Ethnicity, Identity, and Attitude to Religions of the Central Asian Koreans: Some Results of a Pilot Survey among Korean Minority Students

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Diasporic ethnic identity varies depending on the political, social, and cultural situation in the host country, on the level of self-organization, and the specifics of the ethno-demographic environment. What roles are religion and beliefs playing in the formation of a diasporic self-consciousness among younger generations of Koreans in Central Asia, these having become a new phenomenon of the contemporary period? A case pilot survey helped to note the actual trends of religiosity among young Koreans living as the fourth and fifth generations in the regions with predominant Muslim populations. The results of the survey demonstrate clearly the existing legacy of the Soviet period – atheism, along with increasing interest in religion, especially in South Korean Christian missionary churches, which are vigorous in realizing religious and secular proselytization. The development of the Korean Diaspora in post-Soviet Central Asia is a complex and objective process and its completion is connected with the formation of diasporic identity.

Keywords: Koryo saram, ethnicity, identity, ethnic self-identification, religiosity, students, pilot survey

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An Overview of Korean Communities in Post-Soviet Central Asia

There are more than 500,000 Koreans living in the former Soviet Union. About two-thirds of them reside in Central Asia, with 100,000 people in Kazakhstan, 180,000 people in Uzbekistan, and 30,000 people in Kyrgyzstan. And in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan the number of Koreans is around 1,000 people in each country. The rest are living in Russia (150,000 people) and Ukraine (15,000 people), and smaller groups are dispersed in other former Soviet republics. Ethnic Koreans arrived en masse in Central Asia in 1937 after they were deported during the Stalinist purges from the Russian Far East to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Initially, Korean deportees were concentrated in rural, agrarian regions, but today the majority of them are located in urban centers. In the past, both in the academic literature and in the vernacular, the term "Soviet Koreans" was used to refer to all Koreans living in the USSR, but the Koreans refer to themselves as either "*Koryo saram*" or "*Choson saram*" interchangeably. Nowadays the term "*Koryo saram*" is preferred. Recently in South Korea two variants of that name, "*Goryeoin*" and

"*Goryeo saram*," have become most commonly used in reference to post-Soviet Koreans.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of sovereign states in the former USSR opened a new page in the history of the *Koryo saram*. Compared to other ethnic minorities, which have chosen the strategy of leaving the former Soviet Central Asian republics, ethnic Koreans have stayed, but they are again being forced to adapt, this time to their adopted states.[1] A minority of *Koryo saram* have emigrated abroad, primarily to other former Soviet republics.[2]

The *Koryo saram* are descendants of immigrants who arrived in the Russian Far East during several waves of migrations from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1920s.[3] However, the Sakhalin Koreans appeared beginning in the 1940s.[4] Thus, the Sakhalin Koreans differ

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1 Natsuko Oka. (2001). The Korean Diaspora in nationalizing Kazakhstan: Strategies for survival as an ethnic minority. *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 105-6; Alexander Diener. (2004). *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.

2 Nikolay Bugay. (2000). *Rossiiskiye koreitsy: noviy povorot istorii. 90-e gody* (*Russian Koreans: a new turn of the history. 1990th*). M.: Russkoye slovo; German Kim. (2004). Migrations of Koreans in the Post Soviet Space. In *The 140-year History of Koreans in Russia: Reflection and New Approach*. Proceedings from International Conference at Hanguk University of Foreign Studies. Seoul, August 27-28, 2004, 127-39.

3 Kim Syn Hwa. (1965). *Ocherki po istorii sovetskih koreitsev* (*A Study of the History of the Soviet Koreans*). Alma-Ata: Nauka; Kho, Songmoo. (1987). Koreans in Soviet Central Asia. *Studia Orientalia*, 61; Kim & King. (Eds.). (2001). The Koryo Saram: Koreans in the Former USSR. *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 189; Boris Pak. (1993). *Koreitsy v Rossiyskoy imperii* (*Koreans in Russian Imperia*). M.; German Kim. (1999). *Istoriya immigratsii koreitsev. Kniga pervaya. Vtoraya polovina XIX v. –1945* (*The History of Korean Immigration. Vol.1. Second Half of the 19th c. –1945*). Almaty: Daik-press, 424; Alexander Petrov. (2001). *Koreiskaya diaspora v Rossii 1897-1917 gg.* (*The Korean Diaspora in Russia 1897-1917*). Vladivostok, DVO RAN, 400.

4 Bok, Zi Kou. (1989). *Sakhalinskie koreitsy: problemy i perspektivy* (*Sakhalin Koreans: Problems and perspectives*). Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia; Kuzin, A. T. (1993). *Dalnevostochnye koreitsy:*

from the *Koryo saram* in a number of ways. There are also differences within the Koreans in Central Asia. The Koreans in Kazakhstan became urbanized much more quickly than those in Uzbekistan, where up until the beginning of the 1990s there remained many large, so-called "Korean collective farms." This agrarian population has socio-cultural characteristics that are essentially different from those of urbanized Koreans. Furthermore, since the Uzbeks have always dominated Uzbekistan numerically, unlike the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistani Koreans are more accustomed to their host country's culture and language. Different political, economic, and cultural developments in contemporary Central Asia have played key roles in the divergences of the Korean communities.

Historical experience shows one characteristic feature of the Korean immigrants: their special ability to adapt to new ecological, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. The first generation of *Koryo saram* tried as quickly as possible to adapt to the new living conditions of the Tsarist Empire and later of Soviet Russia. That generation learned Russian and accepted Russian Orthodoxy, and then two decades later abandoned the religion, following the Communist Party line. They founded settlements and farmed the land. The second generation did not have time to taste the fruits of their labor in the new lands. They were forced to repeat the mission of the previous generation, that is, to adapt to a new land, namely Central Asia. This generation heroically withstood great difficulties and created a solid foundation for the third generation. The third generation also turned out to be pioneering because they were forced to adapt to the new sovereign states of the post-Soviet area.

The issues of *Koryo saram* are explored by local Russian, Central Asian, and foreign, predominantly South Korean scholars. The recent list

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zhizn i tragediya sudby (*The Far Eastern Koreans: Life and the tragedy of their fate*). Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia.

of names and publications mainly on history in the Russian Maritime region, deportation, Korean kolkhozes, prominent persons, language problems, and other topics is impressive from a quantitative point of view.[5] As to the topic of this paper, there are some papers mostly published in Korean or printed in the proceedings of conferences, which means that there are not easily accessible.

Research Methodology

Acting on the fact that religious beliefs, and ethnic and confessional self-identifications of the Central Asian Koreans have not been so far the topic of research and there are no systematized sources available, I carried out a pilot survey in order to obtain empirical data. The main task was to try to answer the question "How does the ethnicity and ethnic self-identification of young Koreans representing the Diaspora in its fourth and fifth generations correlate with their religious beliefs or non-belief?" This main issue is related to a number of other questions, including the origins of ethnic manifestation, the structure of ethnic self identification, the role of religion, and whether it is possible to make a typological analysis of the Korean young people's religious identification.

The focus group for the questionnaire was Korean students mostly majoring in Korean studies. Written questionnaires were conducted in May-June, 2008, at the universities of Almaty, Taldykorgan, Tashkent, Bishkek, and Dushanbe. The respondents totaled 300 persons from sixteen to twenty-six years of age: 100 living in Kazakhstan, one hundred fifty living in Uzbekistan, fifty living in Kyrgyzstan, and fifty living in Tajikistan. As girls are prevalent among those studying the Korean

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[5] See German Kim. (2000). *Koryo saram: Historiography and Bibliography*, Almaty: Kazakh National University Press. An updated edition will be published 2013.

language at universities, there is a significant gender disproportion among the respondents: the share of male respondents constitutes a minimum of 15 percent in Kazakhstan to a maximum of 38 percent in Uzbekistan. This was a random sampling, and questionnaires were filled in by the respondents themselves as issues of religious belief are private if not confidential, and discussing them with interviewees could affect the sincerity of their answers. A preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data has not revealed any significant differences in many answers of the students from different Central Asian countries, thus a differentiated approach according to the place of residence will be applied only if divergence is at least 10 percent.

The pivotal notion on the basis of which the questionnaire was compiled is "young people's religiosity," including possible secular and non-religious backgrounds. The aim was to define the extent to which the Korean students are involved in religious life in the countries of Central Asia.

The Theoretical Frameworks

Prior to the interpretation of the pilot survey results, theoretical frames should be defined, for regarding many issues there are various and sometimes contradictory opinions among well-known scholars both in the post-Soviet space and in the West. I use the following theoretical frameworks. When a part of an ethnos migrates to a new place, not only the first generation of immigrants but also their descendants to a certain extent preserve their former distinctive ethnic characteristics. Long-time residence in a new country transforms generations of immigrants into a sub-ethnos (diaspora) which has separated from the main ethnic nucleus characterized by the peculiarity of their culture, language, and certain self-identification. Representatives of such a sub-ethnos possess as a rule a double ethnic self-identification: awareness of belonging to an ethnos and awareness of belonging to a diaspora.

Such a theoretical approach suits the *Koryo saram*. On the one hand, they are Koreans, and they have much in common with Koreans in both North Korea and South Korea. They have common genetic roots, are of the same anthropological type, and share culture and language. Yet *Koryo saram* are different in many aspects from their brethren on the Korean peninsula. Over the last century and a half, they have undergone many changes in their mentality, ethnic identity, language, customs, cuisine, and even appearance.[6]

When discussing diasporas, of special interest are their specific ethnic features, which reflect differences from the ethnos-nucleus and other surrounding peoples. The role of ethno-differentiating features can be played by various characteristics: language, values and norms, religion, the idea of the native land, myth about common ancestors, national character, folk art, and professional art. This group includes ethnic self-identification which for a long time has not been considered as an identifier of an ethnos. N.N. Tcheboksarov, analyzing the language, territory, and aggregate cultural features inherent in certain ethnoses, states that the "interaction of these features, their total influence on formation and preservation of an ethnic community is manifested as a secondary phenomenon – ethnic self-identification which in the long run turns out to be decisive for defining belonging of separate persons or whole human collectives to this or that ethnic community. The ethnic self-identification is a kind of result of the actions of all the main factors forming an ethnic community."[7]

Descendants of immigrants who have lived outside their historical

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[6] Valery Khan. (1998). The Korean minority in Central Asia: National revival and problem of identity. *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*, No. 3, 66-77; German Kim. (2004). Koryo Saram in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia. *World Diasporas Encyclopedia*, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 985-93.

[7] Nikolay Tscheboksarov. (1967). Problemy tipologii etnicheskih obschnostey v trudah sovetskih uchenyh (The problems of ethnic unit's typology in the publications of Soviet scholars). *Sovetskaya etnografia*, Vol. 4, 99.

ethnic area for a long time are subject to assimilation, which leads to their dissolving in the dominating ethnic environment. Gradual loss of the native language, customs, and ethnic culture eventually leads to the loss of the feeling of former ethnic belonging by a sub-ethnos. This process is usually completed after several generations have passed. However, a diaspora will not disappear as long as its members see their own selves in the antithesis "we and they," the latter being understood as all the rest including the ethnos-nucleus from which their ancestors once broke off.[8]

Koryo saram have never tried to hide their ethnic origin, and when asked about their ethnic origin (in Russian, *natsionalnost*) answer, "Korean," a fact written into their passports and other official documents. Thus not only did they call themselves Koreans, but other groups labeled them as such. The level of self-esteem and ethnic identity among Korean adults is very high. Present-day Koreans live primarily in large cities, which, due to their standardized living conditions, are melting pots. Among urban Koreans, the rate of intermarriage is quite high, resulting in a generation of Koreans with bi-ethnic identity. There can also be a weak, indistinct ethnic identification both with one's own and alien ethnic groups, a marginal ethnic identity.

The most adequately reflected in the ethnic consciousness is an objective feature of an ethnos – language. However, language also represents a dynamic structure undergoing considerable changes in the course of time and due to certain circumstances. The Korean immigrants in the Russian Far East hailed mostly from North Hamgyeong Province. Long isolated from standardized Korean spoken on the Korean peninsula, the absorption of elements from southern dialects and the influence of the Russian language led to the development of a linguistic

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[8] Yury Semenov. (2000). Etnos, natsiya, diaspora. – Skepsis. Retrieved August 20, 2008, from http://scepsis.ru/library/id_75.html

phenomenon known as "*Koryo mal*." Young ethnic Koreans in Central Asia today cannot speak either *Koryo mal* or Korean, and socio-linguistic studies unambiguously state that *Koryo mal* is on the verge of extinction. Thus one of the main identifiers of Korean ethnic consciousness and self-identification will be lost.[9] The inevitable loss of their ancestral language by Central Asian Koreans can be easily predicted, and here the so-called partial assimilation is obvious. Loss of ethnic self-identification and total assimilation are not so definite. If it is not the language, common territory, idea of a historical motherland, or traditional culture, what is the pivotal feature of diaspora self-identification? For the Jewish Diaspora, Judaism is its ethnic essence and the main identifier of Jewishness. But for the Koreans in Central Asia, their religious belief has not been a core ethnic identifier.

The militant atheism of the Soviet period ended the traditional beliefs, religions, and rituals of Koreans, who have only kept certain forms of Confucian ceremonies, such as funerals and commemorations of the deceased. The Diaspora's elder generation taught succeeding generations only the basic aspects of such ceremonies, not delving into their religious and semantic meanings. The missionary activities of South Korean churches have converted part of the Korean Diaspora to Protestantism. However, the exact number of converts remains unknown due to the lack of any official statistics.[10] Moon Sun Myung's Unification Church tried but failed to establish operations in the post-Soviet republics at the end of the 1990s. Recently some Won Buddhist communities, followers of a Buddhist sect founded in Korea in the early twentieth century, have appeared in Almaty and Bishkek, but they are small in number.

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[9] Herald Haarmann. (1981). *Aspekte der koreanisch-russischen Zweisprachigkeit, Studien zur Gruppenmehr-sprachigkeit der Koreaner in der Sovjetunion*. Hamburg; Songmoo Kho. (1987). Koreans in Soviet Central Asia. *Studia Orientalia*, 61; Ross King. (1987). An Introduction to Soviet Korean. *Language Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 233-77.

[10] Galina Kim. (1996). On the Question of Religion among Koreans Attending Protestant Churches in Kazakhstan. *Izvestiya koreyevedeniya Kazakhstana*, Vol. 1, 76-80.

On the whole, religion does not have a significant role in the lives of Koreans in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

The significance and role of identifiers in the diasporic self-identification can differ depending upon the historical and political situations, the length of residence in the host-country, and the socio-cultural and religious mainstreams. One hypothesis is that the center of gravity for the Korean Diaspora has shifted to the sphere of rites, customs, and traditions. Such a view has not yet been substantiated in scholarly research. Nevertheless, this does not exclude its possible veracity.[11] The Koreans themselves indeed feel different from the others in the days of their ancient folk festivals.

In the lives of all peoples there are occasions related to traditional ceremonial rites concerning birth, coming-of-age, and celebrations. The ethnic specificity is vividly reflected in wedding ceremonies which include a number of pre- and post-wedding rites. Last are the most well preserved traditions of funeral and commemoration rites. The Central Asian Koreans still observe their main traditions related to the festivals and rites of the life circle. *Koryo saram* have not forgotten Korean calendar national festivals. These include the spring (*hansik*) and autumn (*chuseok*) equinoxes, when all Koreans visit the graves of their ancestors.[12]

The blossoming of the ethnic self-identification which occurred at the end of the twentieth century was called "ethnic revival" or the "ethnic paradox of modern times."[13] The first explosion of interest in one's own

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[11] Marina Khan. (1995). The Language and Ethnic Identity among the Koreans in Kazakhstan. *Korea Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 89-106.

[12] Rosa Dzharylgasinova. (1980). Osnovnye tendentsii etnicheskikh protsessov u koreitsev Srednei Azii I Kazakhstana (Basic Tendencies of Ethnic Processes among the Koreans of Central Asia and Kazakhstan). In *Etnicheskie protsessy u natsionalnykh grupp Srednei Asii I Kazakhstana*, Moscow: Nauka, 43-73; Gennady Li. (2001). *Obychai i obryady koreitsev* SNG *Prakticheskiye rekommendatsii* (*Customs and Rituals among Koreans in CIS. Practical Recommendations*), Tashkent.

ethnic roots, culture, and language occurred during *perestroika* under Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s. The collapse of the USSR entailed a massive "shock" and loss of a stable social identity. It was during that period of demolition of the social system when ethnicity and family undertook the functions of stabilization, consolidation, and support.

During the Soviet period, the state suppressed all attempts by ethnic communities to self-organize. Such attempts by deported peoples were especially suppressed. This changed after the collapse of the USSR, and during the last two decades in the post-Soviet republics dozens of Korean associations, unions, and cultural centers have been established. The primary goal for such associations is the renewal of Korean language and culture and the development of closer ties with the historical motherland (South Korea).[14] No doubt, the Korean youths of today grew up under different conditions as compared to their parents, that is, under the conditions of open possibilities for cultivation of ethnic features of their self-identification.

Scientific experiments have proven that the process of the formation of the ethnic self-identification of a person consists of several stages. The first "flashes" of diffusive identification with an ethnic (racial) group are observed in children of three to four years of age, and "realized" ethnic identification is achieved at the age of adolescence when self-reflection is of primary importance. The Korean family fulfills the function of the main custodian of traditional values, passing them from generation to generation. The rules of behavior and social status in general a Korean starts to realize in the family. From early childhood, by taking part in important rites or simply watching them, an individual

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[13] Anthony D. Smith. (1981). *The Ethnic Revival*. London: Cambridge University Press.

[14] German Kim. (2002). Korean Diaspora in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Relations and Attitudes toward North and South Korea. Proceedings from *the International Conference on the Korean Diaspora and Strategies of Global Network*. October 11, 2002. Korea University and East Rock Institute, 29-43.

becomes familiarized with the sacral aspects of ethnic culture. Korean family rites are based on Confucian ceremonial principles, which according to Confucius rites are the foundation of all human activities. What is the most important aspect in the family awakening of ethnic identity among Korean youths? The socialization of Korean children has always emphasized the importance of respecting elders. According to Confucian ethical standards, a younger person, regardless of his or her social status, should treat elders with respect, and children should obey parents. The importance of good education is the second distinctive feature, and parents, in turn, are obliged to give their children a good education. This is why the share of employed *Koryo saram* with higher education is twice as high as the average share in each country of residence.[15]

In this research, when describing ethnic identification following many Russian scholars[16], I widely use the term "ethno-confessional self-identification," believing that it reflects the existing reality meant by this notion very well. Religious and ethno-national components of self-identification are not only closely intertwined but also have a synergy effect: an ethno-national component strengthens religious identity and vice versa.[17]

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[15] German Kim &Young Seob Shim. (2000). *Istoriya prosvescheniya koreitsev Rossii I Kazakhstana Vtoraya polovina XIX c.- 2000* (*The History of Education of Koreans in Russia and Kazakhstan: Second half of the 19th c – 2000*). Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakh National University.

[16] Mikhail Mtchedlov. (Ed.). (2007). *Vera. Etnos. Natsiya. Religiosny component etnicheskogo sosnaniya* (*Belief, Ethnos, Nation: Ethnoconfessional component of ethnic Identity*). M.: Kulturnaya revolutsia, 368; Yuliya Sinelina. (2001). O kriteriyah opredeleniya religiosnosti naseleniya (About Criteria in the Taxonomy of the Religiosity of Population). *Sotsis*, No. 7, 89-96; Olga Kazmina. (2001). Rol religioznogo faktora v etnicheskom samososnaniii neselenoya Rossii (The Role of Religious Factor in the Ethnic Self Identity of Population in Russia). *Istoricheskiy Vestnik*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 66-75.

[17] Vadim Raguzin. (2002). Etnonatsionalnoye i religiosnoye soznaniye grazhdan Rossii: problemy I vsaimosvyasi (Ethnonational and Religious Identity of the Russian Citizen: Problems and Interrelations). Etnokonfessionalniy dialog: sostoyaniye, protivorechiya, perspektivy rasvutiya.

Religiosity of Korean Students

In the entire sample, the majority of respondents, 63.3 percent, consider themselves as religious. Another 36.7 percent of the respondents declared themselves non-religious. The share of non-believers and atheists among Korean students in Kazakhstan was the largest and constitutes about one-half of all the country's respondents. The next two questions had dual objectives: to verify responses to the first question and to obtain a picture of the confessional background of their families. The seeming paradox of a smaller degree of religiosity among the parents of respondents – 43.8 percent of non-believers – can be explained by the fact that they were socialized, educated, and lived their lives in the atmosphere of the Soviet atheism. The share of believers among blood brothers and sisters, 71.5 percent, turned out to be a bit higher than that of the respondents themselves.

The concrete confessional belonging of the respondents was also revealed. The absolute majority of the respondents (75.3 percent) consider themselves to be members of the Protestant church, 7.2 percent belonged to the Catholic Church, and followers of Confucianism and Buddhism constituted 1 percent each. The rest of the respondents marked "different," not specifying a particular religion. Among the Korean students of faith there is none who identified themselves as followers of Russian Orthodoxy or Islam, though the two faiths are dominant both in numbers and official governmental recognition in Central Asia, and have the largest financial base and educational infrastructure. This can be partially explained by the fact that Protestantism and Catholicism, despite their history of more than a century in Central Asia, started to develop rapidly in the post-Soviet period due to the missionary activities of Korean Protestant pastors and Catholic ministers. The aggressive but

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Orenburg, 10.

Table 1. Confessional Self-Identification of Korean Students in the Countries of Central Asia as of May 2008 (percentage of the total number of believers)

Faith	Percentage of Respondents
Protestantism	75.3
Catholicism	7.2
Russian Orthodoxy	0
Islam	0
Confucianism	1.2
Buddhism	1.2
Other	15.3

enticing proselytism of missionary churches has drawn the attention of the young people.

To the question "What religion suits the Koreans most in your country?" the responses were as follows: Protestantism – 47.2 percent; Russian Orthodoxy – 25.6 percent; Catholicism – 7.8 percent; Buddhism – 2 percent; Confucianism – 0.7 percent; Islam – 0 percent; and other non-specific religions – 16.4 percent. According to preliminary assessments based on articles and broadcasts in the mass media, interviews, and private discussions, the degree of readiness of the Central Asian Koreans for external migration from the Central Asian countries to Russia remains quite high, excluding Koreans in Kazakhstan. In this connection it becomes clear that Russian Orthodoxy is associated with a possible migration to Russia for permanent residence.

The next set of questions was related to the issue of how the religiosity of Korean youths has occurred. In the mid-1960s, the American sociologists Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark singled out five dimensions of religiosity: the experiential (feeling), ritualistic (practice), ideological (belief), intellectual, and consequential (ethical).[18]

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[18] Charles Y. Glock & Rodney Stark. (1965). *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago: Rand

This caused a storm of debate, arguments, and exchange of opinions After two decades of academic debate, it is now generally accepted that the concept of religiosity is best treated as a multidimensional phenomenon.[19] Therefore, it is not a matter of principle whether a three-, a five-, or a ten-dimensional scale is used to assess religiosity or how many questions there are in a questionnaire. Everything depends on the task of each concrete empirical research.

To the question "Have you ever attended a divine service in a missionary church?" 81.5 percent of respondents gave a positive answer. To the question "How often do you attend a church?" the following answers were given: every week – 54.3 percent; twice a month – 34.7 percent; and once a month – 11 percent. Thus taking into consideration the fact that services in missionary churches are held once a week, it can be noted that the attendance of Korean young people is quite high. Among Kazakhstani Koreans, this indicator was at least 10 percent below the average.

In order to realize the role of religion in the outlook of young people, we cannot rely only on the answers to the question: "Do you confess any religion?" Even regular church attendance does not necessarily mean piety and actual religiosity. Korean missionary churches attract attendees not only by their services but also by other kinds of activities, from educational to entertainment. To obtain evidence of the actual attitude of interviewees toward religion and assess the degree of understanding of Christian norms, rules, and morals is possible if a number of questions are answered which reveal the actual place of religion in the daily life of respondents. With this purpose in mind the following question was asked: "Have you read the Bible, New or Old

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McNally, 306.

[19] Marie Cornwall, Stan L. Albrecht, Perry H. Cunningham, and Brian L. Pitcher. (1986). The Dimensions of Religiosity: A Conceptual Model with Empirical Test. *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 226.

Testament?" Among respondents, 80 percent gave a positive response, as could have been expected. However, the response to the next question, "Do you know the main Christian commandments and do you observe them in your everyday life?" gives rise to doubts as to the quality of reading and learning of religious knowledge. The answers were distributed as follows: "No, I neither know nor observe," at 49.7 percent; "I do know but not always observe," at 32.2 percent; and "I know and observe," at 18.1 percent.

Actual belief in faith presupposes readiness for suffering and self-sacrifice for the sake of religious ideals. Therefore the following question was asked: "Do you think you are ready to suffer for your belief?" It is not possible to check the truthfulness by means of experiments, but answers were given, and it turns out that potential martyrs constituted the minority, about one-third of the total respondents.

A special bloc of questions concerned the attitude of the respondents towards and their subjective assessment of the activities of Korean Christian missionary churches. The topic of active foreign proselytism including South Koreans has lately attracted the attention of the mass media, scholars, the official clergy, and local and national security officials. In all Central Asian countries there have been spy scandals centered on pastors-missionaries followed by deportations, refusal by government authorities to grant them official recognition by allowing them to register with local authorities, bans on activities, and other punitive measures.[20]

Pioneers of Korean Christian missions began to arrive during the *perestroika* period, when diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea were not yet established and pastors came with

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[20] U.S. Government Reports. (2007). Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan. Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan. International Religious Freedom Report 2007. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Retrieved August 15, 2008, from http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007.

American passports. After official relations with the Central Asia republics were established, the stream of South Korean pastors and missionaries increased. Political, economic, ideological, and ethnic factors contributed to this. At first, proselytism by the South Korean missionaries was addressed to the local Koreans as the most fertile, and it did not lead to any counteraction on the part of the official authorities in Central Asian countries pursuing a balanced policy of state support to moderate Islam. However, the attitude toward them changed when the number of South Korean churches sharply increased, congregations grew in number one hundred-fold, and the influence of the introduced Christian confessions became tangible among local populations that used to be considered Muslims or Orthodox Christians only on the basis of their ethnic origin.

The official authorities admit that missionaries have carried out much work for consolidation of the Korean Diaspora. Why do churches established by South Korean pastors attract Central Asian Koreans? This question has multiple answers: the missionaries organized free lessons in the Korean language and clubs of a non-religious nature, they carried out charitable activities, rendered material and financial support to people in need, stimulated attendance by offering possible trips to South Korea, and created the possibility for obtaining a theological education and career as a member of the clergy. Thus, not only religious content, but also the so called "social package" offered to community members attracted many individuals to South Korean missionary churches.[21]

Korean missionary churches are mainly concentrated in large cities in Central Asia, which have the highest shares of the Korean population. For instance, in Almaty, where more than 20,000 Koreans, or 20 percent of all Kazakhstani *Koryo saram*, live, about thirty South Korean

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[21] Askar Abubakirov. Missiya vypolnima? (Mission is feasible?). *Megapolis*, No. 1 (265), January 9, 2006.

Christian churches operate. Despite the large number of churches, only 6 percent of the respondents thought that there were "too many" missionary churches. The overwhelming majority, at 72.5 percent, thought that there are "enough" missionary churches, and about 21 percent responded that there are "not enough" missionary churches.

To the question "How do you assess the role of missionary churches in preserving the ethnic identity of the Korean Diaspora in your country?" two pairs of answers were offered: important or insignificant, and positive or negative. About three-quarters of the respondents consider their role to be important and only one-quarter objected to it.

On the whole, it should be noted that under the complicated conditions of the post-*perestroika* period Protestant missions were in demand among the *Koryo saram* and representatives of other peoples of Central Asian countries. South Korean missionary churches, utilizing different forms and methods of ideological indoctrination, managed to pass the initial stage of their rooting in Central Asian soil. However, a large number of political, social-economic, demographic, and cultural factors prevent Protestantism from achieving structural integration in the confessional life of the post-Soviet states in Central Asia.

The South Korean pastors preaching Christ and fundamental principles of Protestantism among the poly-ethnic community are trying to correct mistakes originally made in the proselytism of the masses, including the Korean Diaspora. The interference of missionaries in the ethno-cultural life and prohibitions by pastors to carry out traditional rites, especially funeral and commemoration rituals, caused protests among elder Koreans who do not wish to lose their Confucian-based customs and traditions. A small bloc of questions attempted to clarify the attitude of Korean youths to Confucian rites and the impact of new Christian religiosity on their ethno-cultural behavior. To the question "Does your family annually observe *hansik* and *chuseok*?" 84.6 percent of the respondents gave positive answers. An insignificant number, 15.4 percent, of Korean families refused to conduct the main Confucian rites

Table 2. Some Indicators of Ethnic Self-Identification of Korean Students in Central Asian Countries as of May 2008 (percentage)

	NO	RATHER NO THAN YES	BOTH YES AND NO	RATHER YES THAN NO	YES
I am proud that I am Korean	0.7	2.2	4.5	15.7	76.9
I am trying to learn more about the history of Korea, traditions, and customs	6.1	10.6	21.4	24	38
I actively participate in Korean public organizations	15.7	21.4	20.7	23.6	18.6
I know my Korean roots well	20.1	24.3	22.8	15	17.8
I deeply feel my belonging to the Korean nation	9.3	11.4	12.1	23.6	43.6

of the calendar cycle. At the same time, to the question "Will you and your children observe these traditions?" only 32.1 percent of the respondents gave positive answers, while 22.4 percent responded negatively and almost one-half, or 45 percent, of the respondents found it difficult to answer this question. This data demonstrates that the absolute majority of the Korean young people (86.3 percent) do not understand the meaning of the commemorative rites at the ancestors' graves and only 21.9 percent of the respondents are able to prepare everything necessary and carry out the rite. The tendency of losing ethno-cultural traditions among young people is manifested very vividly.

The questionnaire also covered Korean students' attitudes towards their ethnicity. For all the respondents in this pilot questionnaire, homogenous ethnic identification is typical, which agrees with their official ethnic identity. The last bloc of questions was presented as a table and it is appropriate to present the answers (in relative indices, that is, percent) in the same way. The answers demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of young Koreans are neither ashamed of nor hide their ethnicity, but rather are proud of their ethnic identity and have a deep sense of their ethnic self-identification.

Conclusion

The following should be noted. The Korean students representing the fourth and fifth generations of the Korean Diaspora, which spans from the times of the Russian Empire to the post-Soviet period, living mostly in the multi-ethnic environment of Central Asian cities and often being children of inter-ethnic marriages, invariably preserve their ethnic self-identification and are aware of their belonging to the Korean community.

The religious outlook of many respondents is still vague and in the embryonic state. The traditional rituals, their roots going back to the religious - ethnic Confucianism, have lost their sacral semantics and are being preserved thanks to the efforts of the older generation as an external ritualistic shell. The official religions of the Central Asian countries, Islam and Russian Orthodoxy, have not attracted young Koreans to their rows of the newly converted. Energetic and diverse in its forms, the proselytism of South Korean Christian missions (mainly Protestantism) has given new roots among Korean students.

Any discourse about the typology of the religious consciousness of the Korean young people is premature. However, it would be fallacious to lessen the role of tie religious aspect in the lives of the Central Asian Korean communities on the whole. A distinctive peculiarity of individual religiosity of Koreans is its “sliding down” from the ideological sphere to the everyday behavior. Religion has not occupied any important or strong positions in the ethnic consciousness of the preceding generations of the Korean Diaspora, and so far it has failed to anchor in the ethnic consciousness of the new generation.

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