

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE AHISKA (MESKHETIAN) TURKS AND KOREANS IN POST-SOVIET KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN: THE MAKING OF DIASPORA IDENTITY AND CULTURE\*

**Diaspora Kimliği ve Kültürünün Oluşumu:  
Sovyet-sonrası Kazakistan ve Özbekistan'daki Ahıska Türkleri  
ve Kore Diasporalarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi**

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## ABSTRACT

This research is analyzing two deported diasporas in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. By using Korean and Ahıska Turkish diasporas in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan as cases, this study aims to present the cultural and identity preservation of the two diasporas and their cultural revitalizing activities since the independence of titular nation in 1991. Thus the article examines their survival and the existence of the diaspora nationalism in the nationalizing Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In order to examine these issues, this article focuses on: diaspora movement and the formation of diaspora organizations, territorialization in titular states, language revival and education, and finally the socio-economic situation of the Ahıska Turkish and Korean diasporas. To explore the survival and the existence of the diaspora culture and diaspora identity this work carried out in-depth interview and field research among the Korean and Ahıska Turkish diasporas in Central Asia. Consequently, it tried to reveal actual dynamism and cultural revitalization among these two peoples.

## Key Words

Diaspora, Ahıska Turkish, Korean minority, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan

## ÖZ

Bu araştırma, Kazakistan ve Özbekistan'a sürgün edilmiş iki diaspora grubu olan Koreli ve Ahıska Türkleri örneklerinde kimlik ve kültür muhafazasını göz önüne sermekte ve hakim etnik grupların 1991 sonrasında bağımsız devlet teşkilini müteakip bu iki diaspora grubu arasında gözlemlenen kültürel canlanmayı incelemektedir. Böylece, milli devletler haline gelen Kazakistan ve Özbekistan'daki diaspora milliyetçiliği analiz edilmektedir. Bu amaçla, diaspora hareketleri, diaspora derneklerinin teşkili, diaspora gruplarının belli bölgelerde yoğunlaşması, diaspora dillerinin öğretimi ve canlanması, ve Ahıska Türkü ve Koreli diasporalarının sosyo-ekonomik konumları detaylı bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Diaspora kimliğinin ve kültürünün varlığını ve muhafaza edilmesini araştırmak gayesini taşıyan bu çalışmamız için Orta Asya'da yaşayan Ahıska ve Kore diasporalarına mensup kişilerle detaylı mülakatlar ve saha çalışması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu şekilde her iki diaspora grubunun hal-i hazırda dinamizmini ve kültürel olarak yeniden canlanışlarını da ortaya koymaya çalışılmaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Diaspora Kimliği, Ahıska Türk, Kore diaspora, Kültürünün Oluşumu, Özbekistan, Kazakistan

\* The Ahıska/Meskhetian Turks are known as "Ahıska Turks" in Turkey and "Meskhetian Turks" in the West and Russia. Although the term Meskhetian Turks is widely know in the Western literature, during the fieldwork in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the author noticed the adamant refusal to be called "Meskhetian Turks" among Ahıska Turks in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. They think of themselves simply as Ahıska Turks. Thus, in this article the author uses Ahıska Turks as their appellation.

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## I. Introduction

According to Russian writer and philosopher Aleksandr Zinoviev<sup>1</sup>, the communist system had a strong capacity to destroy national barriers and eliminate ethnic differences. He argued that communism created a new, bland, homogenized community of people (cited in Diuk and Karatnycky 1993: 3-4). However, his assessment has since been disproven by the remarkable national rebirth that helped cause the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many newly independent states were busy with their nation building process by nationalizing and indigenizing their territories. These processes somehow marginalized the non-titular ethnic minorities in the newly independent countries. Non-titular groups, such as the Jews, Volga Germans, Koreans, Crimean Tatars and Ahıska Turks who were deported in the Central Asia found themselves in the middle of nowhere. Also for some non-titular groups, such as Koreans, are facing serious challenge in achieving the primordial notions of nationality due their Sovietization.

Under these circumstances, we should not overlook the fact that these small size non-titular groups, as mentioned above, were more vulnerable and faced hardship during the nationalizing process in the newly independent states compared with the Russian diasporas who were big in numbers and organized. Moreover, unlike Russian diasporas who came to the region as a ruling group, these small non-titular groups were deported in the region as a traitor of the Soviet Union.

Considering the mentioned above, the intention of this article is to focus on the ethnic minority and diaspora issues in nationalizing Central Asia, which have generally been ignored by western academic and political circles due to their powerless and small size. Specifically, this work is an analysis of two deported diasporas in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Korean and Ahıska Turks. These two diaspora groups have experienced Stalin's brutal deportations during the Soviet period and since 1991 both of them are facing new challenges in the nationalizing states. The objective of this work is to examine survival, identity preservation and cultural revitalization activities of Ahıska Turks and Korean diaspora since the establishment of titular states in Central Asia.

Based on fieldwork carried out in 2005 and 2008<sup>2</sup>, it can be argued that many diaspora members are ambivalent, since they expressed both affection and disaffection with regard to life in Central Asia. As Uehling argues, for many diasporas of Central Asia, the ideologies of home, soil, and roots fail to line up with the practicalities of residence, so that territorial referents and civic loyalty are perplexingly divided (Uehling 2001: 394). Diaspora identity contains disparate and even contradictory elements and is constantly evolving in reaction to changing circumstances. In short, degrees of diasporaness, or diasporacity, are not static. Thus, this study aims to clarify certain aspects of these confusions by examining two different diaspora groups, which examination will offer a window on the much broader process

of diaspora identity and nationalism. The comparative content of this investigation will show considerable variations in these practices in different settings and groupings.

## **II. Diaspora Movement and the formation of the Diaspora Organizations in the Post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**

For the Soviet Korean diaspora, the break up of the Soviet Union has provided an opportunity to find their own roots and culture. In the wake of these events, a Korean national revival began along with a series of other movements for cultural autonomy among Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's multi-national population. Many intellectuals have been attempting to revive a sense of Korean identity among the Soviet Koreans through language and cultural education. After years of forced silence, the Korean diaspora took the opportunity to lobby actively to develop their national customs, traditions, language and culture. This initial development of the Korean movement was shaped primarily by academic intellectuals. These scholars played important and positive roles in the organization of Korean centers; the methods and contents of their activities and forging ties with homeland Korea (Kim 1994: 45). There are several reasons for the predominance of intellectuals on the sphere of social sciences in the leadership of Korean association. First, their ties to the party and its government organs gave them access to the power which was needed to resolve organizational questions related to the establishment of Korean cultural centers. In addition, these same ties allowed them to lobby on behalf of the Korean centers. Further-

more, their professional specialization and work experience in party organs meant that the professors were better grounded in the preparation of statutory documents, conceptualization of cultural centers, and management of organizational work. Finally, since these faculty members were all experienced in organic elements of the party-state system, their roles as the leaders of cultural centers was agreeable to the organs of power.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the Korean cultural associations in their early stages copied the working style of the Communist party and other Soviet organs (Kim and Khan 2001: 125). Later, these social associations became automatically accountable to the titular government organizations as well as dependent upon them.

Various Korean cultural centers or associations were established in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In major cities such as Almaty, Kyzyl-orda, Chimkent, Tashkent, Samarkand, Fergana, and elsewhere elsewhere where substantial numbers of Koreans lived Korean cultural centers were opened.

All these associations placed emphasis on the revival of the Korean language, customs, and tradition as their basic goals and missions. The awakening of ethnic consciousness took place against the background of these goals. The goals of the Koreans societies coincided with generally accepted trends during this period. The leaders of the Korean organization in the 1990s studiously omitted any mention of goals in their statutory documentation that might complicate their relations with titular authorities. Consequently, Koreans did not regard themselves as subjects of political activity during the formative period of their new organi-

zations; their political consciousness had not yet been awakened (Khan 1994). No doubt, these Soviet Korean leaders were very loyal to the ruling regime in their respective countries of residency. Therefore, the association's ethnic agenda was primarily cultural rather than political.

Compared with the Korean diaspora, the Ahıska Turks have a long history of ethnic organization. Until the end of 1980s, the Vatan society, as the only organization of the Ahıska Turks, led the Ahıska Turkish movement. Its leaders continuously fought against the Soviet authorities for their rehabilitation to the homeland and their rights to proclaim themselves as Turks. However, due to demographic dispersion and efforts of the Soviet authorities to control and disorganize the Ahıska Turks the movement was fragmented. Also there was the disagreement between the leaders in the organization. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, numerous other societies were founded by the Ahıska Turks residing in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A Central Association of the Ahıska Turks was founded in Almaty and Tashkent in 1991. These Associations presented a somewhat different perspective on the issues of importance to Ahıska Turks, though not departing significantly from the mainstream. One of the important points on their agenda is still obtaining permission and means to emigrate to Turkey, which they consider as their homeland. However, they are also concerned with the problems of the community still living in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The improvement of the Ahıska Turks' socio-economic conditions was central to the Association's agenda. Anyhow,

compared with the Korean associations, they worked towards their rehabilitation to homeland. The Ahıska Turkish associations made close contact with the Turkish embassy and prepared and submit the list of the Ahıska Turkish families willing to migrate to Turkey (Aydingün 2001: 138). During the interview with the leaders of the Associations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, they both said that their primary activities after the formation of the associations were emigration from the titular states to other places, if possible, to Turkey (Aydingün 2001: 138). Within this framework, the associations made the necessary demands to the responsible authorities of titular states.

On the contrary, the Koreans did not make any demands to the titular authorities. And unlike many other diaspora minorities, such as Russians, Germans and Ahıska Turks, the Koreans did not leave Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in large numbers. This fact coincided with the Koreans Associations' (in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) official stance. For example, the Association of the Koreans in Kazakhstan's vice President Gurri Khan stated at a session of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan that they do not support the idea of Korean emigration from Kazakhstan. He said, "for us Kazakhstan has become our motherland" (Tskhai 2000: 136). Hence, the Korean Associations cooperated closely with the titular regime and tried to lobby for their interest and representation.

It seems this is resulting from the psychological perception of their ethnic identity. Many Ahıska Turks perceived their ethnic identity in a negative form. That is, the Ahıska Turks

think that, as during the times of the Soviet Union, they continue to be an unwanted nationality in the region. They considered themselves as not being a privileged group in the region although they were ethnically and religiously similar to the titulars. Many Ahıska Turks have thought that they were among the most discriminated nationalities (Aydingün 2001: 141). On the other hand, many Koreans expressed their identity in positive terms. They think that their ethnic identity holds them in high regard, characterized by traits such as diligence, workaholic, patient, filled with goodwill, and persistent in achieving their goals. In other words, they consider that the attitude of other nationalities towards Koreans has always been positive. Accordingly, many think that they are a wanted nationality in the host-states for the development of the nation (Khan 1994). Having carved a niche for themselves in the Soviet economy and transcended the status of criminality that brought their community to Central Asia, Koreans appear far more willing to embrace a “second among equals” status and adapt to the new reality of a titular dominated Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. By contrast, the Ahıska Turks are presented with an idealized vision of a better life in the distant homeland of Turkey and have had less success in transcending the status of “other” within which they have existed throughout the Soviet period. A comparison of Ahıska Turks’ and Koreans’ reactions after the formation of their associations in titular states reveals a clear divergence in the degree to which these communities feel they may legitimately vest their future in the new states.

### III. Territorialization in Titular states: Ahıska Turks and Koreans

Considering the aforementioned, this section will show a textured picture of re-territorialization identity within titular states as well as shed light on the general nature of diasporic identity in the context of post-Soviet space. As suggested by Table 1, which was acquired during the fieldwork, in comparison with the Ahıska Turkish community, a far higher percentage of Koreans consider the states they live in (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) as their homeland. This constitutes the central issue in this examination of the territorialization of identity and compels an exploration of the degree to which members of both groups feel that they are capable of full integration into the civic nation.

[Table 1]  
 Q. Where is your homeland? (Multiple answer possible)

Nationality	Koreans (%)	Ahıska Turks (%)
Place of birth	46.3	20
Soviet Union	20	0
Titular States (Kazakhstan/ Uzbekistan)	42	22.2
Land of forefathers (Russian Far East / Ahıska region)	22	80
Historical Homeland (Korea / Turkey)	43	96

Source: Data derived from survey conducted in Kazakhstan (2005) and Uzbekistan (2008) from Ahıska Turks and Koreans, 150 samples in each country and diaspora (total 600)

[Table 2]

Q. Who should be considered native residents of titular states (Multiple answer possible)

Nationality	Koreans (%)	Ahıska Turks (%)
Titulars (Kazak or Uzbek)	7.2	15
All people who were born in titular states	52	38
All citizens	50	42
Difficult to say	2	5

Source: Data derived from survey conducted in Kazakhstan (2005) and Uzbekistan (2008) from Ahıska Turks and Koreans, 150 samples in each country and diaspora (total 600)

Taken together, Table 1 and 2 demonstrate that both groups attribute considerable value to “being born in a place” as a criterion of indigeneity. Such a trend was high among youths and middle-agers who think they have certain rights in their countries of residence. This, more or less reveals their desire rather than the reality of dwelling states. The following quote from a middle-aged Korean in Almaty conveys a common thread of interview responses from both communities, in which the complex interaction of ethnic, territorial, and national identities remains unsettled. It shows a dynamic process of identity formation: “In my heart, I feel I am a native of this place – I mean this city or maybe this country. I don’t know. I know that I never lived in Korea, neither did my father and mother. Thus I am not quite sure if it is my homeland. At the same time, however, I now live in a country that I did not choose. Neither did my father or grandfather choose to come here. I really don’t know. You ask me difficult questions.”<sup>4</sup>

In general, the Korean diaspora tend it to have a “hyphenated identity” which is composed of a territorial-based citizenship and ethnicity (i.e. Korean-Kazakhstani or Korean-Uzbekistani). On the other hand, such a trend rarely appears among the Ahıska Turks. In other words, there is a far greater willingness among Koreans to embrace a long-term association with the titular states.<sup>5</sup> As one Kazak official stated, “Koreans were forced to come here, but once here, found a way to contribute greatly to the Soviet Union and now Kazakhstan. It makes them an important part of the Kazakhstani people.”<sup>6</sup> In an instrumentalist sense, such a remark may have contributed to Koreans’ higher levels of territorialization within Kazakhstan. In addition, a more sentimental approach to Koreans’ sense of belonging to Kazakhstan is evident in many of their writings. However, Table 3 shows a continued significance of ethnic self-conception. It seems that the prominence of ethnic identity among both groups results from a combination of the legacy of Soviet nationality policy and the role of the homeland after having contact with them.

[Table 3]

Q. What is your primary community of belonging? (Multiple answers possible)

Nationality	Koreans	Ahıska Turks
Own ethnicity	98	100
Soviet nation	20	0
Kazakhstani (citizenship)	38	13

Source: Data derived from survey conducted in Kazakhstan (2005) and Uzbekistan (2008) from Ahıska Turks and Koreans, 100 samples in each country and diaspora (total 400)

**IV. Language Revival and Education of Ahıska Turks and Koreans**

Compared with the Korean diaspora, the Ahıska Turks preserved their language far better, since Ahıska Turks somehow used their language to identify themselves and used it as a tool against assimilation. Table 4, which is the data collected from the 2001 Statistical yearbook of Kazakhstan, prepared by the European Union’s Tacis program, somehow illustrates the general situation of language knowledge of Ahıska Turks and Koreans.

[Table 4]<sup>7</sup>  
Level of Language Knowledge of Ahıska Turkish and Korean Diasporas

Nationalities	Total Population Thsd. person	Among them those who know language					
		Native (TU/ KR)		Kazak		Russian	
		Thsd. person	As % of total population	Thsd. Person	As % of total population	Thsd. person	As % of total population
Korean	99.7	25.7	25.8%	28.7	28.8%	97.4	97.7%
Ahıska Turk	78.7	59.6	75.7%	57.8	73.4%	59.5	75.6%

Source: European Union Tacis Program, *Statistical Year Book of Kazakhstan* (Almaty: Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001), p.434

Although the Ahıska Turkish community has, by and large, preserved its native language, recently signs of change are visible among those who live in cities, and especially among those who have higher education. Thus, many Ahıska Turkish intellectuals point out that the lack of

education in Turkish is an important factor contributing to the loss of language, especially children born and raised in the urban centers of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, since the elderly people, who possessed high levels of tradition and language, are now aging and passing away, it has become more difficult for the younger generation to learn and speak Turkish. Although there are schools and Universities founded by Turkish charities or religious organizations and also Turkish departments in major universities, unfortunately these institutions are not designed to help the ethnic revitalization of the Ahıska Turks. In general, all these Turkish institutions have a bigger agenda, such as the solidarity of all Turkic peoples in Eurasia. Thus, there aren’t any organized language courses to revitalize the mother language for the Ahıska Turkish diaspora.

On the other hand, the Soviet Koreans have organized many language teaching institutions all over the titular republic. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a certain boom in learning the Korean language among the Soviet Koreans and numerous courses in Korean were organized by Korean cultural centers and Korean missionary churches. Perhaps this can be related to the Korean diaspora’s urgent desire to revive their language compared with the Ahıska Turks. Also, the Korean government overtly supported the revitalization of their compatriots’ mother language. Many language centers were established with the help of the Korean government and many Korean books, dictionaries, computers and other technical assistance were provided by

South Korea. In the regions where the Koreans lived in a compact form, such as Ushtobe (near Almaty) in Kazakhstan and Politotdel (near Tashkent) in Uzbekistan, the Soviet Koreans have managed to organize Korean language courses as part of the regular curriculum in primary and secondary education.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Korean language has been taught at schools (from elementary to high school), and even in Kindergartens. In higher education, numerous Korean departments were opened after the 1990s in a number of universities and colleges in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The total number of students of Korean departments in Kazakhstan is about 250, and in Uzbekistan there are about 350.<sup>9</sup> The most well known Korean departments in Kazakhstan are in the State University of Kazakhstan and Almaty State University. In the case of Uzbekistan there is a Korean department even in the pedagogical university which has almost 200 students itself. Tashkent Nizami Pedagogical University, and the Institute of Oriental Studies are the two main universities in Uzbekistan, where specialists in Korean studies are trained. One of the big differences between these institutions compared with Turkish departments in the region is that the majority of students of Korean departments are from the Korean diaspora. Both in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the Korean diaspora constitutes around 80 percent (sometimes more, in the case of Tashkent Nizami Pedagogical University Korean diaspora compose 92 percent of its students) of students in Korean departments.<sup>10</sup> There is only one exception in the State University of Kazakhstan where the Korean diaspora

represent only one third of its students due to the official policy of supporting Kazak students (Kim 1995). According to Vronislav Lee, the chairman of the Korean department at Tashkent Nizami Pedagogical University, reasons why young people enter Korean departments are as follows:<sup>11</sup> (Order is according to the preference)

1) Nationality, 2) Parent's wish, 3) Possibility to go to Korea, 4) Possibility to get a good job after graduation (For example with Korean Conglomerates, Samsung and LG, etc.)

Accordingly, unlike the Turkish departments in the region, the Korean departments are playing a crucial role in revitalizing and preserving the Korean language for the Soviet Koreans in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. There are also some differences for the reasons to learn the mother language between the Ahıska Turkish and Korean diasporas. By and large, Ahıska Turks have symbolic or primordial reasons for seeking language and cultural education; on the other hand, the Korean diaspora seems to have more instrumental reason. When the author asked Soviet Koreans what their goals were in learning Korean, many Koreans stated that learning Korean would be useful for professional opportunities. Many interviewees professed that their learning of Korean was not an interest in the nationalizing projects pre se, but to study or work in South Korea or to find employment, possibly with a South Korean firm, which are certainly instrumental reasons.<sup>12</sup>

#### **V. Socio-economic Situation of Ahıska Turks and Koreans**

The Soviet Koreans were well known, prior to independence, for their zeal and their achievements in

education, and this reputation still prevails in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The Soviet Koreans have always enjoyed considerable social prestige as scholars, teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers and technicians of all descriptions, accountants, etc. Moreover, successes in these professions helped to secure their socio-economic status. However, the changes in the economy since the independence of the titulars have created a situation of pursuing material wealth in the first place. And this has redirected the attitudes of the Korean diaspora toward their employment. In other words, the Korean diaspora has become more materialistic in their employment preferences as a result of the transition to a market economy. Many Koreans are currently engaged in commercial activities of various descriptions. However, many Korean diaspora intellectuals point out that such a situation drastically threatens to lower their intellectual level in the future. To be sure, this trend is influencing the younger generation, whose educational and academic achievements are declining noticeably. A large number of Soviet Koreans formerly active in science, education, health care, culture and other fields have left them for small and medium-sized businesses. Other Koreans have reinvented themselves as interpreters and translators for South Korean business and churches. Actually, since independence, many Korean professionals were under the pressure of the low wage level and experienced difficulty obtaining promotions in the public sector.

It must also be said that increasingly frequent contacts with South Koreans, too, have accelerated the

materialistic turn of the Korean diaspora society. Since independence, a substantial number of South Korean businessmen, from the biggest Conglomerates down to lower-level representatives of private business, have set up offices and factories in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Moreover, large numbers of South Korean missionaries are active in numerous areas throughout Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.<sup>13</sup> While the missionaries do not have the same goals as the business people, both need the help of local Koreans in order to establish themselves as quickly as possible. Some Soviet Koreans have been able to hone their economic instincts quite rapidly through contacts with these South Koreans, and have also been quicker to find better job openings. On the other hand, these contacts have had a number of undesirable side effects.

In the same vein, Ahıska Turks also sought for opportunities to capture specialized areas and niche economies. They also understood that business enterprises allow the greatest possibilities for accumulating wealth on the basis of individual effort and ability. The fields of self-employment or home business that are flourishing at present are farming and commerce.<sup>14</sup> In Uzbekistan, most Ahıska Turks are involved in the farming enterprise. In Kazakhstan, they are also in farming business, however, the author witnessed quite a number of truck or taxi drivers as well, who were all self-employed. With the 1992 enactment of privatization as a part of economic reforms, the sovkhoses and kolkhoses were privatized, and land usage rights were also transferred to non-government hands. Ahıska Turks

used much of this policy for their economical survival. Private farming has become prominent among the Ahıska Turks after the independence. Moreover, their farming enterprise represents, perhaps, a new historical type of agricultural production that combines elements of socialist collective system with small-scale capitalist farm management in order to maximize personal profit. The farming cooperatives of today resembles this model, but the greatest change has been that all land owned by each cooperative is now invested for the cooperative as a whole by each individual member. The members farm this land collectively and share the profits. Almost all members of the these farms are composed of Ahıska Turk family units. For the Ahıska Turks, as an ethnic minority in a multi-ethnic state, forming micro-communities based on close kin relations was a social necessity that expanded into the farming sphere. The fundamental working unit in this farming enterprise is always an Ahıska Turkish micro-community. In other words, it is not a style of farming undertaken by individuals.

This sort of farming enterprise is currently expanding among Ahıska Turks in Uzbekistan. In order to provide sustainable financial support many Ahıska Turks are looking for investors from Turkey and elsewhere. In addition, they use their Ahıska Turkish networks in Kazakhstan (e.g., truck drivers and merchants) for the distribution of their agricultural products.<sup>15</sup> By selling their products to Kazakhstan (rather than Uzbekistan), where the economy is booming and their products are worth more, Ahıska Turks in Uzbekistan are increasing

their profits. Moreover, by cooperating with their compatriots in Kazakhstan it creates a win-win situation for all Ahıska Turks in the region. The hard work and farming enterprise method demonstrated by the Ahıska Turks serves as a good model for overcoming the current economic difficulties as well as preserving their ethnic identity and culture in rural areas. This also reflects the Ahıska Turks' tendency to preserve their ethnicity foremost rather than making social advancement their primary goal. In one aspect, private business became the economic base of a relatively high degree of personal freedom and independence. As a result, the economic liberty made its imprint on the diaspora's behavior, worldview, and inter-personal relations, including reluctance to work as part of a team. This lack of commitment to teamwork also influenced the solidarity of the diaspora community. These differences must be taken into account as we continue to work on strategies and tactics for the Korean or Ahıska Turkish movements.

## VI. Conclusion

At present, the societies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are being restructured with the titular nationalities being as the new dominant ethnic groups. Whether the indigenization process is a successful or not, the higher birthrates amongst the indigenous population coupled with the migration of the titular population from other countries will force non-titular ethnic minorities in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to accept Uzbekization and Kazakization. This development does not mean that the current nationalizing process restricts the Korean and Ahıska Turk diaspora movements

in any systematic way. Nonetheless, discrimination stemming from the nationalistic sentiment on the part of the titular nationalities can be felt in every sector of the society. The most fundamental change in the consciousness of the Korean and Ahıska Turkish diasporas in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan since the breakup of the Soviet Union has been the recognition that they have no choice but to adapt to the current state ideologies and their new nationalistic tendencies. Officially or legally they have been all undesirable in, or unable to move to, their original homelands. Consequently the majority of Koreans and Ahıska Turks in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan now seem to accept their status as ethnic minorities in the newly independent states and are adapting rapidly to their host-states. Hence these two diasporas are in the process of reconstructing their national identity or diaspora identity in the newly formed environment to unify themselves. The flow of migration has dropped off, particularly after the mid-1990s, and it has become clear that at least a significant portion of the Korean and the Ahıska Turk diasporas residing in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will remain in the region, at least for the foreseeable future. As seen from the main text, the decision to stay, however, is not necessarily a portent of assimilation. They are busier than ever before revitalizing their traditions, cultures and languages in their host-countries.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, when the Soviet Union was dissolved, many Korean solidarity associations and other diasporic activities emerged in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, recently, many people have been

uncovering their Korean ethnicity and registering themselves with Korean associations in various places in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Arguably, the driving force of the current vigorous activities of the Korean diaspora results from the abundance of well-educated intellectuals and continuous material supports from the homeland, i.e., South Korea. While the Ahıska Turks had many problems due to lack of funding and cadre during the process of the reorganizing of their associations and activities after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Korean diaspora did not face such problems during their revitalization movement. The relative lack of an intellectual stratum among the Ahıska Turkish population in comparison with the Soviet Koreans led to their organizational weakness. The shortage of well-educated urban Ahıska Turks, also with the emergence of titular people as their competitors in the economic field, made the Ahıska Turks miss their opportunity to play the role of middlemen between the host-states and homeland after the mid-1990s. Consequently, despite the Ahıska Turks preserved their ethnic identity and language far better than the Korean diaspora during the Soviet period, the Ahıska Turks diaspora movement after the 1990s is incomparably weaker than the Korean one and less active. This reveals the importance of cadre and funding in diaspora movements.

#### NOTLAR

1 He characterized national issues in the Soviet Union in his deeply cynical book *The Reality of Communism* published in 1983.

2 This study is based on field research, the core of which is based on semi-structured interviews with members of the Korean and

Ahıska Turkish diasporas in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

3 Interview with German Kim, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2003.

4 Interview with a member of the Korean diaspora, Anatoli Kim, Almaty, 2003.

5 However, there is a difference of degree between the Koreans in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Koreans in Kazakhstan tend to have more willingness compared with those in Uzbekistan. This is because, the Koreans in Uzbekistan were worried about the increasing Islamization and titular nationalism compared to relatively socio-politically liberal Kazakhstan. Such an anxiety in Uzbekistan makes less willingness to territorialize among the Koreans in Uzbekistan.

6 "Kazakhstanui Koroyoin," *Dong-a Ilbo*, May 22, 2005.

7 Many Ahıska Turks are registered as Azerbaijani, Uzbek or Kazak which makes difficult to calculate the Ahıska Turkish population. Thus, data in this table seems not accurate; moreover, Ahıska Turks are artificially and arbitrarily divided into "Ahıska Turks" and "Turks" in the original data. Thus, the Ahıska Turks' data shown in Table 4 are reorganized (combined) by the author. However, these data give some information about the knowledge of language between Ahıska Turk and Koreans.

8 The author couldn't get the exact number of schools that are giving Korean language in regular curriculum, however according to the information gathered from a member of the Korea Association, there are about 13 schools in Kazakhstan and 19 schools in Uzbekistan.

9 Also in Kyrgyzstan there are 250 students in 3 main universities, therefore in Central Asia there are around nearly 1000 students, mainly the Soviet Korean students, who are studying the Korean language.; German Kim, "Korean Studies in Kazakstan and Central Asia: the Past, the Present, and the Future," paper presented in the 17<sup>th</sup> AKSE (The Association for Korean Studies in Europe) conference, April 1995.

10 One of the interesting things about the students in the Korean departments is that most of the students are girls, boys constitute only about 10-20 percent. If we consider the role of women and their influence while raising their children this data suggests something positive to the language revival of Koreans diasporas in the future.; German Kim, "Korean Studies in Kazakhstan and Central Asia: the Past, the Present, and the Future," paper presented in the 17<sup>th</sup> AKSE (The Association for Korean Studies in Europe) conference, April 1995.

11 Interview with Vronislav Lee, Tashkent, 2005.

12 For example, the narrative of Vladimir Pak, a 26 years old Korean from Tashkent gives an idea of the issue. Vladimir grew up on the Korean collective farm in Politotdel near Tashkent and is a bilingual Russian-Korean speaker. After graduating from university, he obtained an internship with a South Korean firm in Seoul, where he worked as an apprentice for two years. There he learned to speak the standard Korean dialect and has been employed as a director of the TashCom Computer School in Tashkent for the last few years. As this is a South Korean company, his manager is a South Korean. Vladimir acts as his manager's unofficial liaison to the outside community, and he also provides translating and interpreting services for him. Vladimir considers himself very fortunate in that he grew up speaking Korean. He attributes his language skills in helping him to get the internship in South Korea and to secure employment with a South Korean company in Tashkent. Consistent with this case, many Soviet Koreans acknowledge that language abilities certainly can work in their favor.

13 Numerous protestant churches (sects) are activating in Central Asia. It is impossible to estimate them since their activities are veiled. The major protestant sects in Korea are; the Presbyterian church, Methodist church, Baptist church and Holiness church. However, there are more than 100 sects of Protestant churches in Korea.

14 Interview with Ömer Salman, the Head of Ahıska Turkish Association in Uzbekistan, 2005.

15 For example, the Ahıska Turks are running a greenhouse plantation, as a cooperative farming, in Sirdarya, Uzbekistan, which borders near Chimkent Kazakhstan, is cooperating with their compatriots in Chimkent for their product's delivery and distribution in Kazakhstan.

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