Journal of Social and Theological Studies
https://mijournals.com/index.php/JSTS

KORYO-SARAM: THE FORMATION OF A DIASPORA THROUGH FORCED ETHNIC RELOCATION AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

https://doi.org/10.57033/mijournals-2026-3-0104

Nurbek ABDURAHMONOV
3rd-year student, Major in International Relations,
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies
E-mail: tolqinjonovichnurbe@gmail.com

Received: 15-03-2026
Accepted: 28-03-2026
Published:26-04-2026

Abstract. *This article analyzes the historical and social processes that shaped the Koryo-saram population throughout the 20th century. It examines issues related to the policy of forced resettlement implemented during the Soviet period. Particular attention is given to the status of Koryo-saram as a diaspora and to the social functions of the Korean language across different historical periods. Based on available empirical data, the processes of everyday life and social adaptation of Koryo-saram are examined within a broader context. In addition, social, cultural, and institutional developments of the post-Soviet period are taken into account.*

Keywords: *forced ethnic relocation, post-deportation identity, linguistic shift process, Soviet Koreans, stateless diaspora concept, surrogate homeland model, homeland–diaspora relations.*

INTRODUCTION

The Koryo-saram constitute a social group that emerged in the twentieth century as a result of forced ethnic relocation implemented during the Soviet period, shaped significantly by interstate political decisions. This process involved the dislocation of Korean populations from their historical homelands and their long-term resettlement in Central Asia and other regions, closely linked to the Soviet state's policies on security, border control, and nationality management. As a result, a distinct form of diaspora emerged characterized by a post-deportation identity that does not fully conform to classical homeland–diaspora paradigms.

Within the framework of international relations theory, the case of the Koryo-saram can be interpreted through the concepts of a stateless diaspora and the model of

a substitute homeland. The historical experience of this group reflects a socio-political formation identified as "Soviet Koreans," in which the interrelationship between language, identity, and political space occupies a central role. The evolving social functions of the Korean language across different historical periods serve as a key indicator in analyzing the dynamics between diaspora communities and state structures.

The aim of this article is to analyze the formation and development of the Koryo-saram from the perspectives of forced ethnic relocation, post-deportation identity, and processes of linguistic shift, drawing upon theoretical approaches within international relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The systematic study of Koryo-saram history is fundamentally grounded in the scholarly works of German Nikolaevich Kim, whose research serves as a primary academic foundation. Kim's contributions are of particular significance, as he is not only a researcher but also a representative of the Koryo-saram diaspora itself. His work provides an in-depth analysis of the community's historical memory, post-Soviet social adaptation, and institutional integration, drawing upon insider perspectives and empirical data. Notably, his studies substantiate a model of diaspora participation characterized by political moderation, constructive engagement, and alignment with state institutions.

In addressing the issue of forced deportations during the Soviet period, the works of Nikolai Bugai and Pavel Polian were utilized to establish the broader theoretical and historical context. Bugai interprets deportations within the framework of Soviet central policies related to security and control mechanisms, whereas Polian conceptualizes forced migrations as part of ethnic engineering and territorial redistribution strategies. These studies provide a basis for understanding the systemic and preventive nature of Korean deportation.

Empirical data concerning the Central Asian context were analyzed based on the research conducted by Abdurakhman Turgunov (2021). This study examines the settlement patterns, demographic composition, and secondary migration processes of Koreans in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, relying on official statistics and archival materials.

Additionally, theoretical and methodological insights were drawn from studies on forced migration and ethnic policy developed within the Göttingen School (Germany), which situate these phenomena within broader post-Soviet and international contexts.

The research methodology is based on historical-comparative analysis, source criticism, and socio-political approaches. The processes of deportation, linguistic transformation, and the institutional adaptation of the diaspora are examined in an objective and systematic manner, drawing upon official documents, statistical data, and leading academic research.

RESULT

The Forced Relocation of Koryo-saram from the Russian Far East to Central Asia (1937). Source: The Argus (2020). Available at: https://www.theargus.org/news/articleView.html?idxno=1888

DISCUSSION

The Etymology and Historical Significance of the Term "Koryo-saram"

The term "Koryo-saram" represents a distinct ethnonym used to refer specifically to ethnic Koreans residing in Central Asia and the post-Soviet space. It is composed of two elements: "Koryo" and "saram." In the Korean language, saram denotes "person" or

"human being." Accordingly, the expression "Koryo-saram" can be directly translated as "people of Koryo" or "individuals originating from Koryo."

The "Koryo" component of the term is not arbitrary. It derives from the name of the Koryo (Goryeo) dynasty, which existed on the Korean Peninsula between the 10th and 14th centuries. Historically, this name served as one of the principal designations through which the Korean people were recognized by the outside world. Indeed, the term "Korea" in European languages is etymologically derived from "Koryo." In this sense, the term carries significant historical connotations, reflecting the legacy of Korean statehood and a shared civilizational heritage.

Importantly, the term "Koryo-saram" is not applied universally to all ethnic Koreans worldwide. Koreans residing in countries such as the United States, Japan, or various European states are typically categorized as "overseas Koreans" or members of the Korean diaspora. In contrast, "Koryo-saram" specifically denotes a group shaped by the unique historical experience of the Soviet and post-Soviet context. It encapsulates their collective experience of forced ethnic relocation, adaptation within the Soviet system, and the formation of a post-deportation identity.

The Migration of Koreans to the Russian Empire and the Early Formation of the Koryo-saram

The migration of Koreans to the territory of the Russian Empire represents one of the earliest and most significant stages in the history of the Koryo-saram. According to scholarly sources, although initial contacts between Koreans and Russians date back to the seventeenth century, these interactions remained largely episodic for an extended period. Mass migration of Koreans into Russian territory began in the second half of the nineteenth century, following the establishment of a land border between the Russian Empire and the Joseon Kingdom. In particular, the Treaty of Aigun (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860), which resulted in the incorporation of the Ussuri region into the Russian Empire, created the legal and political foundations for this migration process (Akulenko, 2019: 38).

The arrival of the first Korean households in the Russian Far East dates back to the 1860s. According to prevailing scholarly consensus, in 1863, thirteen Korean households crossed the Tumen River and settled in the villages of Tizinhe and Yanchikhe in the Russian Far East (Kwak, 2019). Although these areas were initially undeveloped and unsuitable for agriculture, Korean settlers transformed them into productive agricultural

lands through intensive labor. These settlements subsequently served as foundational hubs for the emergence of Korean communities in the Russian Far East.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Korean population in Russian territories had grown significantly. Statistical data indicate that while approximately 9,000 Koreans resided in Russia's maritime regions in the 1860s, this number increased to 28,000 by 1900, 54,000 by 1910, and reached 107,000 by 1923 (Kwon, 1997: 3–4). Koreans were primarily concentrated in the Ussuri region and around Vladivostok, which became a central hub of Korean migration.

The migration of Koreans to Russia cannot be explained solely by economic factors. While land scarcity, crop failures, natural disasters, and demographic pressures were major driving forces, political factors also played a crucial role. In particular, the growing influence of the Japanese Empire on the Korean Peninsula led Korean settlements in Russian territory to evolve into centers of anti-colonial political activity. The activities of independence movement figures such as Choe Jae-hyung, An Jung-geun, Yi Beom-yun, and Yi Wi-jong in Yanchikhe demonstrate that Korean communities functioned not merely as sites of labor migration, but also as socio-political spaces with distinct political significance (Kwak, 2019: 75).

From the 1870s onward, a significant portion of Koreans began relocating to Vladivostok. By 1874, Vladivostok had become the administrative center of Primorsky Krai and the primary destination for Korean migrants. By the early twentieth century, approximately 7,500 Koreans resided in the city. They predominantly lived near port areas and were engaged in construction, agriculture, and transport-related labor.

Although Koreans initially resided in central districts of Vladivostok, urban expansion, sanitary regulations, and administrative decisions led to their relocation to peripheral areas. In 1911, under the pretext of a cholera epidemic, Korean residents were forcibly resettled to elevated eastern outskirts of the city. It was in this area that a Korean settlement known as Sinhanchon emerged. Sinhanchon functioned as an urban contact zone, becoming a center of compact settlement, social interaction, and political activity among Koreans (Suh, 1987:85).

From the 1870s onward, a significant proportion of Koreans began relocating to Vladivostok. By 1874, Vladivostok had emerged as the administrative center of Primorsky Krai and the principal destination for Korean migrants. By the early twentieth century, the Korean population in the city had reached approximately 7,500. They were

predominantly concentrated in areas near the port and were engaged in construction, agriculture, and transport-related occupations.

Although Koreans initially resided in the central districts of Vladivostok, processes of urban expansion, sanitary regulations, and administrative interventions led to their gradual displacement to peripheral areas. In 1911, under the pretext of a cholera epidemic, Korean residents were forcibly relocated to the elevated eastern outskirts of the city. It was in this area that a Korean settlement known as Sinhanchon was established. Sinhanchon functioned as an urban contact zone, serving as a focal point for compact settlement, social interaction, and political activity among Koreans.

The Forced Relocation of Koreans from the Russian Far East to Central Asia (1937)

The forced ethnic relocation of the Koryo-saram was closely linked to the Soviet state's security-driven nationality policy. In the 1930s, the Soviet Far East was considered a strategically unstable region, as the growing military and political activity of the Japanese Empire in the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria transformed it into a zone of potential threat. Under these conditions, the Korean population began to be perceived as an "unreliable group" residing near the border due to their ethnic origin.

Moreover, the relocation of Koreans from the Far East to Central Asia was neither accidental nor solely a response to external security concerns. Although the deportation was carried out in 1937, preparatory measures had begun as early as the late 1920s. Within the higher organs of the Bolshevik Party, the issue of relocating Koreans from Primorsky Krai and Khabarovsk Krai to interior regions was discussed multiple times in 1927, 1930, and 1932. This indicates that the deportation was a premeditated state policy rather than a spontaneous decision (Turgunov, 2021: 340–343).

In official discourse, Koreans were framed within the context of a potential espionage threat linked to Japan. Beginning in the spring of 1937, Soviet central press outlets increasingly published materials concerning "Japanese spies" and "Japanese-Korean intelligence." Newspapers such as Pravda and Izvestiya widely reported alleged espionage cases involving Koreans, thereby fostering an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust toward the Korean population. In reality, however, available sources indicate that the majority of Koreans were Soviet citizens, many of whom had even fought in the ranks of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War.

Prior to the deportation, large-scale repressive measures were carried out by the NKVD in the Far East. On the eve of and during the 1937 deportation, Korean

organizations within the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) were completely dismantled. This process extended beyond mere population transfer and formed part of a broader repressive policy aimed at eliminating the institutional and political presence of Koreans. These measures facilitated the deportation by minimizing both technical and social resistance.

The deportation itself was conducted in a strictly centralized and militarized manner. Korean families were given only three days to gather their belongings, their passports were confiscated, and they were transported via designated railway stations in special train convoys. Those who resisted leaving their homes often faced execution. Approximately 2,500 Koreans were arrested and executed as a result of special operations conducted during this period (Human Rights Watch, 1991:58). On average, each railway carriage accommodated 5–6 families, amounting to approximately 25–30 individuals. The train convoys typically consisted of around 50 passenger wagons, in addition to freight and auxiliary cars.

According to available estimates, a total of 36,442 Korean families were deported. The relocation process was carried out under extremely harsh conditions, resulting in severe suffering, including loss of life during both transportation and resettlement. Between 1937 and 1938, it is estimated that approximately 40,000 individuals died as a consequence of these processes (Artefact Magazine, 2025:23).

Although deported Koreans were permitted to take livestock with them and were allocated an average compensation of 6,000 rubles per household, in practice these funds proved insufficient to ensure adequate living conditions. Of the 36,442 relocated households, only a small proportion actually received material compensation. Upon arrival in Central Asia, many families were forced to reside in temporary underground shelters or inadequately adapted structures. The first winter proved particularly severe, leading to a sharp increase in infant mortality.

From a legal perspective, Koreans were assigned the status of “administrative exiles.” Their freedom of movement was restricted, and leaving Central Asia was prohibited. Nevertheless, unlike some other deported populations, Koreans were granted limited opportunities for functional integration within the Soviet system. They were able to occupy leading positions in collective farms (kolkhozes), pursue higher education, and enter scientific fields. This situation clearly illustrates the paradox within Soviet policy between distrust and controlled integration.

The resettlement of Koreans in Central Asia was not accidental. The region was perceived as geographically distant from strategic borders, militarily secondary, and easier to control. At the same time, Central Asia required labor for its economic development, making the relocation a policy that combined both political and economic objectives.

Thus, the forced ethnic relocation of the Koryo-saram should be understood as part of a broader set of measures implemented within the framework of Soviet policies related to border security and internal control. This decision became a defining historical factor shaping the subsequent social condition of the Koryo-saram and their characterization as a distinct form of diaspora.

The Adaptation and Socio-Cultural Transformation of the Koryo-saram in Central Asia

As a result of the forced ethnic relocation carried out in 1937, the majority of the Korean population was resettled in the territories of Central Asia. According to archival and statistical sources, more than 170,000 Koreans were transported by train over a distance of nearly 6,500 kilometers, and the journey from Primorye to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan took approximately 30–40 days. Although the initial plan envisaged settling the Korean population in seven designated regions, in practice they were dispersed across 44 different areas.

Specifically, 37,321 individuals were resettled in Tashkent region, 9,147 in Samarkand region, 8,214 in Fergana region, 5,799 in Khorezm region, and 972 in Namangan region. In total, 18,300 Korean households were deported to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, while 20,141 households were relocated to the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. According to final estimates, approximately 100,000 Koreans were sent to the Kazakh SSR and over 70,000 to the Uzbek SSR.

Upon arrival in Central Asia, deported Koreans were often placed in barracks under military supervision. On December 31, 1937, approximately 4,000 Koreans arrived in the city of Kostanay; however, due to extreme cold conditions, they were forced to remain in railway wagons for nearly a week (Adams, 2020:402). No immediate assistance was provided by the local authorities. As a result, deportees were accommodated in abandoned hospitals, prisons, warehouses, and temporary shelters.

By October 1938, 18,649 Korean households had established 59 separate collective farms (kolkhozes), while an additional 3,945 households had been incorporated into

205 existing collective farms (Bugay, 1996:56). Nevertheless, widespread problems such as hunger, shortages of drinking water, lack of medical supplies, and insufficient employment opportunities persisted. Some Koreans submitted formal complaints to kolkhoz authorities regarding food scarcity and water shortages. Many survived largely due to humanitarian assistance provided by local Kazakh and Uzbek populations.

The Koryo-saram were dispersed across vast areas of Central Asia. While some were able to settle in abandoned housing, others were incorporated into seasonal and permanent labor within collective farms (kolkhozes) and state farms (sovkhozes). The harshest conditions were observed in certain regions of Kazakhstan, particularly in areas surrounding the city of Ushtobe. These regions were largely steppe zones with minimal infrastructure and scarce natural resources, leaving the arriving Korean population without basic living conditions. Due to the cold climate, housing shortages, and food scarcity, some Koryo-saram were forced to dig temporary underground shelters to survive the winter. Between 1937 and 1939, the sharp climatic differences, lack of food, and absence of medical services led to a significant increase in mortality rates, with an estimated 10 to 25 percent of the deported population perishing.

Despite these conditions, the Koryo-saram managed to recover relatively quickly. Within two years of their resettlement in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, they established housing, organized schools, and developed stable labor activities, primarily in agriculture. Their key advantage was their extensive agrarian experience, particularly their expertise in rice cultivation. In regions such as Kyzylorda and Almaty in Kazakhstan, as well as Tashkent, Samarkand, and Khorezm in Uzbekistan, Koreans rapidly introduced irrigated agriculture. By 1939, rice yields in some Korean-populated areas were two to three times higher than the local average. This achievement was officially recognized by Soviet authorities, and Koreans soon became an economically significant group within collective farming systems.

However, this relative stability did not last long. Under Stalinist policies, Korean-language schools and publications were systematically closed. These measures were aimed at enforcing assimilation and suppressing potential cultural or political autonomy. In addition, strict movement restrictions were imposed, preventing Koryo-saram from leaving kolkhozes and sovkhozes. This period was marked by a sharp decline in the social functions of the Korean language and a weakening of its intergenerational transmission.

The issue of language occupies a central place in understanding the social and cultural transformation of the Koryo-saram. The majority of Koreans who migrated to Russian territories historically originated from Hamgyong Province and initially spoke the Hamgyong dialect of Korean. During the early Soviet period, particularly until the early 1940s, the Korean language was relatively actively maintained in education and everyday life. However, the closure of Korean schools and publications, combined with centralized language policies, significantly reduced its functional scope. In this context, a distinct variety of Korean known as Koryo-mar emerged among the Koryo-saram. This variety incorporated lexical and grammatical influences from Russian and Central Asian languages. The traditional Korean script, Hangul, was not systematically used among Koryo-mar speakers; instead, the Cyrillic script became dominant due to practical needs.

From a legal perspective, the status of Koreans remained ambiguous for a long time: they were neither formally recognized as special settlers nor as exiles. Only on March 3, 1947, following an instruction signed by Minister of Internal Affairs S. N. Kruglov, were Koreans granted permission to obtain passports; however, these documents were valid only within the territory of Central Asia.

Although the process of de-Stalinization that began after Stalin's death in 1953 politically condemned deportations, the issue of Koreans remained largely neglected for an extended period. It was only between 1989 and 1993 that deportations were officially recognized as unlawful and criminal. In 1993, the Russian Federation formally acknowledged the illegality of the deportation of Koreans and, at least at a theoretical level, recognized their right to return to the Russian Far East (Drobizheva, 2015:375).

The post-Stalin period was marked by increased internal migration of the Koryo-saram toward major urban centers. They actively entered the higher education system and began to establish themselves in science, culture, industry, and creative fields.

However, paradoxically, the relative liberalization following Stalin's death did not have a positive impact on the preservation of the Korean language. On the contrary, due to urbanization, the dominance of the Russian language, and the lack of institutional support, the Korean language was gradually displaced from everyday communication. According to Soviet census data, although the majority of Koryo-saram were concentrated in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, post-1959 censuses indicate a noticeable increase in their population across other Soviet republics as well.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, while the majority of Koryo-saram remained in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a portion migrated to Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, South Korea, and the United States. Today, the total number of Koryo-saram is estimated to be around 500,000. Recent statistical data indicate that while the Korean population has remained relatively stable in Russia and Kazakhstan, the proportion of individuals who consider Korean their native language has been steadily declining. This reflects an intensification of language loss among the Koryo-saram and suggests that ethnic identity is increasingly being expressed through new forms.

The post-Stalin era represents a significant turning point in the history of the Koryo-saram. During this period, they gained relatively greater opportunities in terms of residential choice, professional activity, and access to education. Although full freedom was not achieved, the rigid restrictions characteristic of the Stalin era were significantly relaxed. As a result, migration to major industrial and cultural centers accelerated, and Koryo-saram actively integrated into higher education and various social strata of Soviet society.

This process also transformed the social profile of the Koryo-saram. They were no longer confined solely to agriculture or collective labor but began to produce prominent figures in science, culture, and the arts. A symbolic example of this transformation is Viktor Tsoi, who founded the influential Soviet rock band Kino and became a transnational cultural figure within Soviet youth culture.

At the same time, this process of social openness produced contradictory outcomes in terms of the preservation of the Korean language. Prior to the Stalin era, the Korean language had been maintained to a certain extent due to the relatively closed and community-based living environment. However, the dispersal of the Koryo-saram across the country, combined with the social and institutional dominance of the Russian language, significantly reduced the role of Korean in everyday communication. As a result, the Korean language gradually shifted from being a primary means of communication to functioning as a cultural and symbolic marker.

According to Soviet census data, the majority of Koryo-saram were initially concentrated in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, post-1959 census records indicate a significant increase in their population across other Soviet republics. At the same time, a portion of the Koryo-saram migrated to Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan,

Tajikistan, South Korea, and the United States. Today, the global population of Koryo-saram is estimated to be approximately 500,000 (Channel News Asia, 2025:45). In the Central Asian region, the Koryo-saram today constitute one of the largest Korean diasporas in terms of population size. According to available estimates, the total Korean population in the region exceeds 350,000. The majority are concentrated in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, with more than 200,000 residing in Uzbekistan and over 125,000 in Kazakhstan. The remaining population is distributed across other Central Asian states: approximately 20,000 Koreans reside in Kyrgyzstan, around 1,000 in Turkmenistan, and about 800 in Tajikistan • • (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). These demographic indicators demonstrate that the Koryo-saram occupy a stable and significant position within the socio-demographic structure of Central Asia.

Although the number of Koryo-saram in the United States is relatively small, they have formed a cohesive community primarily in New York City. In this context, Koryo-saram cuisine reflects a synthesis of Korean, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Russian culinary traditions. Additionally, a Koryo-saram pastor serves at the All Nations Baptist Church in Brooklyn.

Since 1991, approximately 100,000 Koryo-saram have returned to South Korea through special migration and visa programs (Lee, 2022:98). However, a significant proportion of them had adopted Russian as their native language, which complicated their integration into Korean society. Today, particularly in the city of Incheon, densely populated Koryo-saram neighborhoods have emerged, where Russian-language signs and inscriptions are widely visible.

In the present period, Koryo-saram in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are distinguished by their economic activity. They are engaged in sectors such as banking and finance, agriculture, housing construction, communications, trade, transport, and construction, forming a significant part of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The city of Almaty in Kazakhstan has emerged as a center of Koryo-saram cultural life, where Korean cultural centers, Korean-language schools, and a Korean-language theater operate.

Within the contemporary Koryo-saram information space, the newspaper Koryo Ilbo, published in Almaty, occupies an important position. During the 1970s–1980s, the circulation of this publication reached 40,000 copies, whereas today it is limited to approximately 1,000 copies per week. At present, the majority of Koryo-saram no

longer use the Korean language as an active means of communication; it is primarily preserved among the older generation. Nevertheless, as of 2025, there has been a partial revival of interest in the Korean language among younger Koryo-saram in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, although this trend has not been sufficient to reverse the overall decline of the language.

According to the 2004 International Religious Freedom Report issued by the United States Department of State, approximately 0.2 percent of the population of Uzbekistan adheres to Buddhism, with the majority of adherents being ethnic Koreans. Within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan, there is officially only one registered Buddhist place of worship the Jeunsa ("Compassion") Temple located in the city of Tashkent. Established in 1991, this temple is considered the only Korean Buddhist temple in Central Asia. The establishment of this temple by the Koryo-saram themselves reflects the active role of the Korean diaspora within the country.

The Korean diaspora in Central Asian states is primarily characterized by a model of institutional and constructive participation in political processes. Representatives of the diaspora are engaged in public administration, local self-government bodies, and civic institutions, thereby contributing to social stability and interethnic harmony. This form of participation is distinguished by its emphasis on professional competence and institutional loyalty rather than the promotion of narrow ethnic interests.

The role of the Korean diaspora in political life in Central Asia can also be observed through individual examples. In particular, Agrippina Vasilyevna Shin, a representative of the Korean diaspora, has distinguished herself through her contributions to the education system and public administration in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In 2015, she was elected as a member of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan from the city of Tashkent. On October 19, 2017, Agrippina V. Shin was appointed as the head of the newly established Ministry of Preschool Education, where she served until the end of 2022, subsequently continuing her work as Deputy Minister (Gazeta.uz, 2020). Her career demonstrates that the participation of representatives of the Korean diaspora in the political system is shaped not by ethnic affiliation, but by principles of professional competence and service to state interests.

The influence of the Korean diaspora on political processes is not limited to practical governance but is also manifested through academic and intellectual activity. In this regard, German Nikolaevich Kim, a representative of the Korean diaspora active

in Kazakhstan, serves as an important individual example. As Director of the Institute of Asian Studies at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, he has conducted extensive scholarly research on the historical formation of the Koryo-saram diaspora, their political and social integration, and their interaction with state policies. His work is significant in that it approaches the issue of diaspora not from an ideological perspective, but through analytical and institutional frameworks.

Importantly, the Korean diaspora in Central Asia remains largely distant from political radicalism or separatist tendencies, instead operating adaptively within existing political systems. At the same time, it functions as an informal diplomatic bridge (soft power) between South Korea and Central Asian states, contributing to the strengthening of interstate trust and cultural ties.

Today, the Koryo-saram are recognized as one of the most unique diasporas on a global scale. Their existence and historical experience remain insufficiently acknowledged not only in international academic discourse but also within Korean society itself. As noted by historian German Nikolaevich Kim, who has extensively studied the history of the Koryo-saram, ethnic revival cannot be reduced solely to elements such as national dress, cuisine, or language. In the case of the Koryo-saram, ethnic identity has been shaped as a product of complex historical and social processes.

The cultural traditions of the Koryo-saram have significantly diverged from those of South Korea, a development largely influenced by the multicultural environment of Central Asia. Over decades of coexistence with Russian, European, and Central Asian peoples, they have adapted to these societies and incorporated various cultural elements into their way of life. As a result, the Koryo-saram represent neither a purely traditional Korean culture nor a fully localized one, but rather a distinct diaspora model characterized by a unique historical and cultural experience.

CONCLUSION

Although the Koryo-saram emerged in Central Asia as a result of forced ethnic relocation, over time they have evolved into a unique diaspora that has successfully established stable social, economic, and cultural life in the region. Their experience demonstrates that even under conditions of forced migration, it is possible to create a new social space through adaptation, labor, and institutional integration.

Today, the Koryo-saram are distinguished by a constructive and stable model of participation within Central Asian societies. They remain distant from political radicalism and ethnic isolation, instead engaging in activities aligned with the interests of both the state and society. In this regard, the Koryo-saram diaspora represents one of the key factors contributing to interethnic harmony and social stability in the region.

The monument dedicated to the memory of the Koryo-saram in the city of Tashkent symbolically reflects not only their historical tragedy but also their transformation into an integral part of Central Asian society. This monument affirms that the Koryo-saram are not merely migrants or victims, but active participants in the shared historical memory of the region.

REFERENCES

1. Channel News Asia. (2023). Koryo-saram: Stalin's deportations and the Korean diaspora in Central Asia. Retrieved from https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/south-korea-uzbekistan-kazakhstan-koryo-saram-soviet-union-russia-joseph-stalin-3833966
2. Joshua Project. (2024). Korean, Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan. Retrieved from
3. https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12795/UZ
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. (2022). Overseas Koreans by country. Retrieved from https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_21618/contents.do
5. New East Archive. (2021). Koryo-saram photography and memory in Uzbekistan and New York. Retrieved from https://www.new-east-archive.org/features/show/11570/korean-uzbek-photography-koryo-saram-brooklyn-new-york
6. Bugay, N. (1996). The deportation of peoples in the Soviet Union. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
7. Drobizheva, L. (2015). Ethnic conflict in the post-Soviet world: Case studies and analysis. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
8. Kim, G. (2003b). Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan: Question of topical problems for minorities in post-Soviet space (Research report). S2CID: 199386943.
9. Polian, P. (2004). Against their will: The history and geography of forced migrations in the USSR. Budapest–New York: Central European University Press.
10. Turgunov, A. G. U. (2021). The history of Korean deportation to Central Asia. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 3(1), 340–343. https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume03Issue01-66
11. Human Rights Watch. (1991). "Punished peoples" of the Soviet Union: The continuing legacy of Stalin's deportations. New York, NY.
12. Adams, M. (2020). Steppe dreams: Time, mediation, and postsocialist celebrations in Kazakhstan. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
13. Akulenko, V. S. (2019). Vladivostok and the migration of Korean people to the Russian Empire. The Newsletter, 82. International Institute for Asian Studies
14. Korea Times. (2022). Koryoin feel at home in Gwangju. Retrieved from https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/southkorea/society/20220401/special-report-koryoin-feel-at-home-in-gwangju