzbek Korean or Korean Korean?” 50% answered – Russian Korean, 35% – Uzbek Korean, 9% – Korean Korean and 6% did not give a concrete answer.

Since the notion of one’s “Korean origin” can be treated differently and apprehended quite subjectively, the survey asked, “What does it mean for you to be Korean?” 83,5% respondents included into the components of Korean origin their heredity, 55% – the observance of Korean customs and rites, 41% – knowledge of Korean language and 34% – the use of Korean cuisine. Of course, “*Korean* customs” are understood to refer to the cultural phenomenon of language and cuisine characteristic of the Koryo saram. Thus, for the majority of Uzbekistani Koreans, to be Korean means, first of all, to have Korean parents. And what is connected with so-called Korean identity is not of *first-rate* significance.

This kind of self-identification of the Koryo saram stems from their synthetic cultural genetic pool, which also leads to other peculiarities in Koryo saram identity. For example, Uzbekistani Koreans prefer a poly-ethnic environment (81,7%) to a Korean one (17,7%). In other words, they prefer the atmosphere of interaction of various cultures rather than the monopoly of one culture, since they themselves are the product of a poly-ethnic environment and the synthesis of different cultures. Hence a liberal attitude towards interethnic marriages: 30% respondents regarded these positively, 39% regarded these neutrally (“indifferent”) and only 31% negatively.

Among the indexes of the transformation of Koryo saram ethnic consciousness are the anthroponimic processes described by R.Sh. Djarilgasinova. The following are characteristic of the Koryo saram: the widespread use of Russian and international names, the appearance of surnames with a formative suffix – gai (for instance, Yu + gai, O + gai, etc.), patronymics consisting of the Korean names of their fathers, plus the suffixes for patronymics from Russian language - ovich (- evich), - ovna (- evna). (For example, a father named Kim Dya-dun could have a son named Kim Lavrenty Dyadunovich; a father named Son In-dek could have a daughter named Son Lyudmila Indekovna.) It is an interesting fact that Uzbekistani Koreans live in Uzbekistan but give their children Russian names. Other Koreans from Central Asia ? Kazakhstan, Kirghiztan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan ? do the same.

So, a general ethno-cultural portrait (identification) of the Koreans of Uzbekistan according to the data of the sociological survey appears as follows. These people:

- consider themselves to be Korean, first of all, because of their genetic origin;
- speak and think in the Russian language and, to a small extent, in *kore mar*;
- use the cuisine of various peoples;
- sing mainly Russian and only occasionally Korean songs;
- consider their favorite songs to be Russian and foreign, and only in insignificant part Korean;
- are raised on Russian, Soviet and foreign literature and practically have no idea about Korean literature;
- occasionally and to equal extents conform to Korean, Russian and Uzbek customs;
- celebrate, first of all, international, Soviet and, to lesser degree, Korean holidays;
- have an indifferent attitude to interethnic marriages;
- prefer Russian names.

Thus, side-by-side with their Korean origins, Uzbekistani Koreans also have Russian-Soviet origins, Uzbek origins, European origins and, in recent years, American origins. In addition, it is necessary to note that the extent and level of the manifestation of so-called “Korean” origins among different strata and age groups of the Korean diaspora in the CIS are different.

3. Koreans and interethnic relations in Central Asia

Their long residence in a poly-ethnic milieu has led the Koreans to adapt extensively to various cultures. This adapting was the basis of relations between Koreans and other peoples of Central Asia. Let us consider the example of Uzbekistan.

Representatives of more than 100 nationalities live in Uzbekistan. They can be divided into two large groups: native peoples and migrant peoples. The first group includes members of the titular ethnos (Uzbeks) and other related peoples who have lived on this territory for centuries (Kazakhs, Kirghizs, Karakalpaks, Uigurs, et al.). In the second group, Russians are the largest ethnos, and have had a special impact due to historic reasons; also included in this group are Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Koreans, Jews, Poles, Azerbaijanians, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars and others.

Inter-ethnic relations in Uzbekistan and their reflection in ethnic stereotypes were formed under the influence of a number of circumstances.

The titular ethnos and other native peoples of Uzbekistan. The native peoples in Uzbekistan, as in Central Asia as a whole, have a great deal in common: ethnogenesis, a common historic past, religion, rites and customs, etc. It is no accident that on an official level, the leaders of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan constantly declare “friendship between brotherly peoples”. However, ethnic relations between these peoples are by no means so ideal. We deal with a known phenomenon of rivalry and sometimes also confrontation typical of many frontier and, oftentimes, related peoples. It suffices to refer to Korean-Japanese, Abkhasian-Georgian, Ossetian-Georgian, Russian-Ukrainian, Armenian-Azerbaijani, Iraqi-Iranian, Kurd-Turkish, Serbian-Croatian, Serbian-Albanian and other relations. The proximity of territories and a

common past are not only a basis for the formation of a single or congenial regional culture, but are also the basis for rivalry, conflicts and even wars.

The historic past that brings native peoples of Central Asia together simultaneously becomes an apple of discord. The same states from ancient and medieval history in Central Asia are the subject of arguments: according to Tajik sources, they are the historical forms of Tajik Statehood, while according to Uzbek ones, they are the forms of Uzbek Statehood. The same fate has befallen great Central Asian thinkers (al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina et al.). Moreover, the problem is not only about differences between scholars that existed as far back as Soviet times. Today even heads of states are involved in the justification of the fact that great civilizations of the past are the heritage of this or that people. In Uzbekistan, an Uzbek-centered model of the history of Central Asia has been implemented, much to the skepticism of other native peoples in the region. The same situation has been manifested by Tajik-centered, Kirghiz-centered and other similar models.

Other questions influencing interethnic relations of the native peoples in the region are arguments about nomadic and settled-urbanized pasts, the existence of written languages and great national entities, the antiquity of this or that people, the role of peoples in the ethno genesis and ethnic history of the region, contributions to world culture, victories and defeats at these or those battles, etc.

The titular ethnos and Slavic peoples. Though Slavs are represented in Central Asia by a number of nations (Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Bulgars, Poles et al.) they are associated with the largest migrant group ? Russians. Also, other Slavs identified themselves as Russian-speaking peoples.

Interrelations of Russians and the native peoples of the region are conditioned by the conquest of Central Asia by Tsarist Russia and nationality policies enacted by the USSR. Ethnic stereotypes formed by Russians about Central Asian peoples and vice versa relate to various sides: history, family, way of life, labor inclinations, upbringing, etc. If during the Soviet period “mutual pretensions” were expressed only at a domestic level, since the period of perestroika they have been spoken out at academic and political levels.

The majority of Russians think that their mission in Central Asia bore a civilizing character, and with their arrival came industry, modern scientific and educational establishments, European culture, the liberation of women and the monogamous family, secular institutes, etc. ? all that characterizes modern civilization appeared in the region. As British researchers H. Pilkington and M. Flinn write, “Russians outside the RSFSR identified themselves not in ethnic categories...but in socio-cultural ones ? considering themselves the best, the most worthy in order to educate and develop “backward” marches of the USSR».

However, today many Uzbeks, especially officials, regard the activities of the Russian Empire and the Soviet state with respect to the native peoples of Central Asia as a colonial-repressive one which led to the oblivion of traditional values and historic memory, a one-sided economy, ecological disasters and the loss of national pride.

As O. Brusina writes: “Russians associate a stereotyped image of Uzbeks with poor professional qualities and a traditional disposition to trade” . And further: “There is a

widespread opinion among Russians: instead of dealing in “serious business” , for instance, working at a factory (which, although less profitable, deserves respect since it is useful for society), the trading Uzbeks care first of all about their own incomes” . An analogous stereotype in the consciousness of Russians in relation to the native peoples of Central Asia was also noticed by British researches. They write that, “Russians evaluated themselves as skilled, responsible, scrupulous workers unlike representatives of titular ethnic groups who were incapable of normal factory labor and “would like only to carry portfolios or to trade” . Uzbeks, in their turn, think that “Russians lack the ‘patriotism’ needed to work on cotton, that they do not strive for honorable agricultural labor, desirable for a native dweller, but seek easy lives in the city.” Negative ethnic stereotypes in the opposition of “the titular ethnoses ? Russians” can be found also in the matters of lifestyle, familial relations, upbringing, style of behavior, etc.

Koreans and the titular ethnoses. As a whole, relations in the pair “the titular ethnoses ? Koreans” can be characterized as positive. A positive image of Koreans in the eyes of the native population is conditioned by the following factors.

Firstly, Koreans arrived not as conquerors but as deported and repressed people. This fact provoked a sense of pity and sympathy among the native population.

Secondly, some other peoples either deported (Crimean Tatars, Turks–Meskhetins et al.) or forced into exile (Greeks) constantly made it known that they were temporary guests on this land, as was reflected in their models of behavior. In contrast, Koreans from the very beginning perceived Central Asia as their new motherland.

Thirdly, Koreans never pretended to hold a more developed or more ancient culture than Central Asian ones. The first generation of koryo saram ? mostly peasants ? dimly conceived their distant historic past. And the second and subsequent generations already identified themselves not with Korea, but with the USSR. The topic of the ‘superiority’ of culture simply did not exist in relations between Koreans and Uzbeks. Even if it had been, it would not have had an acute character, as in the case of other native peoples and Russians. A morbid question was absent in this topic in principle: who brought developed culture into Central Asia?

Fourthly, the customs and codes of behavior of Koreans (bearers of Eastern culture) coincided in many respects with the traditions of Uzbeks.

Fifthly, the majority of Koreans of Central Asia were engaged in agricultural labor like the main native population. Due to Koreans, large fallow lands unusable for agriculture were cultivated and the productivity of many agricultural crops increased; this could not but evoke respect on the part of Uzbeks, who know the worth of hard agricultural labor.

Sixthly, being repressed and being a migrant group, having no status as a titular nation like the Uzbeks or as “big brother” like the Russians, in a short time, Koreans achieved high watermarks in the most varied fields of life. This was also favorable for their image: professionalism and industry came to identify Koreans. In recent times, in which the population of Uzbekistan has discovered Korea and its achievements for themselves, this opinion has been strengthened.

Seventh, the Koryo saram have played and are playing an important part in establishing contacts for attracting and adapting South Korean business to Uzbekistan.

Koreans and Russians. Koreans are also evaluated highly by European peoples in Uzbekistan. As in the case of Uzbeks, this esteem is caused by the above listed achievements of Koreans, but side by side with these lie other factors.

Firstly, Koreans are a Russian-speaking group. In other words, Russians and Koreans have the same mother tongue, but this tie goes beyond means of thought and communication. That is, Koreans are educated at Russian-speaking educational institutions where the quality of instruction remains invariably higher than at Uzbek-speaking ones. The latter institutions have access to Russian-speaking scientific, technical literature and fiction, which in turn grant access to the world achievements of mankind. For Russians, the mastery of Russian language indicates a person's ability to succeed in science, technology, and other intellectual fields.

Secondly, since mastering European culture, the role of the collective heritage typical of traditional Korean families has weakened. That said, European-Korean marriages are on the rise. Thus, the percentage of mixed Korean marriages in the beginning of the 80s in Alma-Ata reached almost 40%, and among these marriages, a "particularly large proportion was made up of inter-ethnic marriages with Russians." The reason is that, being Russified, Koreans have come to depend less and less on a public Korean milieu. The primacy of the collective over the individual is typical in a majority of families of the region's native peoples. As N. Em writes: "The most typical trait of a traditional system of interpersonal relations is the dependence of an individual on relatives and neighbors' ties ? both socio-psychological and economic" . Therefore the proportion of Russians marrying with representatives of Central Asian native peoples is insignificant. And in mixed Korean families, relations are built more and more on an individual level than on a collective-social one.

Thirdly, Russians, generally speaking, highly esteem East and South Asian cultures (Indian, Chinese, Japanese), with many adhering to Eastern martial arts, Buddhist and Confucianist philosophies, yoga, meditation, Dao systems of nutrition, Eastern landscaping, acupuncture medicine, etc. The European population associates Korean culture with this historic-cultural region.

Koreans and other minority groups. Other ethnic groups (Jews, Armenians, et al.) also positively rate Koreans. In all poly-ethnic societies, even in countries with developed democracies, small ethnic groups feel less comfortable than larger ones. Therefore, it is natural that they oppose themselves to titular nations, as well as large privileged ethnic groups which wield influence on a given country's political and interethnic atmosphere. Uzbekistan is not an exception here. In the binary opposition "we ? they" , ethnic groups which feel uncomfortable describe themselves as "we" , including in their ranks Koreans. The aforementioned achievements of Koreans is, once again, another reason why they are highly esteemed by other minority groups.

Thus, in the existing interethnic oppositions "title nation ? other ethnoses" , "Russians ? other ethnoses" , "large ethnoses ? small ethnoses" Koreans have a stably positive rating. One reason for this is the synthetic, non-traditional character of Koryo saram culture. This synthetic character does not oppose Islamic to Christian, Asian

to European, Turkic to Slavic, etc., but includes all of these categories in the formation of a distinct *Eurasian* culture. This, in turn, allows for *highly adaptive* models of behavior.

4. Koryo saram and Koreans from the peninsula: ours or others?

The synthetic, Eurasian character of Koryo saram culture is also important for understanding their relations with representatives of the historic motherland. This is especially the case in light of the widely discussed topic, the “Global Korean Community.”

During the period of perestroika, all Soviet Koreans suddenly realized themselves as *Koreans* and in any event wished to be like *genuine* Koreans. Korean courses, as well as the etiquette and behavior of Koreans from the peninsula (both North and South) became fashionable. Everything that they did provoked admiration, resulting in a phenomenon of mechanical, blind imitation.

However, soon it became clear that attempts to imitate “genuine” Koreans, would only lead the Koryo saram to inferiority complexes.

Soviet Koreans vividly demonstrated a sense of ethnic inferiority (telling themselves that they were not genuine, that they were deformed Koreans), and their self-abasement and self-reproach began to lead both North and South Koreans to take an arrogant, mentoring, lecturing position towards the Koryo saram. Representatives from the Korean embassies started openly to meddle with the activities of Korean organizations, newspapers, TV, etc.

North and South Korean media began to represent transformational changes in Soviet Korean culture as a “crisis of Korean identity” . Even now, calls sound constantly that Koryo saram must return to the bosom of maternal Korean culture. That is, Koryo saram again must radically change their way of life, mentality; they must sacrifice their habits, customs and traditions.

But do they want that? South Korean businessmen, professors and pastors constantly stress the principle of shared blood (“we are all Koreans”). They deduce from this basis a principle of obligation that practically reduces to the fact that, in everything, the Koryo saram must follow South Korean models of behavior and consciousness. Of course, sooner or later this situation will lead to a negative reaction on the part of local Koreans.

It should be kept in mind that due to their synthetic culture and the Soviet system of education ? considered one of the best in the world ? Soviet Koreans achieved considerable successes in many fields. For instance, from the milieu of Soviet Koreans advanced:

- members of governments (vice-premiers, ministers and deputy ministers), deputies of parliaments and local Soviets, outstanding figures from various political and public organizations;
- recipients of the most prestigious titles and prizes (Heroes of the Soviet Union, Heroes of Labor, winners of the Lenin Prize, winners of the National Prize, etc.);

- scientists with different degrees and titles (academicians and correspondent members of the Academies of Sciences of the USSR and republics, professors);
- heads of educational institutes (principals and vice-principals, deans and deputy deans, heads of higher education institutions, heads of schools and colleges);
- heads of scientific research and planning institutions (directors and deputy directors, heads of departments);
- managers of large industrial, finance and agricultural state and private enterprises;
- outstanding sportsmen (Olympic champions, World and European championship medallists, World champions in professional sports, winners of various international tournaments, winners of National championships of the USSR and the CIS countries, head coaches of National teams of the USSR and CIS countries, heads of national Olympic committees, heads of associations of various sports);
- well-known, internationally recognized writers, composers, painters, opera and ballet performers, etc.

In no other country in the world has the Korean Diaspora achieved as much success as Soviet Koreans. Not only Koryo saram but Koreans in general can be proud of that. It is quite natural that the mentor-tone of Koreans from the peninsula at a certain stage can not but lead to a negative reaction from the Koryo saram. Among themselves, Koreans from the CIS have begun, again and again, to criticize the thinking abilities, values, moral qualities and behavior of Koreans from the peninsula. Moreover, these criticisms have become sharper and sharper. And now already the self-perception “we are not the same” has become, rather than a revelation of inferiority and decline, a source of pride and even superiority for the Koryo saram: they are able to place themselves in a world cultural tradition rather than a mono-national one.

I have said already that Koryo saram consciousness represents a fusion of various cultures that reproduces various types of consciousness. All worthy cultural achievements of Soviet Koreans have been based on ways of synthesizing different types of consciousness. History more than once has given us examples of how the merging of the *different*, especially in the context of cultural diversity, leads to striking effects, opening previously unknown worlds of human perception and consciousness and new prospects for development. In other words, discussion about the identity of Koryo saram ethnic consciousness and culture and its development can be carried out only *in the context of the multi-layeredness of their cultural genetic pool.*

I have a deep conviction in the fact that the historic cultural experience of the Korean Diaspora in the USSR to some extent has anticipated the present historic and future experiences of Koreans on the peninsula. The latter group, developing for a long time within the frameworks of a purely mono-national cultural tradition ? and the types of consciousness and behavior that corresponded to it ? only quite recently began to open up to non-Korean (and non-East Asian) culture and absorb it, to adopt the rules and terms of “other” external existences. It is in this synthetic nature of culture and consciousness, in the flexibility of perceiving other worlds of consciousness that the value of the historic existence of Koryo saram culture rests. In the capacity of possessing this flexibility, Koryo saram culture made and can further make a unique contribution to world culture duplicated by no one.

The attempt to thrust on the Koryo saram the leitmotif of a statically understood Korean identity aims to reproduce in an individual’s consciousness and behavior the realization

of his rigid belonging to a certain community (in our case ? to the Korean ethnos), though in his *real* life this connection can be quite fragile. This is an attempt to program his thinking and behavior in accordance with traditions and norms of Korean identity as a kind of abstract, frozen essence. The world outside the way of thinking and the norms of a given community is seen by this consciousness as “alien” and, in the case of extreme nationalism, as abnormal. It seems to me that ethnocentrism and narcissism of various social groups (not only ethnic, but religious and others) in a historic prospect is a dead end. And the *attempt to unify Koreans from all over the world in accordance with standards of single kind of Korean identity presents itself as non-productive.*

Of course, the denial of the unification of Koreans does not mean at all the denial of the right of Koreans to preserve and develop their culture. Generally speaking, the aim to accentuate ethnicity is a peculiar reaction of many ethnic groups to the processes of globalization, internationalization, standardization and unification in the world. The paradox is that in trying to preserve Korean culture under the conditions of globalization, Koreans from the peninsula do not notice that sometimes they themselves assume a standardizing role (*on the basis of their understanding of Korean identity*), *refusing the right of diasporan Koreans to be what they are.*

It seems to me that the conditions for a normal dialogue between Koreans of the peninsula and of the various Korean Diasporas can only be principles of democracy and tolerance, and the recognition of Korean communities around the whole world as possessing *unity in diversity.*