

BOOK REVIEW

Korean Diaspora across the World. Homeland in History, Memory, Imagination, Media, and Reality

**Edited by Eun-Jeong Han, Min Wha Han, and JongHwa Lee,
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The stories of the more than eight million Koreans in ethnic communities abroad remain by far the most discussed in contemporary academic literature. The stories of Korean migration are linked to almost every country and continent in the world. Hence, there is a stunning diversity of fates and characteristics in the so-called “historical and demographic context” of each individual Korean diaspora in different countries.

As a representative of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan, as well as a researcher of Korean studies and a social activist of the Korean ethnic community, I was particularly pleased to be asked to review this engaging book.

Eun-Jeong Han, Min Wha Han, and Jonghwa Lee have, in their book titled *Korean Diaspora across the World. Homeland in History, Memory, Imagination, Media, and Reality*, provided a distinctive approach to the history of the Korean diaspora across different geographical boundaries. Along with its in-depth discussion, the key features of this work include flowing discourses on understandings of homeland, homeland history, the heart’s longing for homeland, and familiar experiences. The perspective provided is deeply rooted in the sense of identity in the context of memory, and how it is preserved and reproduced in and for the next generations. The intergenerational

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transmission of ethnic values and notions of family and clan, along with ethnic history, have been exemplified by the authors through cases in Japan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Chile, the USA, and Latin America.

A particularly interesting aspect of this work is the discourse on the concept of homeland and identity through the prism of the media. In the current context of globalization, the role of the media, and especially ethnic media, is most relevant. This work is refreshing as this aspect has not always been studied in the context of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ethnic groups.

Within the context of communication (personal and public), the book is divided into two parts: first, “Homeland in personal experiences and memories: Identity negotiations and cultural adaptation among the Korean Diaspora”, and second, “Homeland in public discourses: Media use and news coverage of the Korean Diaspora”.

In my view, the narrative histories of several generations of the Korean diaspora, often spanning more than four generations, are stunning. Eun-Jeong Han's introductory chapter “Looking at the Koreans’ Global Migration Path through the Lenses of Family History” reviews the history of Korean migration to Japan, demonstrating the globalization of Korean migration through the lens of several generations. Through the oral histories, we can see generational differences in sharing or hiding personal and family stories, shaped and influenced by the interplay of receiving cultures and Korean perspectives. The chapter narrates multigenerational stories as characters take turns in different historical events as they go through stages of “migration behavior”, where the consistent threads of the longing for homeland, the difficulties of adaptation, and the Korean traits of patience and endurance weave their way through the fabric of history. Despite the nature of migration, the author highlights the simple common shared positive aspects of voluntary migration experienced by Koreans. The story of three generations of Koreans, intertwining Korea, Sakhalin, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and the USA, is a beautiful story of humanity transitioning the conceptual boundaries of nations. Thus, the authors show the irreversibility of the global migration process of Koreans.

The first chapter, “Part I, Homeland in Personal Experiences and Memories: Identity Negotiation and Cultural Adaptation among Korean Diaspora”, covers the most intimate stories, where personal experiences during adaptation are discussed with issues of identification in the host country. The oral histories and ethnographic work shine through. The stories told by different generations highlight the perception of self and care for others in the Korean diaspora. The authors anchor this discourse in the historical context. Thus, in Chapter 2 on the Korean Diaspora in Sakhalin, “Your Homeland Does Not Need You but We Do”, by Irina Balitskaya and Jae Hyung Park raise issues of “return” and identification with this or that country as a “homeland”. In my opinion, this essay on the history of the Sakhalin diaspora does not fully reflect the situation in Sakhalin, presenting the survey results of only

16 Sakhalin Koreans from different generations, while living both in Korea and on Sakhalin. The author's focus on the issues of "homeland identification" and "the question of intent to return home" for different generations is, however, enlightening. In particular, the discussion of interview data exploring "their dissimilarity with South Koreans" and "difficulties in maintaining Korean identity" due to the presence of a "Russian mentality".

The essay "Negotiating the 'Homeland', an analysis of Narrative Identities among First-Generation Koreans in Japan" by Min Wha Han, is completely unexpected. Narratives of history told by a first-generation Korean in Japan, in a setting where history was accompanied by descriptions of historical events, illustrated by over 200 photographs displayed on walls and in family albums. Despite the vast amount of contemporary research on the history of first-generation Koreans in Japan, the problems of citizenship and the identification of the concept of "homeland", this essay is original. The experience of their "identity", of their "originality" as Koreans, told in their own words through emotion with tears, is an asset of such an ethnographic work.

The stories of families divided between the US and North Korea were the most memorable in this chapter's series of essays. "Families Beyond Borders: Discourse of Homeland, Diaspora, and (Up)Rooted-Identity" by Jonghwa Lee, sheds light on the irreparable loss of life from the 1950-1953 Korean War beyond the devastating material impact of those years. As a result, this essay reveals the tragedy of four generation's collective trauma in a family divided by war. Until today, these people, like the generation of Korean Americans from North Korea, remain "invisible, silent and forgotten". The oral history of the characters in this essay revives part of the forgotten history of the Korean War and attempts to unite families divided by different political and ideological states. Many families share similar stories of tragic events. This family's story read like a letter from the past, of Japanese colonialism and the Korean War, filled with bitterness of loss and condemnation. Tragic historical narratives of divided families in Korea are a reminder of the contemporary pain felt by those still divided, and families separated by current global events. This interesting discussion context resonates throughout the oral histories with analyses and statistics on divided Korean-American families.

The novel and unconventional approach to exploring the notion of homeland and identity through cuisine is refreshing. The study of cooking as a semiotic system for creating personal and group identity was explored in the essay "Homeland in the Kitchen: The Intersection of Food and Diasporic Identity" by Jaehyeon Jeong. The author shows food as a marker of personal and ethnic identity. Through the prism of oral histories and quotations from interviews, we see an emotional reflection of identity and relation to homeland "through similarities and differences". This approach explores constructing ethnic and national identity and transcultural belonging. A facet is perhaps common to other Korean diasporas. While recognizing ethnicity through Korean food, ethnic Koreans

still only feel the semiotic role of Korean food in the context of the host culture, as has been shown in the case of American mainstream culture. As a result, through the definition of Korean food, the author shows an evolving diasporic identity, distinct from both Korean and American.

The tragic stories of lost Korean children, adopted during the Korean War, are then explored. The difficulties of Korean adoptees are discussed in the chapter “Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Discursive Burden of Establishing Individual and Family Identity” by Sara Docan-Morgan. The author explores various difficulties through the prism of racism, societal bias, and personal psychological trauma and how they are overcome. With a degree of caution, it is possible to define adopted Korean children as a part of the Korean-American diaspora, which has had different patterns of migration in different historical periods.

The stories of Koreans in Chile were examined through in-depth interviews of half and second generations aged 28-36 in the essay “The 1.5 and 2nd Generations in Chile: Am I a Korean?” Wonjung Min. The material in the ethnographic notes shows the identity trends of Koreans in Chile. As in many other Korean ethnic groups, young Koreans are aware of the differences in character and mentality between Koreans and Chileans. An indicative factor for the ethnic identity of Koreans in Chile can be seen in the fact that out of 11 people, only one person's marriage partner was Chilean. In the remaining cases, Koreans in Chile preferred to marry ethnic Koreans, although the number of interethnic marriages of Koreans in Chile is increasing.

The second section, “Part II: Homeland in Public Discourses: Media Use and News Coverage of Korean Diaspora” focuses on the analysis of media and public discourses. The authors discuss issues of Korean diaspora identity and concept of homeland. The discourse of Kazakhstan's Korean ethnic group was framed using the example of the national Korean newspaper *Koryo Ilbo* in the essay “Identity Formation of the Korean Diaspora, *Koryo-Saram*, in Contemporary Kazakhstan. An analysis based upon Articles of *Koryo-Ilbo*” by Jinhye Lee. Thematic analysis of the articles of the Korean newspaper was based on a sample from 1991. According to the author, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan's independence was the “trigger of transformation”. The analysis is based on a sample of several articles, divided into thematic blocks. In my opinion, this division may be conditional, as the understanding of “Oralmans”, came much later than 1991 and was also related exclusively to the representatives of the Kazakh diaspora. In this period, where a significant time interval is covered, it is erroneous to combine such long processes as integration and Kazakhization, which have a slightly different direction of implementation. Over such large stretches of time, the author attempts to “measure the identity of Koreans in Kazakhstan”.

For this purpose, the author “collected all articles related to Kazakhization and multi-ethnic integration for their analysis and sorted them into three categories: first, the policy of Oralmans, the

policy on the return of foreign Kazakhs and articles on immigration and migration; second, language policy and articles on Kazakh history and culture for Kazakhization; and third, articles about the ANC, a political organization of multinational integration”.

In my view, the approach to evaluating Koryo-Saram ethnic identity over such long periods through only the “issues about Oralmans”, the “process of Kazakhization”, and “multinational integration” is somewhat limited because, as such a long period is examined, many additional influential events occurred during this time. These influences on the course of ethnic identity preservation activities should be mentioned, and it is necessary to better frame why these aspects were highlighted over such a long time period.

The public discourse of Koreans in Japan was discussed through “hate speech” in the essay “Trash to the Trash Cans, Koreans to the Korean Peninsula! Diehard Racism and the Rise of Hate Speech against Korean Residents in Japan” by Soo-Hye Han.

It is interesting to analyze the multigenerational use of social media by Korean Americans to construct diasporic identities. Thus, the essay “I am Korean-American: Constructing Diasporic Identities on a Korean-American Facebook Group and Pinterest Board” by David C. Oh demonstrates the role of the online community in discussing the meaning of “homeland”.

Continuing the discussion on the role of online communities, EunKyung Lee's essay “Online Community for Information, Support, and Transnational Activities: a case of Missy USA among Female Korean Im/migrants in the United States” discusses the role of ethnic/diasporic media in empowering Korean/American women in the United States.

In the article “Context Matters: The Effect of Homeland Media Use on the Generation of Social Capital among Korean Communities in the US” by Sohyun Choi and Claire Shinhea Lee, the authors analyzes migrants' use of English and Korean media and how such patterns of media use are associated with different types of social capital within and across different ethnic communities.

The author focuses on diasporic cultural production rather than diasporic media consumption by 1.5 generations of Koreans in Latin America, particularly Mexico, by examining “Coreano Vlogs: Diasporic Media and the Politics of Asian Representation in Latin America” by Benjamin M. Han. The Korean-Latin American product was studied to understand the uniqueness of the Asian experience of Koreans in Latin America. Diasporic identity was examined through the lens of cultural production on a YouTube channel with 2.6 million subscribers and almost 300 videos in Spanish. Coreano Vlogs is a visual testament to how a close interaction between diaspora, transnationalism, and globalization shapes the identity and subjectivity of younger generations of Korean immigrants and renders new ethnicities and diasporic identity formations that are in constant oscillation in search of what it means to be an itinerant cosmopolitan Korean-Latin American.

I deeply admire the editorial work, which was eloquent in expressing the unique “accents” of the Korean diaspora within different geographic boundaries. In my opinion, the significant “voices” of researchers from among the local Koreans bring their own emphasis, creating a special and original contribution to this study.