

TERRITORIALIZING THE *KORYO SARAM* :
NEGOTIATING SOUTH KOREAN PERSPECTIVES ON HOMELAND AND DIASPORA

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Geography and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date defended: April 17, 2015

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ABSTRACT

Diasporas are increasingly prevalent as globalization has increased transnational interaction between homelands and host-states. The territorial state as a container of the nation is challenged by transnational interactions of diasporas, although titular nation-states continue to territorialize detached ethnic minority groups within homeland rhetoric. This thesis evaluates diasporic identity and transnational belonging of the *Koryo saram* – or Koreans of the former Soviet Union – to explore how South Korea utilizes its assumed role as ethnic homeland to expand its economic influence in Central Asia. During the Joseon period (1392-1910) northern Koreans experienced socio-cultural marginalization that encouraged migration to the Russian Far East, and in 1937 the entire *Koryo saram* population of 200,000 ethnic Koreans was deported to Soviet Central Asia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, South Korea has made significant efforts to reintroduce nationalized Korean culture and history in order to revitalize the ‘Koreanness’ of the *Koryo saram* to expand its global economic influence and reinforce political legitimacy on the peninsula, but South Korean government policy does not recognize the *Koryo saram* as belonging within the Korean ethnos. South Korea primarily maintains interactions with the *Koryo saram* to infiltrate burgeoning Central Asian economies, diversify its energy needs, and promote the cultural soft power of the ‘Korean wave’ (*Hallyu*) despite the socio-cultural division between the “homeland” and the *Koryo saram* diaspora. This separation of the diaspora from a collective myth of homeland and homeland return reveals the “liminal diasporism” of adaptive diasporas in an age of transnationalism and globalization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my advisor Alexander Diener, for his encouragement, guidance, and constructive criticisms, as well as for introducing me to the region of Central Asia and for the opportunity to write a thesis in line with my personal interests;

I also want to thank Barney Warf and Kyoim Yun for their involvement and support in this endeavor, and the many other professors, staff, and fellow students from the departments of Geography and East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Kansas;

A special thanks is extended to scholars who supported my pursuit of studying the *Koryo saram*, particularly Valeriy Khan, German Kim, Elena Yugai, Steven Lee, and Lisa Min;

Lastly, but furthest from least, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to my parents and siblings for encouraging my endeavors, my sweetheart Lauren for her unceasing support and endurance, and our newest addition Franklin Alfonso, for staying up with me through many long nights and inspiring me with a renewed sense of purpose.

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Lawrence, Kansas

April 2015

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NOTE ON KOREAN ROMANIZATION

For transliteration of the Korean *hangul* script I have used the Revised Romanization of Korean system, rather than the more standard McCune-Reischauer Romanization system, because of its simplicity for both Korean and non-Korean speaking readers alike. The Revised Romanization system avoids the excessive hyphens and apostrophes of which the McCune-Reischauer system uses in excess.

Korean names are written with the surname preceding the given name. I have followed this practice with historical figures (e.g., Sin Chae'ho) throughout the text, excusing commonly referenced names (e.g., Syngman Rhee). To avoid confusion I have also cited Korean authors with given names first, followed by the surname (e.g., Chong Jin Oh, rather than Oh Chong Jin).

While the Revised Romanization system eliminates diacritics and adheres to Korean phonology more closely than the McCune-Reischauer system, it should be noted that while the Revised system refers to the ancient Korean kingdom of 'Goryeo', in the McCune-Reischauer system the same kingdom is rendered as 'Koryŏ' – the root derivative of the *Koryo saram*.

SEMANTIC EXPLANATION OF THE *KORYO SARAM*

The *Koryo saram* are one of the largest groups within the claimed Korean diaspora community. The term “*Koryo saram*” literally means “person of Goryeo.” During Korea’s Three Kingdoms Period (57–668 CE) the largest, northernmost kingdom on the peninsula was Goguryeo. During the Unified Silla period (668–935 CE), the Korean kingdom of Balhae (698–926 CE) was established within former Goguryeo territory. Throughout its history, Balhae was referred to by neighboring tribes and Chinese kingdoms as Goryeo (a derivative of Goguryeo) (Kim 2011). After the fall of Unified Silla, the subsequent rulers resurrected the name of Goryeo, and the kingdom lasted from 918–1392 – before it was supplanted by the Joseon rulers of the Yi dynasty (1392–1910). The English name “Korea” is derived from the term Goryeo and the modern-day states of North Korea and South Korea are officially the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK), respectively. In Korean the name of South Korea (Daehan Minguk) translates to “Nation of the Great Han,” while North Korea has revived the name of Joseon (Joseon Minjujueu Inmin Gonghwa-guk or Joseon People’s Democratic Republic). Although both countries claim to be the Korean “homeland,” neither title designates a place for the “people of Goryeo,” the *Koryo saram*.

Central Asian Koreans refer to themselves as the *Koryo saram*, while South Korean political and academic discourse refers to Central Asian Koreans as *Koryo-in*. German Kim and Ross King (2001) explain the usage of ‘*saram*’ in *Koryo-mal* (a dialect of Korean spoke by the *Koryo saram*) as more linguistically productive than the modern Korean term ‘*in*’. Although literal meanings of ‘*saram*’ (native Korean) and ‘*in*’ (Sino-Korean) are synonymous, general usage specifies ‘*saram*’ as an individual, while ‘*in*’ refers to a more collective or group identifier.

In this context even the semantic distinctions between Central Asian Korean and South Korean terminology designates that South Koreans separate the *Koryo saram* as a distinct ethnic group.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Embedded within global processes de/re-territorialization is a realignment of identity among diaspora communities. Currently the term “diaspora” is used to reference any group of migrants beyond the political borders of their respective nation-state. Understanding diasporic identity of transnational groups is vital to recognizing the role of diasporas as intermediaries between historic homelands and current states of residence. My thesis explores the diasporic identity of the Central Asian Korean diaspora, known as the *Koryo saram*, to explore the question: How does South Korea utilize its assumed role as homeland of the *Koryo saram* diaspora to expand its economic influence in Central Asia? Employing geographic and diaspora theories, I analyze South Korea’s perspectives on ethnic Koreans residing in former Soviet Central Asia and its role as historic and ethnic homeland.

Chapter 2 situates the *Koryo saram* within theories of diasporic identity, ethnicity, and territorial belonging. This chapter highlights the standard works on diasporas by Safran (1991), Clifford (1994), Tololyan (1995), and Cohen (1996), as well as more contemporary works by Brubaker (2005), Shuval (2000), and Brinkerhoff (2009) to discuss the validity of the *Koryo saram* as a diaspora. Issues of identity surrounding detached ethnic groups compel questions pertaining to the constructed links between people and place (homeland conceptions).

The fundamental principle in defining whether or not a detached group is diasporic lies within the dynamics of dispersal from, attachment with, and myth of eventual return to a homeland. While a majority of diaspora communities can be associated with a titular nation-state, the existence of a geopolitical entity is not a qualifying factor in identifying diasporas (Carter 2004; Clifford 1994; Malkki 1995). Detached group identities are predominately based on the preservation, and when necessary, recovery of traditions and customs to maintain a sense

of attachment to the homeland, and geo-political discourse promotes a titular state as an assumed homeland of ethnic diaspora groups, despite constructions of imagined homelands (Blunt 2007; Cohen 1996). This assumption is based on the sovereignty and power given to states within the nation-state system.

A diaspora's connection with its homeland must be strong enough to overcome host-land assimilation and acculturation, although globalization and information technologies are making it increasingly possible for diaspora groups to maintain identity beyond nation-state boundaries (Alonso 2006; Anderson 1991; Brinkerhoff 2009; Lie 2004). Transnational characteristics of diasporas stretch beyond the relations of the detached group and their titular homeland to form triangular relationships between host-land, homeland, and diaspora group. These relations increase transnational connections, indicating that diasporas will become powerful players in international politics and economics (Brubaker 2005; Butler 2001).

A general history of the Korean peninsula during its most prominent dynastic periods in pre-modern and early modern history, including the Japanese occupation and post-war division, is discussed in Chapter 3. While portions of this chapter may be in chronological order, the purpose is not to simply regurgitate historical facts, but to situate the *Koryo saram* within an historical setting to understand the ethno- and socio-cultural division that separates the *Koryo saram* from the "homeland."

A major focus of this chapter is the misappropriated title of "Unified Silla" in reference to the ancient kingdom of Silla that emerged as a major power on the peninsula during the 7th century, and the role of the Korean kingdom of Balhae (Ch. Bohai) in what is today North Korea, Manchuria, and the Russian Far East. Over-emphasis on the unification of the peninsula by Silla (668-935) can be attributed to anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric to reinforce the Korean nation as

pre-dating the Japanese nation. While Balhae is often obscured, it is necessary to understand its role in ancient Korean history in order to properly form a conception of an imagined homeland for the *Koryo saram*.

Chapter 3 also highlights the *Koryo saram* within the context of peninsular Korean history in order to frame the contexts of implications for interaction between homeland and hostlands, leading into the final discussion of the role of the *Koryo saram* diaspora on South Korean-Central Asian relations. The focus of Chapter 4 analyzes the perception of the *Koryo saram* within South Korean discourse and addresses the questions: Do the *Koryo saram* consider South Korea as their ethnic homeland? What is the role of South Korea in constructing the *Koryo saram* identity? How do South Korea's interactions with the *Koryo saram* reflect the role of diasporas in the current and future global world? Each of these questions leads to the conclusion of how South Korea utilizes its assumed role as the *Koryo saram* homeland to expand its global economic influence and reinforce political legitimacy on the Korean peninsula.

Assuming the role of ethnic homeland, South Korean government organizations and businesses have exploited ethnic connections with the *Koryo saram* to gain access to the burgeoning energy economies of Central Asia. While ties between South Korea and this component of its claimed diaspora community have clearly strengthened since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, interactions between the "homeland" and the *Koryo saram* should not be considered an ethnic or cultural revival, per se (Khan 2013). Although South Korea assumes the role of homeland, a lack of repatriation, diminished sense of belonging, and differing ethnic characteristics among the *Koryo saram* devalue this claim.

This thesis establishes that South Korea's interest and involvement with the Central Asian Koreans is predominately economic: the "homeland" relies on Central Asian states'

economies to diversify its energy needs (Calder and Kim 2009; Fumagalli 2012; Hwang 2012). While this issue has been addressed from a politico-economic lens, my work examines the topic from an ethno-cultural perspective to evaluate how South Korea utilizes its cultural soft power to infiltrate Central Asian economies, despite an increasing ethno-cultural division between the “homeland” and the *Koryo saram* diaspora. South Korea maintains ties with the Central Asian republics under the assumed role of ethnic homeland of the *Koryo saram*, but innately designating South Korea as such ascribes to frailties of modern geopolitical dichotomies of the nation-state system. Discussing identity formation of the *Koryo saram* may illuminate identity construction of adaptive diasporas, potentially creating a new category of what I refer to as “liminal diasporism.”

I have applied my Korean language skills to consult South Korean government documents, historic texts, and public media reports relating to the *Koryo saram*. These primary sources provided me with particular insight regarding South Korea’s assumed role as historic homeland and perceptions of the *Koryo saram* diaspora group. With assistance from Dr. Valeriy S. Khan, I also conducted surveys via online questionnaires with *Koryo saram* diasporans in Uzbekistan to gather opinions regarding perception of South Korea as “homeland.” This research is highlighted in Chapter 4.

Although the scope of this paper does not explore the interactions between the *Koryo saram* and North Korea, it is significant to note that the North Korean regime – like South Korea – has maintained an anti-colonial historical identity based on the turn-of-the-century nationalist movement (Schmid 2002). Yet North Korea has not extensively pursued relations with the *Koryo saram* in order to limit external influence and maintain ideals of isolationism, although most Korean ex-patriots in Japan returned to northern Korea following the Japanese surrender

(Ryang 1997, 2012). In the 1940s Stalin sent a group of ethnic Koreans from the Soviet Union to assist Kim Il-Sung in establishing the North Korean communist government. Eventually, the Kim regime's interpretation of communism veered from the Soviet model, and the repatriated Soviet Koreans were purged. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea established diplomatic and economic relations with the Central Asian republics. During this time, North Korea competed with South Korea for political legitimacy via interactions with the Korean diaspora community, including the *Koryo saram*. After significant efforts North Korea could no longer compete financially with South Korean efforts in constructing cultural centers, making investments, and conducting telecommunication broadcasts, and eventually ceased the majority of its interactions.¹ Though North Korean ventures have fallen short of any significant impact in developing a sense of "homeland" among the *Koryo saram*, the communist state continues to assert this role to establish its political legitimacy on the peninsula (Kim and Khan 2001; Oh 2007; Tae 2001).

¹ A major outreach effort is the annual "Songdowon International Children's Camp," during which North Korea hosts *Koryo saram* teens and young adults for a week to learn about ethnic Korean culture and experience the "homeland."

CHAPTER 2:

TRANSNATIONALISM AND TERRITORIALITY: DIASPORAS IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

The term ‘diaspora’, until a relatively recent expansion of usage, was a specific reference to the dispersion of the Jews from their inherited Holy Land (Cohen 1996; Safran 1991). According to Robin Cohen (1996), the original meaning of the term ‘diaspora’ referred almost exclusively to the forced dispersion of the Jewish community, and he argued a necessity to break from the purely victimized usage of the term in academia. Accompanying global de/re-territorialization is a “reorientation of identity” among diaspora communities (Butler 2001; Carter 2004; Cohen 1996; Diener 2009). The break that Cohen (1996) desired has come to incorporate a multitude of peoples and nations spread across the globe, although the term “diaspora” is now bandied about in reference to any group that wanders beyond the political borders of its respective nation-state.

Judith Shuval (2000; see also Malkki 1995) claims that diaspora is a type of migration that will become more commonplace in an increasingly globalized world, although she attributes this expansion to its newly acquired “broad semantic domain” rather than an actual increase of diaspora groups. In order to properly designate the *Koryo saram* as a diaspora, an analysis of the qualifications of each detached group and the – or what they perceive to be the – homeland is paramount. This chapter includes a brief history of the *Koryo saram* preceding an analysis of territory, homeland, and diaspora theory.

Diaspora: Defining a “Travelling Term”

A ‘diaspora’ can be defined as “the dispersal of a people from its original homeland” (Butler 2001, p.189). Despite its original context, referring almost exclusively to the spread of Israelites from their inherited ancestral homeland, the terminology surrounding ‘diaspora’ has

extended its semantic reach to include immigrants, expatriates, refugees, and guest-workers (Brinkerhoff 2009; Brubaker 2006; Clifford 1994), but according to Kim Butler (2001, p.194), “diasporas have unique characteristics distinguishing them from other types of [migrant] communities.”

The trouble with defining diaspora is that it is a “travelling term” (Clifford 1994, p.302). This phenomenon is referred to by Rogers Brubaker (2006) as “the ‘diaspora’ diaspora,”² and Robin Cohen (1996, p.514) addresses the issues as the “inevitable dilution of ‘diaspora’ as a terminology,” albeit with the caveat that “diaspora” is used in “a variety of new, but interesting and suggestive contexts.” In constructing a distinct definition of diaspora, the dynamic nature of identity must be considered. Comparing case studies with an ideal type of diaspora may distract from the histories of certain social groups that, during certain times throughout history, have been subject to a “wax and wane in diasporism” (Clifford 1994, p.306).

Regardless of the ambiguous expansion of “who” or “what” may be categorized as diasporic, the classic works on the subject refer to a fairly standardized set of features to define “diaspora.” James Clifford (1994) argues against establishing an “ideal type” because comparative case studies often detract from specific histories and experiences (see also Goetze 1998). The discourse surrounding diaspora has expanded to “encompass a multitude of ethnic, religious and national communities living outside of the territory to which they are historically ‘rooted’” (Carter 2004; Clifford 1994). While scholars may amend, delete, or emphasize various portions pertaining to their specific study group, the three basic features of a diaspora include (1) a dispersal – traditionally forced – from an historic homeland to multiple destinations, (2) a constructed and maintained concept of a homeland, whether actual or imagined, and (3) a

² Brubaker (2005, p.1) refers to the “‘diaspora’ diaspora” as “a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space.”

conscious group identity (Butler 2001; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1996; Safran 1991). A major feature amended to the traditional definition is lived experience in a host-land over multiple generations (Butler 2001; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1996).³ In an effort to expand Safran's (1991) six point outline of diasporic characteristics, Cohen (1996) included features that allow a more expansive adaptation of the terminology. The following is a comprehensive list of Cohen's (1996) nine features of diaspora:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions,
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions,
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements,
4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation,
5. The development of a return movement which gains collective approbation,
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate,
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group,
8. A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement, and the possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Despite the variable application of specific features in defining 'diaspora', the fundamental principle in defining whether a detached group is diasporic lies within the integrated dynamics of dispersal from, persistent attachment with, and myth of eventual return to a "homeland." Brubaker (2006) argues that in modern discourse a mere dispersion across space is enough to classify a population as diasporic, stretching the semantic value of the term until it has lost its utility in defining and distinguishing a particular phenomenon. It is common practice for detached group identity to focus on historic homelands – real or imagined – as a means of cultivating or maintaining group cohesion (Anderson 1991; Blunt 2007; Shuval 2000).

³ Though he does not argue specifically that a multi-generational aspect is necessary in defining a diaspora, Clifford (1994) does note that a diaspora is not intended to be temporary.

Despite the characteristics of transnationalism, diasporas continue to be defined in a binary relationship against the nation-state. According to Cohen (1996, p.516), “transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims... in the age of cyberspace a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts, and through a shared imagination” (see also Brinkerhoff 2009). Diasporas are both ethno-national and transnational, although transnationalism does not imply diasporism (Blunt 2007; Cohen 1996). The transnational role of diaspora stretches beyond the relations of the dislocated group and their titular homeland to form triangular relationships between the assumed ethnic homeland, the diaspora group, and the host-land-turned “home” state. These relations increase transnational connections and break the binary discourse surrounding geo-politics.

Constructing Community, Homeland, and Return Myth

Diasporas consist of multiple groups stemming from a single ethnic background that generally share a common perception of an historic homeland. These dispersed diaspora groups are referred to as diaspora communities. Brubaker (2005) makes it clear that the term “communities” should only be used within quotes – which may be true for almost any term used within the social sciences, including “diaspora.” The insistence of quotes by Brubaker (2005) distinguishes the dynamic aspects of community, identity, and – by extension – diaspora construction. Ana Maria Alonso (1994, p.380) argues that “by positing a mystifying separation of the political and the social, scholars have objectified and personified the state,” and this trend exists in diasporas as well. Diaspora groups and communities are not ethnically homogenous. Discourse surrounding diasporas must overcome the fallacies of ethnic purity within a given group and homogenous cultural populations; these misconceptions establish ethnicity as

instinctive and primordial, but “ethnicity is *invented* in the course of cultural, political, and economic struggles” (Alonso 1994, p.392, emphasis added). Ethnicity is therefore a functional attribute created as an effort to distinguish themselves from ‘others’, making ethnic distinction vital in maintaining a diasporic identity (Clifford 1994). In his discussion of “otherness,” Stuart Hall (1993) emphasizes the heterogeneity of cultural identity within ethnic communities. The *Koryo saram* are unlike other Koreans in linguistic, social, and cultural customs, yet are branded as being within the Korean diaspora community that, for the most part, did not exist until after the creation of the modern South Korean state in 1948.

“Diaspora” is not simply a label, but a symbol of historic – and present – struggles to establish and solidify identity (Clifford 1994). According to David Goetze (1998, p.61), “group identity results from an evolved mechanism designed to propagate genes identical by common descent, whether those genes reside in oneself or in others.” Goetze’s (1998, pp.60-61) study suggests that this “mechanism” encourages the value of kinship attachments, which in turn increases group attachment. However, the power of ‘kinship’ in communities can stretch beyond directly shared ancestry, creating a cohesive group identity, although “one should, of course, be wary of projections of contemporary ethnic categories backward in time...more complex than such formulations imply” (Malkki 1995, p.21; see also Alonso 1994; Goetze 1998; Lie 2004). Like nations, diasporas perceive and construct their identity based on common history, language, and even past achievements of their society and culture (Shuval 2000, p. 44).

Another key component of group identity, especially regarding diasporas, is ethnicity. Alonso (1994) and Butler (2001, p. 214) further emphasize that ethnicity is not only important as a group identifier, but is vital to status and power in state societies. But diaspora identity stretches beyond the physical realm, “into the psychosocial reality of diaspora” (Butler 2001, p.

207). A belief in kinship and affiliations with ethnic groups, particularly in a diaspora context, create ethnic boundary markers (Alonso 1994; Butler 2001; Lie 2004). The experiences that form the core of diaspora identity are highly subjective to the group defining itself within its identified parameters (Clifford 1994). Hall (1993) divides cultural identity into “shared culture” and “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’.” Shared cultural identity revolves around a nation’s ability to construct a common view of historical experience, in lieu of or despite actual history, in order to establish a unified community (ibid; Anderson 1991). This imagined history is especially valuable to diasporic identity and homeland myth. Identities are created and manipulated within actual and perceived histories, by those within and without, but are also based on the preservation and, when necessary, recovery of traditions and customs in order to maintain a sense of attachment to the homeland (Shuval 2000).

Contact within diaspora communities “independent of contacts with the homeland, is vital in forging diaspora consciousness, institutions, and networks” (Butler 2001, p.207). The identity of a diaspora group partially stems from the “self-awareness” that comes as that group discovers the existence of its place within the greater diaspora community, whether self-constructed or inferred (Butler 2001). Diaspora consciousness suggests recognition of the historical and cultural connection to the homeland, while it includes a simultaneous recognition of the unique community existing between members of the diaspora group.

In his work on territory and human territoriality, Robert Sack (1986, p.58) notes that “the connection between a people and the place they occupy becomes extremely close.” People and their social identity become intricately woven together with place, due to the vital connection between territorializing space and group formation (Alonso 1994; Lie 2004; Sack 1986). While the most basic sense of place can simply refer to being in a specific location, important events

and places – with religious, familial, and social value – create an identity of the territory, intertwining the homeland and its inhabitants (Abrahams 1986; Bruner 1986; Geertz 1986; Kapferer 1986; Turner 1969, 1986). Homelands play an integral role in forming diaspora identities; cultural and social traditions are intrinsically tied with place (Blunt 2007; Butler 2001; Tuan 1979). Place, especially when it becomes a homeland, is responsible for the formation of group identity, although the community bestows the meaning (Sack 1986; Tuan 1979).

Diasporas continue to be defined in a binary relationship against the Westphalian nation-state despite transcendence of geo-political boundaries and characteristics of trans-nationalism (Brubaker 2005; Carter 2004; Malkki 1995). Many groups referred to as diasporas today became such due to negative affiliations with the political nation-state in their homeland. Diaspora discourse should not be expanded to include non-ethnic groups while excluding groups who have a homeland transcending geo-political borders (Butler 2001; Clifford 1994). Current discourse surrounding diasporas is actually more concerned with the “conceptual homeland,” in part because the actual homeland may no longer exist (Brubaker 2005; Safran 1991).

The binding feature of all diasporas is the concept of an ethnic homeland, and the essence of the homeland is centered on the concept of return (Butler 2001; Safran 1991). The homeland return myth is essential in the formation of diasporic identity and the diaspora experience (Butler 2001; Safran 1991). Clifford (1994) argues that immigrants seek to make their destination a new homeland, while the diaspora seeks to return to their previous homeland, or at least maintains the myth of return. Whether the homeland exists in actuality or conceptuality, the homeland return myth is essential to diaspora identity because it “serves to solidify ethnic consciousness” (Safran 1991, p. 91; see also Blunt 2007). Despite technological advancements and the creation of non-concrete bonds among diasporas and homelands, the importance of place – especially

‘homeland’ – is still a valuable feature in defining diaspora (Brubaker 2005; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1996). Butler (2001, p.205) notes that “to some extent, diasporan representations of the homeland are part of the project of constructing diasporan identity, rather than homeland actuality.”

The myth of a return is more fundamental to the diaspora identity than its actual possibility of physically returning (Butler 2001). Although thoughts of an historic homeland are inherently nostalgic, they express “a stubborn hope” of eventual return (Clifford 1994). Clifford (1994) describes the maintenance of a homeland return myth by a diaspora group as “lived tension.” While residing in another space, the dispersed recollect and seek to return to a former place (Shuval 2000). Diaspora groups seek to maintain “a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements” (Safran 1991, p.83). Ascribing to this mythological conception of a homeland allows diasporas to imagine an ideal homeland that current and future generations may look to in order to make the difficulties in life more tolerable (Safran 1991).

According to Clifford (1994, p.319) diasporic identity is created by unequal political and economic regimes, although group consciousness is produced by cultures and histories in “collision and dialogue.” The “collision and dialogue” of diasporas and their home-/host-land relationships are not extinguished after initial dispersion, and both homeland and host-land are primary contributors to the formation and development of diaspora consciousness and identity (Butler 2001). All parts of this triangular relationship are dynamic. A diaspora’s connection with a homeland must be strong enough to overcome host-land assimilation in part or in whole, and thus diaspora groups to maintain identity beyond the nation-state; in essence, there is a creation of “pluralistic nationalism” (Clifford 1994, p. 310). Sean Carter (2004, p. 62) claims

that there is a “double re-territorialization” among diasporas. This phenomenon comprises an effort to maintain the homeland while being “rooted (or routed) through the territory of the nation of residence.” According to Carter’s (2004) “double re-territorialization,” diasporas remain in a liminal state, simultaneously belonging and not belonging to both the homeland and host-land.

The ethnic homeland of the *Koryo saram* was a dynastic Korean peninsula. Currently the peninsula is divided politically and culturally between North and South, and the *Koryo saram* reside predominately in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The *Koryo saram* (re)established group identity based on altering homeland perception and adaptation in ever-changing host-lands. Chong Jin Oh (2007) articulates an adaptive identity within the *Koryo saram* diaspora. Originally the *Koryo saram* transitioned to life under Tsarist Russia, then Soviet rule, and now independent Central Asian states. Following their removal from the Far East in 1937, Soviet Koreans underwent intense assimilation, challenging the persistence of their identity (Diener 2006, 2009).

Origins and Identity of the *Koryo Saram*

The *Koryo saram* first arrived in the tsarist Russia in the mid-nineteenth century (Diener 2009; Gelb 1995; Kim 2003/4). Due to successive famines on the peninsula and social marginalization by the ruling monarchy, northern Koreans from what would become North Hamgyeong Province continued large-scale migrations into Russia’s maritime region and settled into already prominent Korean villages (Diener 2009; Fumagalli 2012; Kim 2001; Pohl 1999). Initially tsarist Russia maintained a tolerant stance on foreign migrants and allowed access to farmland, and the *Koryo saram* became prominent in agriculture, industry, and politics. By 1883 it is reported that there were over 32,000 registered Koreans in the Russian Far East (Gelb 1995),

with a potential of almost 58,000 more that were either illegal or non-citizens (Diener 2009). While in the Russian Far East the *Koryo saram* “developed a strong social group” with different and distinct traditions unlike other Koreans in linguistic, social, and cultural customs (Oh 2006). Even in the early days of migration along the Russo-Korean border there are records of Russian speaking Koreans (Kim and King 2010).

Russification, and later Sovietization, may appear to be cultural deformation because of changes in language, culture, and political ideology, but the *Koryo saram* left dynastic Korea facing intense government discrimination and Russification was seen as the modernization many of the *Koryo saram* desired. Due to their socio-cultural marginalization within the “homeland” during the Joseon Period (1392-1910) and subsequent life in the Russian Far East, the *Koryo saram* established a distinct culture from that of peninsular Koreans (Schmid 2002; Lee 1965; Robinson 2010; Wells 2002).

After the tsarist defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan claimed the Korean peninsula as a protectorate, and tsarist Russia enacted policies forcing ethnic Koreans to obtain Russian citizenship and instituted partial relocation of Koreans away from the borderlands (Diener 2009; Gelb 1995; Kim 2003/4; Kim 2001). Protectorate status of the homeland continued to encourage ethnic Koreans to emigrate from the peninsula, and the formal annexation of Korea into the Japanese Empire in 1910 brought another swell of immigrants to Russia, increasing anxiety within the Tsarist government (Diener 2009; Gelb 1995; Pohl 1999).

The Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula encouraged Russo-Koreans to become “the enemies of the Bolsheviks’ enemies” and during the Russian Revolution of 1917 the *Koryo saram* supported the Bolsheviks (Diener 2009; Gelb 1995; Kim 2001). Most Koreans in the Russian Far East saw the Revolution as a means of liberating their homeland, but the Soviet

Koreans saw the opportunity vanish with Japanese annexation of Manchuria in 1931. Further Japanese expansion raised alarm in Soviet Russia, and brought about the relocation and forced naturalization of Koreans within Soviet borders, although neither action halted illegal immigration (Gelb 1995; Pohl 1999).

Due to the loss of a physical homeland, the Korean nationalist movement made great efforts to unify the diaspora community on behalf of Korean independence, but were unsuccessful in mobilization (Lee 1965). Many of the groups within the Korean diaspora community were either too distant (i.e., in the United States or Europe), while others were overly proximal (within the Japanese Empire's realm of influence) to have any effect. In the case of the *Koryo saram*, the original community included multi-generational Koreans who had left the peninsula decades before the popular nationalist movement and were unconcerned with assisting what was perceived to be a discriminatory and oppressive monarchy, while many of the new migrants – some of which were caught up in the nationalist cause – fled to Manchuria when allowed by the Soviet government before deportation (Lee 1965).

Soviet mistrust of the *Koryo saram* is generally ascribed to the impending threat of Japanese expansionism and potential of espionage infiltration from ethnic Koreans sympathetic to Japan (Gelb 1995; Kim and King 2010). While Korean spies were utilized by both Russian and Japanese military forces (Caprio 2010), German Kim (2001) proposes that the deportation was not a radical decision based solely on Soviet national security, but that the deportation of the *Koryo saram* was a continuation of former tsarist policies. Although there was some fear of Korean political subversion, immigrants provided major agricultural development, cheap labor, and “stabilizing effects of industrious, unpretentious, and law-abiding citizens” (Kim and King 2010, p.258). Other major issues – aside from potential espionage – in the deportation of the

Koryo saram include the Soviet plan to begin rice cultivation in Kazakhstan, labor shortages in the Central Asian Soviet republics, and the Soviet military exploitation of infrastructure left behind by the Koreans (Kim 2001). All things considered, “the basic reason was rooted in the high-level domestic and foreign policies of Stalin’s totalitarian regime” (ibid). In 1937 a two-phased removal project of the entire population of the *Koryo saram*, nearly 200,000 ethnic Koreans, was loaded onto trains for a month-long relocation at the onset of winter and became the first forced deportation of an entire ethnic group orchestrated by the Stalin regime (Gelb 1995; Kim 2001; Pohl 1999).

During the Soviet era, the *Koryo saram* underwent a massive identity shift, suffering “great losses in the realm of national culture” (Oh 2007, p.157). Increased Sovietization in Central Asia initiated the simultaneous creation of new cultural tradition and identity, further distinguishing the *Koryo saram* from their ethnic kin (Kim 2003/4). The onset of perestroika allowed a “revival” of traditional Korean culture and identity, and numerous South Korean cultural centers and Christian churches were established in Central Asia (Kim and Khan 2001). Despite the desire and efforts to reacquaint the *Koryo saram* with ‘true Korean culture’, the main problem contributing to the lack of success of the cultural centers within the various Central Asian states is attributed by Kim and Khan (2001) to the *Koryo saram* “possessing their own culture” and being “in no way obliged to imitate the culture of the Korean peninsula.” Despite their socio-cultural differences, certain trends are manifest among the *Koryo saram* that are common throughout the Korean diaspora community, forming a bridge between host-lands and homeland.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, both Koreas sought to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the individual Central Asian republics and, although North Korean

ventures have fallen short due to a lack of economic stability and investment, South Korean business investments have brought the Central Asian Koreans closer to their ethnic kin (Kim and Khan 2001; Oh 2007; Tae 2001). The *Koryo saram*, like other groups within the Korean diaspora community, have a high rate of urbanization within their various host-lands. Within Central Asian states urbanization is a fairly new phenomenon, due to the residual effects of Soviet rule, but nonetheless, a vast majority of the younger generations of the *Koryo saram* are migrating to major city centers (Oh, 2006; Tae 2001). Along with this major urban migration is the common trend of entrepreneurship among Korean minority groups, as well as a tendency to relocate to areas with a higher concentration of their ethnic kin (Oka 2001).

Despite ethnic kinship and similarities in socio-economic tendencies, as well as South Korean business ventures and the establishment of Korean cultural centers within Central Asian states, the connection of the *Koryo saram* and South Korea cannot be seen as a “cultural revival” due to the drastic social and cultural divergence between Central Asian Koreans and South Koreans (Kim 2003/4; Kim and Khan 2001). For example, communication technologies that usually contribute to a diaspora’s connection with its homeland, but Korean telecommunication systems focus operations more on the Northeast Asian and North American regions, rather than Central Asia, and radio and television networks available to the *Koryo saram* are broadcast in Korean or English, despite their Russian-speaking audience (Brinkerhoff 2009; Kim 2003/4; Kim and Khan 2001; Oh 2007).

The dissolution of the Soviet Union created multiple host-lands, primary agents in diaspora identity construction. Central Asian states nationalizing their new territories create rifts between the *Koryo saram* (Oh, 2007). According to Cohen (1996) compulsory means tend to alienate the diaspora group; generally the stronger the compulsion, the less the diaspora group

tends to acculturate and assimilate into host-land society, but this does not seem to be the case in regards to the *Koryo saram*. Soviet Koreans were able to maintain traditional economic roles such as rice cultivation and fishing, despite major changes regarding language and ideology during Sovietization (Kim 2003/4; Diener 2006).

After removal from the Far East, Soviet Koreans underwent intense assimilation, challenging the persistence of their identity (Diener 2009, 2006). In the decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become clear that Soviet and, now, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz nationalist policy has separated the *Koryo saram* from their “cultural and ethnic roots” (ibid, p.158; Kim 2003/4). Diener’s (2006) study on the concept of homeland among Korean-Kazakhstanis reveals an interesting trend in identity perception. A majority of the *Koryo saram* in his study view Kazakhstan as their homeland, despite an increase in “ethnic culture and ethnic history” awareness (p. 207-209). According to surveys distributed among the *Koryo saram* in Uzbekistan, I found that while all those polled consider the Korean peninsula as the homeland of ethnic Koreans, they do not consider it the *Koryo saram* homeland. Instead, among the *Koryo saram* that responded, all considered place of birth (Uzbekistan, Russia, and the former Soviet Union) as their homeland.

Despite diaspora conception and establishment of identity partially on the basis of a common cultural history (Shuval 2000), it is clear that the multi-generational feature amended to identify diasporas is a two-edged sword. Surely the *Koryo saram* have become more aware of themselves as a distinct socio-cultural element within the Korean ethnic community, but they simultaneously seem to maintain Central Asian state identity more than Korean ethnic identity. So are the *Koryo saram* still a diaspora? They exhibit some of Cohen’s (1996) criteria, yet many maintain the notion of respective Central Asian states as their homelands. Members of particular

ethnic groups may have intent and opportunity to assimilate and relinquish their prior identity in an effort to acquire greater social mobility or marry outside of their ethnic group, which slowly diminishes the sense of a distinguishable diaspora; in essence they transform their notion of homeland. Cohen (1996, pp. 516-517) argues that “a strong attachment to the past or a barrier to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained.” But where is the homeland of the *Koryo saram*? Despite Oh’s (2007) belief that South Korea holds the power to “revitalize” the Korean-ness of the *Koryo saram*, evidence reveals South Korea’s ethno-cultural interactions are a guise for economic pursuits. The lack of return migration following the dissolution of the Soviet Union is a fair indicator because the *Koryo saram* do not maintain a sense of belonging in North or South Korea.⁴ The Korean peninsula has undergone such dramatic changes in recent history that any ideal homeland existing in that space would be unfamiliar to the *Koryo saram*.

⁴In comparison, Sonya Ryang (1997) notes that there were over 2 million Koreans in Japan in 1945, while only around 600,000 remain today after significant repatriation to North Korea.

CHAPTER 3:

IMAGINED HOMELAND: NATIONALIST CONSTRUCTION OF KOREAN HISTORY

For centuries the Korean peninsula has been vital to geopolitics in Northeast Asia and a crossroads of empires. Historically, Japan viewed Korea as an opportunity to expand its territory into mainland Asia, Russia sought the abundant warm-water ports of the peninsula, and China has seen Korea as an independent, yet subordinate, appendage to its various dynasties. Throughout its history, Korea has been a land of turmoil, reflected in the Korean lamentation, “when whales fight, the shrimp’s back is broken.” Over four thousand years ago Central Asian tribes migrated toward the Pacific coast and established various centers of East Asian civilization. The Buyeo tribe settled in modern-day Manchuria, and eventually migrated southward into the peninsula. The physical landscape of the Korean peninsula provided a haven, surrounded on three sides by the sea and protected by the mountains to the north, where the Buyeo people found a place to develop a unique culture and an ethnic homeland.

This chapter situates the *Koryo saram* within an historical setting to discuss the ethno- and socio-cultural division between the “homeland” and the diaspora group. While it foregoes some historical events vital to Korean history, society, and culture, the purpose is to highlight South Korean nationalist discourse that disrupts senses of belonging among the *Koryo saram*, as well as expanding perceptions of the historic homeland beyond the Korean peninsula.

***Dan-gun* and the Origin of the Korean Ethnos**

“The *Old Record* notes that in olden times Hwanin’s son, Hwanung, wished to descend from Heaven and live in the world of human beings. Knowing his son’s desire, Hwanin surveyed the three highest mountains and found Mount T’aebaek the most suitable place for his son to settle and help human beings. Therefore [Hwanin]...dispatched [Hwanung] to rule over the people.... At that time a bear and a tiger living in the same cave prayed to Holy Hwanung to transform them into human beings. The king gave them a bundle of sacred mugworts and twenty cloves of garlic and said, ‘If you eat these and shun the sunlight for one hundred days, you will assume human form.’ Both animals ate the

spices and avoided the sun. After twenty-one days the bear became a woman but the tiger, unable to observe the taboo, remained a tiger. Unable to find a husband the bear-woman prayed under the altar tree for a child. Hwanung metamorphosed himself, lay with her, and begot a son called Tangun Wang-gom.”

– Dangun Creation Myth from *Samguk yusa (History of the Three Kingdoms)* 1:33-34, translated by Peter H. Lee (UCLA) (Lee and De Bary 1997, pp.5-6)

There are anthropological and archeological arguments about the origin of proto-Korean peoples, but according to Korean nationalists, ethnic Koreans first came to the peninsula from the Heavens when Dan-gun established the ancient kingdom of Old Joseon (Kr. Gojoseon) (Lee and De Bary 1997; Pratt 2007; Robinson 2007). The historian-monk Iryeon (1206-1289) first recorded the myth (excerpt quoted above) that recounts Hwanung’s decent from heaven to the “world of man” and his marriage to a she-bear, who in turn bore Dan-gun, the founder of the first Korean kingdom and father of the Korean nation (Lee and De Bary 1997).

The Dan-gun myth established its influence in Korean culture during the onset of Japanese dominance within Northeast Asia. B.R. Myers (2010) argues that the legend of Dan-gun was revived as a direct result of the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1905 to combat the Japanese propaganda machine highlighting Korea as a region of Japan, which maintained that the Korean language was a dialect of Japanese. In response, Dan-gun emerged as a nationalist propaganda tool. According to Myers (2010, p.27), although the ancient myth had been “largely ignored for centuries . . . , the tale gave the Koreans their own pure bloodline.” Nationalist discourse not only revitalized the myth of Dan-gun, but embellished the record with geographic symbols (geomancy) in order to reinforce the claim of the peninsula as a homeland for Koreans. The Korean foundation myth identified Mt. Baek-du as the birthplace of Dan-gun in 2333 before

the Common Era.⁵ This is viewed by Myers (ibid) as a “counterpart to Japan’s sacred Mount Fuji” as the nationalist movement sought to distinguish their identity from their colonial overlords’. The vitality of this myth in Korean society is exemplified by the 1909 formation of a shamanic-based Korean religion known as Daejonggyo (Religion of Great Ancestors or Dangunism) by Na Ch’eol (1864-1916). This religion was based on the worship of the mythological founder of the Korean nation and was a main organizational network of Korean nationalist movements (Ch’oe et al. 2000, p. 298; Schmid 2002). Although the role of Dan-gun – whether as a god or as the progenitor of the nation – was disputed, after the 1910 Japanese colonization membership rose from 20,000 to 300,000 in 1914 (Schmid 2002).

The ancient establishment of the Korean nation by Dan-gun was vital in providing a myth of a consanguineous “imagined” ethnicity and nation (Schmid 2002). Keith Pratt (2007, p. 33) notes nationalist rhetoric during the colonial period reiterated the Dan-gun myth to a point that “under conditions of colonial occupation...it began to acquire a veneer of historical respectability,” and has since gained clout as the progenitor of the Korean nation.

A Forgotten Homeland: The Kingdom of Balhae

The Three Kingdoms period (221-265 CE) is highlighted by geopolitical intrigue between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean kingdoms. Each kingdom on the Korean peninsula maintained founding legends, of which Dan-gun was only one (Lee 1965; Pratt 2007). Although the boundaries were fluid and borders shifted constantly, the largest of these three kingdoms⁶ was Goguryeo, which occupied Manchuria, portions of the Russian Far East, and over half of the

⁵ During the rule of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), the cycle of kingdoms were kept according to the Dan-gun calendar (Lee and De Bary 1997, p.258).

⁶ During most of the three kingdoms period, there were actually five kingdoms located on the Korean peninsula – the fourth and fifth being Gaya, located between Silla and Baekje, and Buyeo to the northwest of Goguryeo, in central Manchuria.

Korean peninsula (Kim 2011). The other two kingdoms were Baekje and Silla. The kingdom of Baekje controlled territory ranging north of modern-day Pyongyang and extending southward and westward of an uneven line down the center of the peninsula, eventually terminating at its southernmost end. Silla occupied the smallest territory of the three kingdoms; its capital was located at Gyeongju and the territory occupied the current South Korean provinces of north and south Gyeongsang (Pratt 2007). These three kingdoms vied for control over the Korean peninsula, allying with both China and Japan. In 660 CE, combined Silla and T'ang (China) forces took the Baekje capital of Gongju and acquired its territory. Less than a decade later, in 668 CE, the Silla–T'ang alliance overtook Pyongyang and the southernmost territories controlled by Goguryeo. This expansion is hailed as the first unification of Koreans, and the unified kingdom of Silla ruled the peninsula for over two centuries (668-918) (Pratt 2007; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002).⁷

⁷ The term “unification” is in quotations because the nationalist-historian Sin Ch'aeho refutes “Unified Silla” on the grounds that it did not conquer Manchuria, an historically Korean territory (Schmid 2002, p.231).



Map1: During the Three Kingdoms Period (57-668 CE) the major kingdoms of Goguryo, Baekje, and Silla vied for control of the Korean peninsula – which was accomplished by ‘Unified Silla’ in 668. Created by Aaron Taveras, Nov. 2014.

Despite the designation of the historical period of “Unified Silla,” the territorial extent of this specific Korean kingdom was limited to south of the Phae River (now the Daedong River) (Henthorn 1931; Kim 2011). Neither Silla nor T’ang obtained control of the former expanse of the Goguryeo kingdom (Kim 2011). After the fall of Goguryeo in the year 668, a successor kingdom was established in 698 by Dae Jo-yeong (Ch’oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000; Henthorn 1931; Kim 2011; Roehrig 2010). Silla is credited with unifying the Korean peninsula, and by extension the Korean nation, and within South Korean history and nationalist discourse the existence of Balhae is de-emphasized in relation to Unified Silla (Kim 2001; Ro 2000).

After the establishment of the kingdom of Jin (698/699 CE) by Dae Jo-yeong, the official recognition of the kingdom by the T’ang Empire in 713 CE required a renaming of the kingdom to Balhae (Henthorn 1931; Kim 2011). T’ang influence was reflected in Balhae society and government structure, but Balhae was considered an independent kingdom (Henthorn 1931; Kim 2011; Kim 2011; Roehrig 2010; Song 1995). Balhae maintained diplomatic and economic ties with T’ang, Japan, and various Central Asian Turkic and Mongol tribes, including the Khitan (Henthorn 1931). Balhae scholars studied alongside those of T’ang and Silla; Balhae also sent Buddhist monks to study in T’ang (Henthorn 1931; Kim 2011; Song 1995). Balhae extended its power to its fullest during the reign of Dae Heom-mu (737-793 CE) by establishing firmer relations with the T’ang Empire, forming a military alliance with Japan, and establishing embassies throughout Turkic Central Asia and Persia (Kim 2011; Noh 1997). According to Taedon Noh (1997), Balhae served as a continuation of Goguryeo in the political view of the Central Asian kingdoms and tribes; Balhae representatives referred to the kingdom as ‘Goryeo’ internationally and it was recognized as a political and economic power.

Before the fall of Balhae in 926, Khitan tribes raided the borders and forced many citizens of Balhae to flee to the southern neighbor kingdom of Goryeo (918-1392), which had overthrown Silla (Pratt 2007; Ro 2000; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002). Subsequent migrations from formerly controlled Balhae territory occurred sporadically until 934 CE, and were openly received as citizens of Goryeo (Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000; Henthorn 1931; Pratt 2007; Ro 2000). “The perception of Parhae [Balhae] history was influenced by the notion of succession from a preceding dynasty to a following dynasty sanctioned by the Heavenly mandate” (Ro 2000, pp.125-126). Goryeo viewed Balhae as a branch of the line from Goguryeo and both could be seen as legitimate successor states (Noh 1997; Ro 2000). The legitimacy of Balhae as a successor state to Goguryeo was maintained by ethnic, cultural, and geographic consciousness and identity (Ro 2000).

Former citizens of Balhae participated in the political bureaucracy of Liao, Jin, and Northern Song dynasties for over 400 years after their kingdom's demise in 926 and can be considered “a considerable force in northeast Asian history” (Kim 2011, pp. 287-288; see also Ro 2000). In *History of the Divine Tan'gun's People*, the nationalist-historian Kim Gyoheon defined the Balhae, Liao, Jin, and Qing dynasties as paramount to the history of the Korean nation as the northern branch of Dan-gun's lineage (Schmid 2002), as well as refuting the nationalist construction of the “unification” of the Korean nation by Silla.

In order to maintain notion of the Korean nation as primordial and pre-dating the Japanese nation, nationalist rhetoric emphasized the unification of the peninsula by Silla. While this discourse maintains prominence in Korean history today, some Korean nationalist during the colonial period saw the exclusion of Balhae from Korean records as a grave omission (Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000). One of the most prominent Korean nationalist advocates was the

historian Sin Ch'aeho (1880-1936). According to Sin the nation must be an “historically defined ethnic entity” (cited in Schmid 2002, p. 181), although “history was not of the state, but of a more fundamental matter, the *minjok*,” or Korean nation (Schmid 2002, p. 190). Sin saw ethnic identity as an inherent, not constructed, aspect of history, and the Korean nation was presented as a “natural entity” (Schmid 2002, p.182). According to Michael Robinson (1986) Sin Ch'aeho encouraged national identity to be constructed through an emerging historical consciousness.

Sin's “new” national history was based on Korean control of Manchuria. From Dan-gun's ancient kingdom of Gojoseon and the Balhae kingdom's succession, Manchuria played a major role in Korean identity and took “center stage” (Schmid 2002). Balhae (698-926) was considered by certain Korean nationalists as a distinctly Korean kingdom founded by a Goguryeo general, and Sin argued that Balhae and Goryeo were parts of a singular whole, indicating the nation transcends current and historic borders (Kim 2011; Schmid 2002). The vitality of Balhae expands the perception of a Korean historical homeland beyond the peninsula, and establishes Balhae territory as an extension of the perceived Korean ethnic homeland.

In Schmid's (1997) analysis of Sin Ch'aeho's works regarding a “Korean Manchuria” there is evidence of a distinct ethno-national tie of Koreans to former Balhae territory. According to Roehrig (2010) Balhae as a Korean state is intrinsically linked to the establishment of Korean national identity. Balhae controlled territory was vital to the identity of Koreans in regards to the Dan-gun myth and the origin of Koreans as an ethnicity, further validating Balhae as a successor state of Goguryeo (Roehrig 2010; Schmid 2002). The Korean nation should not be merely consigned to be classified as a “peninsular nation” (Kr. *bando-guk*), although it maintains an historical basis within records of ensuing dynasties – especially in regards to Korean rulers being subordinates to the Chinese Son of Heaven (Schmid 2002). But Schmid

(ibid) notes the emphasis that Sin Ch'aeho places on the success of the Korean state and its control of Manchuria:

How intimate is the connection between Korea and Manchuria? When the Korean race obtains Manchuria, the Korean race is strong and prosperous. When another race obtains Manchuria, the Korean race is inferior and recedes.... This is an iron rule that has not changed for four thousand years.

Schmid (2002) notes that Sin is basing the validity of Korean identity, as an ethnicity, singularly on its territorial possessions, particularly Manchuria. Despite his emphasis on territory, Sin sees the elimination of Balhae from Korean records as more of a psychological defacing of identity, rather than purely a loss of territory. Not only are Manchuria and the Russian Far East vital to the history of Balhae, but these territories pertain greatly to the identity of Korean ethnicity, particularly the *Koryo saram* and their imagined homeland conception beyond the peninsula.

Global Emergence of the Hermit Kingdom and the Formation of Korean Nationalism

The kingdom of Joseon (1392-1910) succeeded Goryeo, and after multiple invasions by Japanese and Manchu forces the Joseon dynasty sealed its borders and was labeled “the Hermit Kingdom” (Lee 1965; Pratt 2007; Robinson 2007). The Yi dynasty ruled the Korean peninsula from 1392 until Japanese occupation in 1910 (Lee 1965; Robinson 2007). Although Confucianism was introduced during the Three Kingdoms Period, it was re-furbished as a government policy during the neo-Confucian Joseon (Lee 1965). Neo-Confucian government policy was a major factor in the development of Korean national identity and in initial emigration of the *Koryo saram*. Joseon rulers neglected the dynamic global interactions and were therefore unable to defend against future threats of Russian and Japanese territorial expansions (Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000).

Joseon society valued cultural development and maintenance rather than economic and political efficiency (Lee 1965). Sino-centric cultural tradition was upheld by the ruling elite and

was a root cause of the nationalist movement (Robinson 1986; Schmid 2002). Nationalists attributed many of Korea's faults to social, cultural, and political subservience to China (Schmid 2002). The waning years of Joseon rule were marked by corruption and civil disorder (Schmid 2002). The elite class was seen as the cause of Joseon's demise, and by extension, the eventual colonization of Korea (Schmid 2002). Even during the turn of the century, as nationalist tendencies were becoming popular in Korea, many of the uprisings were more concerned with reforming the government rather than unifying behind the anti-Japanese banner (Lee 1965). During Joseon rule, class distinction fractured regional and social interactions until Japanese occupation forced government and social reforms, dismantling the Korean aristocracy (Lee 1965; Wells 2002).

Prevalent regionalism resulted in marginalization and resentment in the northern provinces (Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000; Lee 1965; Schmid 2002). During Joseon rule, the northern region of Korea experienced political discrimination and "social and cultural abuses that ... drove them to become extremely resentful" (Kim 2011, pp.8, 11-12; see also Lee 1965). Such political discrimination led many northern Koreans to be more accepting of foreign, predominately Western, ideas and ideologies, becoming valuable cultural capital to foreign interests within the peninsula (Kim 2011; Moon 2010). Mark E. Caprio (2010) argues that northern Koreans at the time were known for their mistrust of central governments, self-reliant spirit, and independent disposition. Northern Koreans "did not recognize time-honored Confucian hierarchies," which may account for political marginalization and distrust by the Joseon ruling elite (Caprio 2010, p. 307). Citizens in Korea's northern provinces were considered "enemies of the state" because of their forward-thinking attitudes and peripheral geographic location (Caprio 2010; Kang 2001; Kim and King 2010).

Regionalism was not only manifested in political objectives, but in national identity as well. Creating a nation is reliant upon imagining a homogenous community (Caprio 2010). Despite the nationalist claim of an unbroken succession of consanguineous identity, regionalism and regional stereotyping maintained potency into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the Yi dynasty implemented public policy in an effort to nationalize Korean identity, the programs focused on how to “civilize” the northern provinces (Kim 2011).

During Joseon rule trans-boundary migration was common and the northeastern provinces of Korea were a “frontier zone of interaction” (Robinson 2010, p.22-23). The porosity of Joseon’s northern borders denotes the lack of government control in the northern region, as their political influence was incongruent with territorial boundaries (Robinson 2010; Schmid 2002). “The Russo-Korean ‘contact zone’ [extended] from northeast Korea into the Russian Maritime Region” and Korean migration into the Russian Far East began in the mid-1860s, with several waves of migration into the region until the 1920s (Kim and King 2010). Russia expanded into the Far East in 1856, taking control of territory with major Korean populations (Lee 1965). Russians and Koreans had regular contact along the border zone and migrants from northern Korea were drawn to the Russian Far East because of its Western ideals and opportunities (Kim and King 2010; Schmid 2002). The Russo-Korean boundary was fluid before the Japanese occupation (Schmid 2002) and seasonal migrant workers were allowed unhindered travel between the two countries (Bougai 1996). Many Koreans had moved from northern provinces across the Tumen (Kr. Duman) and Yalu (Kr. Amnok) rivers in order to escape famine, and by 1882 had established prominent settlements within Manchuria and the Russian Empire (Schmid 2002). Vladivostok hosted a major Korean immigrant population by

the 1870s, and it is even argued by Kim and King (2010) that South Ussuri krai was merely an extension of Korea's northwestern region.

As Chinese dominance in Northeast Asia waned, the Meiji Restoration brought Japan to the forefront of the Northeast Asian regional power structure. The newly modernized Japanese Empire and expanding Tsarist Russia were poised for expansion into the now exposed Korean peninsula (Robinson 2007). In 1876 the Hermit Kingdom was coerced into international society by Meiji Japan (Lee 1965; Robinson 2007; Robinson 1986). Until then Korea was on the fringe of the world system, only exercising international political relations with China, until the Treaty of Kanghwa “exposed Korea to unprecedented outside influences” (Robinson 2007, p. 15; see also Robinson 1986). The opening of Korea to Western ideas and ideologies moved Korean historians to view their past through a new lens, applying the idea of the nation-state to their dynastic history and reexamine their culture as a homogeneous society and nation (Robinson 2007; Robinson 1986). After their defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Qing dynasty was forced to recognize Korean independence and Japan seized the opportunity to obtain territory on the Asian mainland (Lee 1965; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002). The Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) forced changes to Korea's political identity, and the recreated identity provided a new scope wherewith to view their history.

After centuries of mimicry, many new nationalist Koreans saw China as “lacking civilization” because of the new Western ‘other’ of comparison (Schmid 2002, p. 57). This decentering of China from Korean politics, culture, and society was “integral to the rearticulation of Korean identity” (ibid), and the years following the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki saw a significant increase of Korean people's interaction with foreigners, particularly within the northern provinces (Lee 1965; Moon 2010). The Japanese occupation of Korea was an issue of

sovereignty, highlighting the integrated issues of nationalism and identity (Wells 2002, p. 186). Japanese victory changed regional geopolitics in Northeast Asia. Eliminating China from geopolitical activity in the Far East left the fate of Korean sovereignty to Japanese and Russian territorial expansionism and brought the peninsula to the forefront of international rivalries (Lee 1965; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002; Spector 2007). Japan began to enforce the Meiji ideology of Pan-Asianism⁸ to “protect Korean sovereignty” and reform the Korean cultural system; Russia was seen as a threat to “Asians” and it was thought necessary to “remove Russian influences” from Korea (Moon 2010; Park 2010; Schmid 2002).

After the Sino-Japanese War, Japan and Russia sought dominance in the wane of Chinese influence in Korea, as well as Manchuria (Schmid 2002). Russia and Japan both sought territorial expansion, but “everything that Japan and Russia did in Korea was in the name of Korean independence” (Lee 1965). Japan offered Russia predominance in Manchuria, but Korea’s warm-water ports drew Russia into further involvement on the peninsula, eventually leading to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) (Lee 1965; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002). Victory over Russia provided Japan with an unimpeded opportunity to occupy Korea (Lee 1965). Prior to, and during the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was seen as the protector of Korea, rather than a threat to national sovereignty (Caprio 2010; Schmid 2002). Even during the war, many Korean newspapers supported Japan, linking regional identity to racial differentiation, and necessitating Japanese victory for the good of all Asians (Schmid 2002). After Japan’s victory over Russia, Korea became a suzerain of Japan (1905), and Japan oversaw management of

⁸ Pan-Asian discourse was not popular in the northwestern provinces, and northern Koreans, unlike southern Koreans, held avid anti-Japanese sentiments, while maintaining high regard for Russia (Kim and King 2010, p.281; Moon 2010, p.208).

Korean foreign relations (Lee 1965; Schmid 2002). Establishment of Japanese hegemony in Northeast Asia brought Western ideas to the Joseon dynasty. The de-centering of China and nationalist discourse introduced via the Meiji Restoration “were integral to Korean self-knowledge” (Schmid 2002, p. 142). In 1906, after victory over Russia, Japan was recognized as the de facto ruling state in Asia after King Kojong’s efforts in the Hague failed to eradicate the Japanese from the peninsula and create the Korean nation-state (Schmid 2002).

The 1910 annexation of Korea saw the territorial body of the Korean nation “stolen” yet the imagined identity was vital to the nationalist movement (Schmid 2002). During the Japanese occupation the Korean nation was de-territorialized, but place maintained its role in national and diaspora identity, thus history, language, and religion became intangible symbols of the of the nation, as well as the peninsula (Schmid 2002). Not only did the Japanese take control of the state government, but Korea’s territory – the homeland – no longer belonged to the Korean nation. Nationalist discourse in Korea expanded “in an age when the peninsula had been incorporated into the global capitalist order with its universalizing, modern ideologies” (ibid, p.198), and as Korean sovereignty dissolved, the nation uncoupled itself from its territory, and Korean identity was legitimated beyond the peninsula (Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002).

During the colonial period Korean territory and identity was shaped by Western discourse of the nation-state. The Japanese Empire instituted colonial ideology in an effort to form a more unified Japanese-Korean identity marked by cultural, social, and political assimilation; Japanese sought to annex Korean territory, as well as Korean ethnicity into that of the Japanese nation through Pan-Asian discourse (Caprio 2010; Kang 2001; Robinson 1986; Schmid 2002). Due to the lack of a sovereign state, Korean nationalists soon shifted from a state-centric view of the nation to an ethno-centric view (Schmid 2002). The nationalist movement saw the development

of a Korean nation-state as necessary to ethnic survival (Robinson 2007; Robinson 1986). According to prominent nationalist leaders, Koreans were not yet sophisticated enough in their sense of patriotism or sense of national identity to maintain a sovereign nation-state (Robinson 1986).

Early Korean nationalists insisted that the historical bond between Korea and China had to be re-evaluated and the process of what Andre Schmid (2002, p. 55) calls “decentering the Middle Kingdom” brought about the “sustenance of a pure culture.” Cultural detachment from China allowed the Korean national identity to (re)construct its history as an independent state, no longer under the shadow of neighboring China. This decentering from politics, culture, and society was “integral to the rearticulation of Korean identity” (Schmid 2002, p. 57; see also Robinson 1986). The historic interconnection of Korean symbols to China was not a true foundation for the nationalist movement, and thus nationalist movements became motivated to focus on a geographic, place-based foundation of Korean identity (Schmid 2002). Schmid (2002, pp. 60-61, 175) notes that distinction of Korean nationality was distinguished “almost wholly by its spatial source,” yet after colonization by Japan and the loss of the territorial identity, Korean nationalists sought to establish an historically based national identity. During this time of historical reconstruction, the Dan-gun myth emerged as a national identifier and provided a foundational myth for the kingdom of Ancient Joseon (Gojoseon) – the “oldest of the peninsular kingdoms” – and the Korean nation (Schmid 2002, p.175).

Not until the establishment of Korea as a protectorate did the term *minjok* (nation) enter into popular usage in Korea, even among nationalists; even the Tonghak Rebellion (1894-1895) formed without the literal sense of the Korean nation (Moon 2010; Schmid 2002). Like the nation itself, the terminology of ‘nation’ was not conceived until after colonization. In its

earliest conception and designation, the Korean nation was territorially bound to the peninsula, ruling out inclusion of the earliest dispersions within the “nation” (Schmid 2002).

The Tonghak Rebellion is often viewed as the first Korean nationalist movement, although this is highly debated. The Tonghak Rebellion should be seen as a religious learning movement centered on xenophobia, although aspects of the movement were surrounded by a misguided nationalist sense of ethnic identity (Lee 1965). In reality, the Tonghak Rebellion did more for Korean nationalism because of its historical timing rather than its role as a political movement. At a time when the Joseon dynasty was too weak to quell the rebellion, the Tonghak Movement provided the Japanese Empire with the opportunity to move troops onto the peninsula (Lee 1965). Consequently, efforts by the Tonghak Rebellion to further alienate the Korean peninsula from the outside world were the prime forces in introducing Meiji-style reform via Japanese occupation.

Michael E. Robinson (1986, pp. 35-36) notes that Korean nationalism was constructed through a “systematic examination of the sources of Western strength, while simultaneously criticizing their own tradition as a source of weakness.” In retrospect, nationalists and intellectuals viewed the restrictive and closed-door economic and political policies as detrimental to the development of the Korean nation and state (Robinson 2007). Schmid’s (2002) discussion concerning the de-centering of China provided a significant alteration in Korean world view, and consequently, their new national identity (Robinson 2007). Essentially, Korean nationalism was not nationalistic at all, but a revolution against the Yi dynasty 500-year long rule. It was actually not until the First World War came to a close and discourse of national self-determination reached Korea that the populace identified itself – even then, only those involved with the movement – as a “nation” (Kang 2001). While Robinson (2007) argues that the nationalist

movement was merely an effort at internal regime change, he also supports Caprio's (2010) argument that the demonstrations were no more than an independence movement. The integration of the Korean independence movement and development of nationalism highlight the role of the Japanese 'other' within the construction of Korean ethno-national identity.

In light of these views, the March 1st Movement is popularly considered the first large-scale Korean nationalist movement (Caprio 2010; Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000; Robinson 2007; Schmid 2002; Spector 2007). Chung-Sik Lee (1965) notes that it was only after the March 1st Movement that nationalism found value in Korea. Yet even after March 1, 1919, the push for nationalist reform failed to take root on a large scale (Lee 1965; Wells 2002).

The residue of the Hermit Kingdom government policies and Tonghak Rebellion remained in the Korean nationalist rhetoric, ensuring xenophobia as a prime construction of the movement (Lee 1965). Korean nationalists were so concerned with eradicating the Japanese that it was the only item on the agenda (Spector 2007). As Japanese annexation of Korea persisted, the nationalists encouraged the diaspora to wait until the homeland was liberated, for "without a nation ... it was not possible to have a home" (Schmid 2002, p. 251). In regards to the *Koryo saram*, various attributes of the homeland can both facilitate and obstruct connections with the diaspora. Xenophobia and ethnocentricity remain prevalent in South Korean political and nationalist discourse, alienating even the Korean diaspora community. South Korean xenophobia is manifest in the government's "overtly and continuously announced ... intention to the Korean diasporas that it would not repatriate its compatriots in [Central Asia]" (Oh 2007, pp. 167-168). Butler (2001, p.209) argues xenophobia caused "reprisals against expressions of diasporan (as opposed to patriotic) nationalism in the same countries that facilitate diasporan networking through accessible telecommunications technology."

Despite Korean suzerainty and later annexation, the process of establishing Japan as the external ‘other’ had not spread universally throughout the peninsula, exacerbating the lack of solidarity among Koreans, even within the nationalist movement (Khan 2001; Lee 1965). Modern nationalism in Korea began as a movement against the Yi dynasty rather than in defense of the Korean nation and was a product of post-Japanese annexation (Lee 1965). Following annexation, the Japanese became the essential ‘other’ for the nationalist movement to create Korean ethnic and national identity (Lee 1965; Park 2010; Wells 2002).

During the height of the nationalist movement in Korea (1930s), there was a major effort to validate the nation through historic cultural accomplishments and precedence of political independence and unification (Ch’oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000). The emergence of state nationalism required social roots, and it was this “complex search for new political ideas, a strengthened sense of national identity, and an examination of the Korean tradition itself” that agglomerated into modern Korean nationalism (Robinson 1986). Nations are not intrinsically tied to state boundaries, yet nations maintain territoriality by the establishment of place-based identity, and place holds a significant role in national identity. Although Koreans held social perceptions of place within the peninsula, the ideology of territorial sovereignty had not yet been introduced (Schmid 2002). Thus, place-based identity maintains vitality within the nationalist discourse while simultaneously being non-nationalist.

Korean nationalist leaders noted that “the people were not at a sufficiently high level of consciousness to join in a common national cause” (Wells 2002, p. 185). During colonization, Japanese anthropologists highlighted ancient Korean kingdoms as sources of regional identity (i.e., Goguryeo (northern) v. Baekje and Silla (southern)), yet a cultural connection of unified

Korean identity rested solely on the Dan-gun myth (Caprio 2010). Even the Korean language was not yet considered vital to the nation.

Language plays a vital role in the construction of social identity, and is an indicator of a nation's cultural unity, but normalization and unified standards of the Korean language were constructed in the 1930s, well into the Japanese colonial period (Ch'oe et al. 2000; King 2010). The Korean alphabet, what is now known as *hangul*, was first created by King Sejong in 1443. During Joseon rule the elite classes sought to distinguish themselves by the continued usage of *hanmun* (Chinese characters used in Korean) as a type of class distinction of education. What is now vital to one's Korean-ness was not yet established as an essential attribute of the Korean nation (Schmid 2002). The *hangul* script did not gain vitality as an ethnic identifier until the nationalist independence movement, to the point that Sin Ch'aeho "challenged the nationality of any Korean who did not [have command of the national script]" (ibid, p.68).

In assessing the vital link between language and identity, Ross King (2010, p.173) claims that "'script nationalism' is one of the defining characteristics of modern Korean identity." Despite this seeming homogenizer, northern provinces historically maintained distinct dialect and pronunciation within the Korean language, and while the nationalist debates of normalizing the Korean language ensued, the soon-to-be deported *Koryo saram* were estranged from the linguistic changes and developments of what remains as the most significant identifier of Korean nationalism and ethnicity (King 2010, p.146). While the *Koryo saram* continued to speak Yukchin Korean in Far East Russia, adoption rates of the Russian language were high among the *Koryo saram* even prior to deportation. After deportation the *Koryo saram* Korean linguistic identity was rapidly diminished due to forced Russian language learning and Korean language

education restrictions. Loss of language is not merely a “simple depletion of communication tools,” but a diminishing of identity, culture, and tradition (Dadabaev 2013, p. 1043).

The *Koryo Saram* within the “Homeland” History

In the early twentieth century there were significant Korean populations in the United States, Mexico, Japan, and Manchuria, but the largest diaspora population was in the Russian Far East (Schmid 2002). Initially, emigration was viewed as “cultural disinheritance” as fear of cultural disintegration or adulteration emanated throughout nationalist discourse and there was “supposed cultural frailty of anyone who crossed the border” (ibid, pp. 237-240). Cultural assimilation caused a lack of Korean prominence in Manchuria and the Russian Far East, and maintenance of a “national essence” was encouraged beyond the peninsula (ibid, p. 239).

Despite the break from territorial necessity in regards to national identity, geographic proximity to the peninsula was still regarded as a greater sense of ethnic belonging, and “space and identity were deemed isomorphic” (Schmid 2002, p.239); thus the *Koryo saram* were seen as less ‘Korean’ after their deportation. Even historically, border porosity and distance from the capital was seen by the ruling class as a cultural dilution and political radicalism according to the Yi dynasty (Kim 2011, p.10). This perception led to “social marginalization and political discrimination” because of peripheral geographic location from the capital (Kim 2011). According to nationalist discourse, “culture...was best rooted in the nation’s soil,” and the dichotomy of peninsular–diasporic Korean ethnicity has continued since its conception in the early twentieth century (Schmid 2002). While detachment from the state allows for the “rethinking of nationness,” there exists a notion of inherent disconnect with culture and identity (Malkki 1995); according to hard-boiled Korean nationalists the outlook of the *Koryo saram* was “no longer thoroughly Korean” (Lee 1965, p. 161).

Korea changed in the extreme during the colonial and post-colonial period, and has changed even more since post-war division (Lee 1965). The idea of the ‘nation’ transcends state borders, and both northern and southern Korean regimes claim to represent all Koreans (Schmid 2002). Korean regimes maintain language and territory as nationally necessary and those not belonging to the southern portion of the peninsula are stigmatized. Korean history and national identity are still concerned with anti-colonial discourse and xenophobic tendencies that it are detrimental to post-colonial identity formation in South Korea and diaspora relations (ibid, p.268).

Between establishment of the protectorate and annexation most leaders of the nationalist movement fled to China, Russia, and the United States, but despite their claims as the bastions of ‘Korean-ness’, their ideologies, values, and beliefs were “Americanized, Russianized, or Sinocized,” and the nationalist movement lost its claim as custodians of the Korean culture, ethnicity, and nation (Lee 1965; Malkki 1995; Wells 2002). Modern Korean nationalism was “born” after a reconstruction of history, an identity the *Koryo saram* did not help to create (Robinson 1986, p.49). Koreans claim uniform ethnic identity, and Japan encouraged this to further its colonial purposes, yet the multi-dimensional construction of Korea as a homogeneous peninsula, intense regional differences show Korea should be viewed as “a peninsula of diversity rather than as a homogeneous entity” (Caprio 2010, p.316).

Despite Korea’s claimed national roots in antiquity, identity is not stagnant nor ubiquitous, but adaptive and adoptive. The nationalist movements from the start of the twentieth century have sought to define what it means to be Korean. By some qualifications the *Koryo saram* may be identified as ethnically Korean, but extended isolation from the initial and re-

emerging nationalist movements proves too stark for South Korean efforts to substantiate the claim as the homeland for all Koreans, particularly the *Koryo Saram*.

CHAPTER 4:

AN AGE OF DIASPORAS: CURRENT AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF SOUTH KOREA– CENTRAL ASIAN RELATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE *KORYO SARAM*

In 1937 the entire population of nearly 200,000 ethnic Koreans was deported from the Russian Far East to the Central Asian Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Today approximately 700,000 ethnic Koreans within the former Soviet Union are one of the largest groups within the claimed South Korean diaspora community. Due to socio-cultural marginalization within the “homeland” during the Joseon Period (1392-1910) and subsequent life in the Russian Far East, the *Koryo saram* established a distinct culture from peninsular Koreans (Schmid 2002; Lee 1965; Robinson 2010; Wells 2002). Regardless of generations of socio-cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical separation, South Korea brands the *Koryo saram* as being a component of a broader Korean diaspora community.⁹ Assuming the role of ethnic homeland, the South Korean government has utilized the *Koryo saram* to enrich its footing within burgeoning energy economies of Central Asia. Although South Korea assumes the role of homeland, a lack of repatriation, sense of belonging, and ethnic characteristics among the *Koryo saram* challenge this claim.

South Korea maintains ties with the Central Asian republics under the assumed role of the *Koryo saram* ethnic homeland, but inherently designating South Korea as “homeland” ascribes to frailties of the modern geopolitical nation-state dichotomy. Following an historical overview of South Korea’s emergence as a global economic power, this work investigates the triangular relations between homeland, host-land, and diaspora group to examine South Korea’s

⁹ Other major groups considered as the South Korean diaspora community include Korean-Americans, Sakhalin Koreans, *Zainichi* (Koreans in Japan), and *Joseon-jok* (Koreans in China).

current and future implications of cultural involvement with the *Koryo saram* and motives of economic relations with Central Asian host-lands.

The South Korean Economic Miracle and the Emergence of “Global Korea”

The Korean peninsula was considered the most valuable possession in the Japanese Empire, and the South Korean economic “miracle” is due in large part to modernization and industrialization of the peninsula during Japanese colonial rule (Cumings 1984). Despite the cultural impact of Japanese social and political policies, Japan established Korean infrastructure and introduced the *chaebol* (Jp. *Zaibatsu*) economic model that is highly responsible for South Korean economic development.¹⁰

Modern South Korean economic and political legitimacy focuses heavily on nationalist discourse. Historiographic emphasis on the Korean nationalist movement is viewed by Kenneth Wells (2002) as a failure because the division of Korea into northern and southern regimes manifests vestiges of Japanese colonialism yet to be overthrown. This is evident by continued government enforcement of legitimacy policies and strategies, which have “revived and recalled many colonial and cultural experiences” (Park 2010, p.86). The boundary between northern (North) and southern (South) Korea is technically an inner-state boundary, and “it is thus possible to attain unification without contradicting the [nation-state] division system itself” (Wells 2002, p.195). Wells’s (2002) argument provides valuable insight into diaspora return migration patterns and reflects the sense of the differentiation within the Korean ethnic group.

Understanding the nation as constructed or imagined is paramount in reconsidering the nation-state, or national identity, as not being the only form of social identity considered in discussing diaspora groups (Wells 2002). Nationalism is about power-seeking and Japanese

¹⁰ Pre-colonial Joseon land ownership policy was detrimental to the economy, and Japan reorganized land rights, built railroads, opened ports, and introduced modern industry to the peninsula (Cumings 1984, pp.11-12).

colonial rule forced all social movements to form under the guise of nationalism; this guise removed the true nature of the nation and disallowed a united Korean identity to emerge (ibid, p.197). As it did historically during the Joseon period and the emerging nationalist movement, factionalism remained as a major issue in national and diasporic identity. After 1910, anti-Japanese sentiment was the main symbol of Korean nationalism, and expressed a continued effort to assert national and ethnic unity in a residue of the colonial period (Robinson 1986). During colonization the Korean nationalist movement was preoccupied with issues of independence, leading to Korean cultural identity being (re)asserted to pre-colonial social norms. The *Koryo saram* left the peninsula under social and political duress (in the mid-19th century), and the resumption of Joseon era socio-cultural norms reinforces a major deterrent to the *Koryo saram* rejecting the “revival” of South Korean cultural identity.

On August 15, 1945, the Korean peninsula was liberated from the Japanese Empire. Despite liberation, the historic homeland would not be reconstructed. In order to facilitate the Japanese surrender on the peninsula at the conclusion of the Second World War (although other geopolitical issues were involved), the Korean peninsula was divided along the 38th north line of latitude by United Nations and Soviet delegation (Spector 2007). In 1948, the Soviet-influenced northern Korean state established the communist regime of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), while the U.S.-backed southern Korea created a pseudo-democratic system within the Republic of Korea (ROK) (Park 2010; Ryang 2009; Schmid 2002). Both northern and southern regimes in post-colonial Korea enacted nationalist rhetoric to validate their legitimacy as custodians of Korean national identity (Morris-Suzuki 2009; Pratt 2007; Ryang 2009; Schmid 2002). Post-World War II division of the Korean peninsula has complicated the formation of a

homeland, reinforcing Sonia Ryang's (2009) argument that homelands cannot be viewed solely within the scope of the nation-state system.

The situation in post-colonial Korea was so dire that staying put was more attractive to most overseas Koreans; detriments included a lack of basic life essentials, political persecution, and marginalization of returnees due to homeland claims of ethnic homogeneity (Caprio and Jin 2009). After liberation, North Korea carried out a successful socio-economic revolution, while South Korea "festered for five years through dissent, disorder, major rebellions in 1946 and 1948, and a significant guerilla movement in 1948 and 1949" (Cumings 1984, p.23). South Korea was controlled by U.S.-backed landlords who were more concerned with their own "social privilege" than national economic growth, and therefore the country "entered a general crisis of legitimacy" (ibid). Bruce Cumings (1984) notes that during the Korean War, North Korean occupation of the South brought about land reform in South Korea, and the legitimation crisis continued after the war. Although Japanese colonialism catalyzed South Korea's modernization, social and political turmoil impeded economic development.

Post-war government policies during the 1960s-1980s were specifically designed to cultivate a national spirit (Park 2010). In 1961, General Park Chung-Hee led a military coup, wrested power in South Korea and established a military dictatorship. The Park regime highlighted national history to validate its legitimacy, claiming that "history ... confirmed the teleology of capitalist modernity" (Park 2010). Park's regime – as well as ensuing administrations – intertwined South Korean economic goals with cultural vitality, utilizing each for the betterment of the other (Park 2010; Pratt 2007). The military government viewed "culture as a legitimate means of social control," and took great efforts to construct Korean history in a way that validated their regimes and promoted national unity (Pratt 2007, p.282).

Pratt (2007) notes that “every president from Park onwards has recognized the value of his nation’s culture to its – and his own – futures,” and all have focused significant political energy and funds into enacting national culture related policies, reifying culture through the government. Throughout the 1970s Park Chung-Hee’s administration sought to establish “self-determining historiography” to construct ancient history in order to “serve present imperatives” (Wells 2002, pp. 189-190). For example, a resurgence in geomancy ensued, highlighting Mt. Baekdu as the birthplace of Dan-gun and the foundation of the Korean ethnos, “the locus of [the Korean] spirit,” and as a symbol of reunification (Schmid 2002, p. 275).

Another vital component of South Korean nationalist discourse is the historical construction of the Korean peninsula as a unitary political entity since the time of “Unified Silla” (668-935). Schmid (2002) argues that Korea, although it is commonly self-identified as a unified nation since 668 CE, was never truly an independent state before 1948, maintaining only “hollow sovereignty” throughout much of its history.

Modern South Korean national culture is based on the resurrection of Neo-Confucian traditions of the Yi dynasty (Robinson 1986). The “backward” traditions that form the crux of modern Korean cultural and national identity were originally seen by the nationalist movement as detrimental to international involvement and social development. According to Robinson (1986), “cultural schizophrenia” caused the vilifying of Korean tradition within the nationalist movement. As the popular nationalist movement sought to eradicate “traditional” Korean culture – and thus the old Sino-centric identity – it was unable to establish a sense of cultural identity beyond anti-Japanese sentiment until post-war government policies reinstated a constructed set of traditions.

During this time of national reconstruction Japan was again vilified as a colonial oppressor. Anti-Japanese sentiment was reignited for its essential role in the original construction of Korean nationalism and has shaped the reconstructed nationalism of South Korea. Such sentiments were strong during the renationalizing process and, until at least 1996, were seen by the government as necessary to purge the country of colonial residue (Park 2010). Throughout the reconstruction of nationalism in post-war South Korea, the external “other” was portrayed as a military threat in order to validate President Park’s military coup, but also in large part to restore the roots of Joseon as the cultural basis for Korean identity and national homogeneity. The Park regime set out to reintroduce Neo-Confucian ideals of loyalty and filial piety on an ethno-national scale, although they were originally opposed by the early nationalist movement – noted as the cause of Joseon failure (Park 2010). Cultural heritage and identity have been utilized by the South Korean state to construct a national culture in order to inspire a sense of nationhood and belonging (Park 2010). Establishing national identity involves determining a dichotomy of belonging (Diener 2002). South Korea utilizes this idea in a continual effort to self-identify within the globalizing world, as well as legitimize the state and government as the true custodian of the Korean nation (Robinson 1986).

During the 1960s and 1970s, South Korea moved from the periphery of the Northeast Asian regional economy and began to garner strong enough economic presence to vie for political legitimacy on the peninsula and global economy. President Park Chung Hee formed a strong central government and acquired “stability amid rapid economic and social change” (Cumings 1984, pp. 28-33). The 1970s saw economic growth due to strong central government and familial structured industrial conglomerates (*chaebol*) (Auerbach, Kim, and Sompornserm 2011). During the Syngman Rhee administration (1948-1960) and well into the 1980s, “South

Korea was a dictatorship where the standard of living was little higher, and may indeed have been lower, than it was in [North Korea]” (Morris-Suzuki 2009, p. 57). During the Park Chung Hee administration (1962-1979) “the geopolitical lines...were thus fixed,” and the Japanese economic model was reintroduced to South Korea (Cumings 1984, p. 20).

East Asian countries were at “the center of world economic dynamism” in the 1970s and 1980s, and that included both Koreas (Cumings 1984). The East Asian economic boom was encouraged by export-led growth, but before President Park took power South Korea’s economy was based on import substitution focusing on textile and cement industry, as well as agriculture (ibid). In the mid-1960s free export zones (FEZ) were established in Korea, attracting major international investment and South Korea began to emerge in the global economy via export-led development. Initially South Korean industry focused on textile export, but the Park regime emphasized more heavy industry based on exporting iron and steel, ships, and automobiles, as well as electronics (ibid).¹¹ When Park took office in 1962 South Korea was still struggling to overcome failed post-war reconstruction efforts with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of 103.57 USD, but by his death in 1979 boasted a 1,857.82 GDP per capita (Cumings 1984; Hwang 2012). South Korea’s rapid economic growth increased industrialization and modernization, and the 1988 Seoul Olympics was a major catalyst in providing the world a new view of South Korea as a modernized state in the global economic arena (Spector 2007).

Throughout the 1970s Park Chung Hee’s regime sought to establish South Korea as the custodian of the entire Korean nation, society, and culture by utilizing the discourse of “self-determining historiography” to construct history to “serve present imperatives” (Wells 2002, pp. 189-190). President Chun Doo Hwan (1981-1988) furthered the work of the Park regime,

¹¹ President Park even noted in 1972 that “steel = national power” (Cumings 1984, p32).

including the incorporation of a national culture clause into the South Korean constitution – manifesting state-sponsored “shaping” of national culture. According to Park (2010, p. 85), the efforts of the Chun administration established its legitimacy and instilled “national pride in Korean traditions, language, and history.” Despite these efforts, South Korean interaction with the *Koryo saram* was negligible due to political circumstances surrounding the Soviet Union and South Korea (ibid).

During the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998), *chaebols* were encouraged by liberalization of short-term finance, which were supported by the “government’s globalization priority,” serving economic and political function simultaneously (Willett 2009, p. 63). In response to the 1997-1998 financial crisis, South Korean banks were permitted by the government to initiate and expand overseas investments and operations. In the mid-1990s *chaebols* controlled over half of all South Korean merchant banks, and South Korea’s neoliberal response – instigated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan and political reform demands – to the Asian economic crisis increased bank operations in overseas markets, compensating for domestic debts (Auerbach, Kim, and Sompornserm 2011).

A direct result of Kim Young-sam’s *segyehwa* (globalization) discourse included the expansion of South Korean popular culture beyond the bounds of the state, particularly among the diaspora community. The *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) is a concerted effort to generate cultural capital, particularly abroad, in light of the Asian economic crisis during the late 1990s. According to Eun-Young Jung (2009) *Hallyu* popularity is due to hybridization of Western culture and Korean tradition, promoting transnationalism and globalization. Despite “possible erosion of their cultural particularity” amidst such global influence, the ‘Korean wave’ has thrived due to adaptations to external influences (Shim 2006, p.38; see also Jung 2009). Park

(2010, p. 159) considers *Hallyu* a “logical outgrowth of Korea’s growing economic status and power in Asian geopolitics and the global arena” promulgated among the ethnic diaspora community primarily to expand South Korea’s economic markets. South Korean popular culture generates cultural capital worldwide, and is seen as vital to expanding South Korea’s export-led economic growth. South Korea utilizes its cultural popularity as economic soft power to highlight homeland/diaspora relations with the *Koryo saram* and influence economic negotiations within Central Asian states (Fumagalli 2012; Jung 2009; Shim 2006). Global economic prominence and nation-building projects seek to reinforce South Korea’s ethno-cultural claim and geo-political legitimacy as the *Koryo saram* homeland.

Triangular Relations: South Korea, the *Koryo Saram*, and Central Asian States

Nationalism seeks rootedness in “fixed territory” that is assigned meaning by the nation or “nationalizing community” (Diener 2002). South Korea seeks political legitimacy as progenitor of Korean nationhood by claiming the role of homeland for the *Koryo saram* – a pre-division detached group. According to Alexander C. Diener (ibid, pp.633-634), “the emotional bond between the population targeted for nationalization and the homeland that will serve as spatial context for that nation” seeks to imply a sense of place permanence among kinsfolk. In South Korea, national identity is centered on the idea of a “one-blood nation,” highlighting questions of dual citizenship and nationality amidst traditions of homogeneity and belonging on the peninsula (Chung and Kim 2012). Despite implications of South Korea’s stance as the assumed homeland of all Koreans, the Overseas Korean Foundation Act (OKA) and senses of belonging among the *Koryo saram* challenge the ethnic identity and belonging of the diaspora group in South Korean ethnicity. Despite these issues, South Korean relations with Central Asian states remain vital to regional and state economies.

During the height of the nationalist movement in Korea (1930s), there was a major effort to validate the nation through historic cultural accomplishments and precedence of political independence (Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary 2000). The emergence of state nationalism maintains social roots, and it was this “complex search for new political ideas, a strengthened sense of national identity, and an examination of the Korean tradition itself” that agglomerated into modern Korean nationalism (Robinson 1986, p. 36). Nations are not intrinsically tied to state boundaries, yet nations maintain territoriality by the establishment of place-based identity, and ‘place’ holds a significant role in national identity (Kim 2011, p. 13; Schmid 2002, p. 199). Although Koreans held social perceptions of place within the peninsula, the ideology of territorial sovereignty had not yet been introduced (Schmid 2002). Thus, place-based identity maintains vitality within the nationalist discourse while simultaneously being non-nationalist. Nation-building revolves around constructed histories, and Korean nationalist history seeks to validate Korean ethnic and national identity (ibid, p.188). The varied historical experience of the *Koryo saram* highlights the necessity of expanding the historical scope of the national history beyond the peninsula; the history of the Korean nation should not be confused with the Korean state history, and analysis of the *Koryo saram* must transcend traditional views and expand beyond “such temporal phenomena as states” (Schmid 2002, p. 190).

The phenomenon of “pluralistic nationalism” is vital to discussions surrounding diaspora, especially in reference to the *Koryo saram*. The historic homeland of the *Koryo saram* was a unified dynastic Korean peninsula. The Korean peninsula is divided politically and increasingly ethno-culturally between North and South; the Central Asian states, formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, are currently undertaking nationalization efforts. According to Cohen (1996) compulsory means tend to alienate the diaspora group, but this does not seem to be the case

regarding the *Koryo saram*. According to my surveys, as well as Khan (2013) and Oh (2007) most of the *Koryo saram* maintain a sense of belonging, consider themselves full citizens, and have experienced little, if any, persecution in Uzbekistan.

The homeland policies can facilitate and obstruct connections with the diaspora. Butler (2001, p. 209) highlights xenophobia as causing “reprisals against expressions of diasporan (as opposed to patriotic) nationalism in the same countries that facilitate diasporan networking through accessible telecommunications technology.” South Korean state-led ethnocentrism discourages a sense of belonging among the diaspora community (Kim 2012). Despite the assumed role of the South Korean state as the ethnic homeland, the diaspora group’s “*construct* of the homeland is essential” for the creation of diasporic identity (Butler 2001, p. 204), although not all groups labeled as diasporas view themselves as such (Brubaker 2005).

A resounding majority of the *Koryo saram* view their host-lands as homeland, despite an increase in “ethnic culture and ethnic history awareness” (Diener 2006, pp. 207-209). Natsuko Oka (2001) and Tae Hyeon Back (2001) both note migrations among the *Koryo saram* have seen a return to the Russian Far East Maritime region, although it must be noted that any type of international migration is minimal. Despite diaspora conception and establishment of identity partially on common history of their ethnic society and culture (Shuval 2000), it is clear that the multi-generational feature amended to identify diasporas is a two-edged sword as sense of belonging shifts from historic homeland to host-land. Ryang (1997) notes that as time within the host-land increases, repatriation tendencies decrease and naturalization becomes more prevalent.

In recent decades, a major issue regarding South Korean ethnicity has revolved around the dual citizenship debate (Kim 2013). The major point of South Korea’s dual citizenship debate (2010) was deciding who belonged, or, who possessed proper ‘Korean-ness’ (Kim

2013).¹² Instigated during the Asian economic crisis, the 1997 OKA was the first legislation to acknowledge Koreans outside the peninsula as belonging to the Korean nation, but citizenship was only extended to Koreans that could trace paternal ancestry to the South Korean state (Kim 2013; Park and Chang 2005). This exclusion of most of the diaspora community including the *Koryo saram* created a “(dis)juncture and tension between national and ethnic identities... in a highly globalized world” (Park and Chang 2005, pp.2-3).¹³ While the OKA was later amended to include all Koreans regardless of gender descent, blood-lineage and former South Korean citizenship was still required to legitimize Korean-ness (Kim 2013; Park and Chang 2005). In an effort to validate the OKA and legitimize the South Korean government, officials argued that although the state was not formally established until 1948, it should be considered the legitimate heir of the provisional government formed during Japanese occupation, and therefore umbrella the entire Korean diaspora community as former citizens of South Korea (Park and Chang 2005).

Emphasis on South Korean citizenship by the OKA disregards ethnic Koreans who were detached from the homeland before 1948, including northern Koreans (Kim 2013). While South Korean politicians have emphasized ethnic, cultural, and class homogeneity within South Korea – which the OKA blatantly refutes – many citizens viewed this as an affront to Korean identity, claiming legislation emphasized class-based ethnicity and favored overseas Koreans deemed useful to revitalizing and restructuring the South Korean economy (Kim 2013).

Amendments to the OKA in 1999 and 2003 emphasized repatriation and offered dual citizenship to the perceived wealthier, skilled Korean-Americans in an effort to attract investment, while excluding citizenship – and *de jure* ethnic belonging – to perceived unskilled

¹² Nora Hui-Jung Kim (2013) uses ethnicity and citizenship synonymously within her work.

¹³ Emphasis on former South Korean state citizenship would eliminate large amount of Joseon-jok, Zainichi, and even some Korean-Americans that migrated before and during Japanese occupation (1910-1945), before the establishment of the South Korean state (1948).

laborers of Korean descent from China and the former Soviet Union (Kim 2013; Park and Chang 2005). These Korean diaspora groups were not seen as second-class citizens, but were not even considered as ethnically Korean by the class- and ethnicity-based social structure that was constructed during the economic crisis. South Korean claims of ethnic homogeneity and ethnic unity reinforce ethnocentricity (Kim 2013). Chung and Kim (2012) note that both Joseonjok and the *Koryo saram* resemble native Koreans, but highlight and reinforce ethnic foreign-ness and are therefore regarded as non-Korean. State-led ethnocentrism enforces a lack of belonging of the diaspora community (Kim 2012).¹⁴ Though South Korea rejects certain diaspora groups as ‘Korean’, the government claims “homeland” status for geopolitical and economic objectives, and “the homeland’s centripetal power” regarding return and identity of diasporas goes unquestioned in classical diaspora studies and geopolitical discourse (Park and Chang 2005, pp. 14-15).

The debate regarding class-based ethnic belonging and the OKA expand the gap between national and ethnic identity relating to the legitimacy of the nation-state and the effort “to build large-scale, de-territorialized, pan-national communities” (Kim 2013, p. 14; see also Park and Chang 2005). The OKA also highlights Korean nationality, ethnicity, and community as constructed and imagined. The 1997 financial crisis was the turning point in South Korean interest in its diaspora community, especially those in Central Asia, as the South Korean economy sought new markets for expansion (Fumagalli 2012; Kim 2013).

Economic transitions in South Korea coincided with Soviet policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, which increased political interactions between both countries. Initial Soviet-South

¹⁴ These Korean diasporas were not seen as second-class citizens, but not even citizens to any degree; this was exacerbated by dual citizenship being extended to non-ethnic Koreans in a 2005 amendment to the OKA. The OKA was further amended in 2010, and although it maintained stringent class-based ethnicity laws, it allowed citizenship to be reclaimed by affluent ethnic Koreans who rescinded/declined citizenship in 2005 (Kim 2013, pp. 15-16).

Korean interactions were economic in nature. For both the Soviet Union and South Korea, the “most immediate concern . . . was an economic one,” and political interaction hinged on – as well as accelerated – economic endeavors, and these economic ties carried over into post-Soviet Central Asian relations with South Korea (Bowers 1992, pp.22-31). The fractured collapse of the Soviet Union, and ensuing political relations with Central Asian republics provided South Korea with access to formerly inaccessible markets (Fumagalli 2012).

Initiated by former President Lee Myung-bak (2009–2013), expansions of economic interaction during the “New Asia Initiative” formed “energy Silk Road diplomacy” to further South Korea’s economic and energy goals in Central Asia (Calder and Kim 2008; Fumagalli 2012). The greatest economic concern for South Korea is energy availability and access, and the Central Asian republics are major producers (Calder and Kim 2008). South Korea’s “lack of domestic energy sources” necessitates dependence on foreign energy, particularly oil from the Middle East (75%); the ROK considers Central Asia a valuable partner in diversifying its energy supplier needs (ibid, p. 6). Not only are oil and natural gas valuable to South Korea, but there are “substantial uranium reserves” which would prove most valuable to a country that is 40% reliant on nuclear energy (Calder and Kim 2009; Hwang 2012). Central Asian energy provide South Korea with longer-term energy solutions that are more stable than their current reliance on Middle East energy supplies (Calder and Kim 2009).

Central Asian-South Korean economic partnerships are symbiotic. While Central Asian states maintain a geo-politically strategic location and large quantities of natural resources, their emerging economies are complementary to South Korea’s business and manufacturing conglomerates (*chaebols*). *Chaebols* are vital to South Korea-Central Asia relations. Major issues surround access and availability to Central Asian energy resources: production and

exploration, transportation and distribution, and geopolitical location and situation of the region. *Chaebol* conglomerates provide comprehensive services to global markets that fit well within Central Asian economic goals (Calder and Kim 2008; Calder and Kim 2009; Fumagalli 2012; Hwang 2012). The South Korean *chaebol* system has the unique ability to supply and finance infrastructure as well as “intellectual services” (Calder and Kim 2008, p. 8). Central Asian republics have benefited from South Korean investment projects in secondary education, manufacturing, information technology, construction, and medicine and medical facilities (Calder 2012).

Kazakhstan holds the second largest *Koryo saram* population (over 100,000), and is the region’s largest oil producer (Calder and Kim 2009). Since establishing economic ties, South Korean involvement in Kazakhstan has steadily grown, especially in banking (Hwang 2012). South Korea’s neoliberal response to the economic crisis (1997) increased bank operations in overseas markets, and the expanded operations were able to compensate for domestic debts (Auerbach, Kim, and Sompornserm 2011). Uzbekistan is home to the fourth largest Korean diaspora population in the world (around 200,000), and is a major natural gas producer (Calder and Kim 2009; Hwang 2012). Political ties were established between South Korea and Uzbekistan in the early 1990s and their economic engagement between the two countries is now the largest in the region. South Korea almost immediately became the largest foreign investor in Uzbekistan (Hwang 2012).

Central Asian governments are open to South Korean involvement in regional economies because of South Korea’s history of government controlled economy (Cumings 1984; Hwang 2012; Willett 2009). South Korea’s history of intense government involvement in the economy is also a beacon to Central Asia’s totalitarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes in the region look

to South Korea's state-led economic growth as a model of economic development, and the *chaebol* provide comprehensive service to global markets without requiring political reform as compensation for economic support (Auerbach, Kim, and Sompornserm 2011; Calder and Kim 2009; Fumagalli 2012; Hwang 2012). This is an attractive model for Central Asia because of "[South Korean] reluctance to meddle in the countries' domestic affairs" (Fumagalli 2012, pp.87-88). Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, especially, utilize their economic relations with South Korea "to increase their leverage with their powerful neighbors, without having to go as far as creating a strategic alliance" (Hwang 2012, p. 2). Although South Korean energy diversification was the main draw, Central Asian republics have benefitted from projects in education, manufacturing, information technology, construction, and medicine and medical facilities (Calder and Kim 2008; Fumagalli 2012; Hwang 2012). This expansion of economic ties has developed from the "energy Silk Road diplomacy" initiated by former President Lee Myung-bak, and have been furthered by current President Park Geun-hye (2013-present) (Calder and Kim 2008).

Central Asian states are "promising markets for cost-effective Korean manufacturers" (Calder and Kim 2009, p. 50). While the *Koryo saram* populations in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are negligible, South Korea has utilized its soft power to expand its economic foothold in the region (Hwang 2012). Economic interest in these three Central Asian republics revolves around their ferrous metals, uranium, and oil and natural gas reserves. According to Calder and Kim (2009), "Korea ... lacks America's hard power yet arguably wields substantial soft power owing to cultural ties, the attractiveness of the Korean economic model, and Korea's role as a cost-effective supplier of both consumer and capital goods." Korea maintains a marketplace role in Central Asia's economic mindset. Although South Korea lacks the hard

power of other major players in the region, it claims cultural ties via the *Koryo saram* diaspora group (Calder and Kim 2008).

Calder and Kim (2009, pp. 66-70) note that the *Koryo saram* are a “catalyst for deeper ties” between the Central Asian states and South Korea. South Korean non-government organizations (NGOs) have established centers to teach the Korean language, art, history, and culture to the *Koryo saram* populations throughout the region, and South Korea seeks to utilize this thin ethnic tie to establish and maintain strong political and economic relations for future energy stability (Calder and Kim 2008). South Korean involvement in “[Central Asia] has been primarily economic” in efforts to assert itself in the global economic market and act as a bridge between developed and developing countries (Fumagalli 2012; Hwang 2012; Park and Chang 2005). South Korea claims that social and cultural interactions with the *Koryo saram* are the main drivers behind involvement in the region, but such “revival” efforts are superficial at best; the Central Asian economies are the major attraction.

Cultural “Revival” of the *Koryo saram*

Soviet nationality policies were constructed and enacted in order to facilitate modernization throughout the Soviet Union, particularly among the Central and Eastern Asian regions (Dadabaev 2013). These policies proved to be the basis of nationalist rhetoric within the independent Central Asian republics since their independence in 1991, although it can be argued that during the Soviet Union, citizens developed a “Soviet ethnicity.” *Korenizatsiya* policies aimed to “liberate” ethnic groups and reify a Soviet ethnicity, but contrarily increased “importance of the so-called ‘objective’ markers defining a nation such as a local language, territory, common descent (kinship) and common culture” among minority groups (ibid). Implementation and enforcement of *korenizatsiya* was extinguished in the 1930s, but not after

seeds of ethnic identity had been planted in groups across the Soviet Union in a way that impacted everyday social life.

As discussed, South Korea has invested heavily in the Central Asian energy economy. South Korea has established long-term contracts with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and it is clear that Central Asia-South Korea relations are products of “mutual economic benefit” (Calder and Kim 2009; Hwang 2012). The energy Silk Road was initiated by President Lee Myung-bak’s vision and policies for a “Global Korea” (Hwang 2012). South Korean government and non-government organizations have established centers to teach the Korean language, history, and culture to the *Koryo saram* throughout the region and seek to utilize cultural ties to establish and maintain economic relations for future energy stability. Although South Korea claims that the *Koryo saram* diaspora group is the main driver of interest and involvement in the region, the Central Asian economies are the major attraction.

Unlike other states involved in Central Asia, South Korea does not require political reform as compensation for economic involvement, and maintains a unique economic model. The main reason for involvement in Central Asia is economic, and South Korea exploits the nation-state system to assume the role as the *Koryo saram* homeland (Hwang 2012). South Korean involvement in the overseas Korean population is “bound up in vested economic interests,” highlighting issues of “the permeability and fluidity of ethnic/national membership” and the role of the homeland in diaspora identity and the peninsula’s legitimacy as a homeland for the Korean diaspora community (Park and Chang 2005, pp. 10, 15).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, South Korea has expanded cultural activities in the region in an effort to further establish ties with the *Koryo saram* and, by extension, Central Asian states (Calder and Kim 2009). Such cultural activities include educational centers, language

courses, traditional Korean art, culture, and history classes, and cultural events. The Korean diaspora, including the *Koryo saram*, impact trade and investment flows and labor markets in the homeland and host-lands (Choi 2003). Globalization and global economic markets are transforming many diasporas into trade and investment diasporas. “Trade and investment have a long history of interrelationship with diasporas” and greatly impact relations between homelands and host-lands; the social and economic networks established by diasporas are transnational (Choi 2003). While Korean-Americans have long desired dual-citizenship (Kim 2013), among the *Koryo saram* it has been a non-issue and research shows that “Central Asian Koreans are intent on remaining in [Central Asia] and vesting themselves in [its] multinational future” (Diener 2009, p. 477).

According to surveys distributed among the *Koryo saram* in Uzbekistan,¹⁵ most consider the Korean peninsula as the ethnic homeland for Koreans, although they do not consider North or South Korea to be their homeland.¹⁶ In regards to repatriation to the homeland or the myth of return, 40% of those surveyed indicated they would definitely leave Uzbekistan if they had the opportunity, although those respondents would migrate to Russia or the United States rather than South Korea. While 20% who would “consider leaving” designated South Korea as a potential destination, along with Russia, the United States, or any other Western country, the ethnic homeland or even a prominent ethnic community does not draw potential migrants. The most valuable “qualifying factors in selecting a new country in which to live” are economic opportunity (7 respondents) and multi-culturalism/multi-nationalism (3 respondents). While South Korea maintains high economic opportunity, the desire for multi-culturalism and multi-

¹⁵ My pilot study was a questionnaire distributed to ten (10) ethnic Koreans living in Uzbekistan that self-identify as *Koryo saram* (see Appendix 1).

¹⁶ One-hundred percent (100%) of survey respondents designated either place of birth or current country of residence as their homeland (all were born in Uzbekistan, Russian, or the Soviet Union).

nationalism maintains the highest draw of repatriation or return migration due to ethno-centrism, xenophobia, and mono-culturalism. Although ethnic ties between South Korea and this component of its diaspora have clearly strengthened since the collapse of the Soviet Union, interactions between the “homeland” and the *Koryo saram* should not be considered as an ethnic or cultural revival.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The horizontal organization of the world by overlapping interactions is creating diaspora communities based solely on interest rather than place, but place is intrinsically tied to diaspora, and diaspora to place (Cohen 1996; Brinkerhoff 2009). The future of diaspora as a discourse is expanding because the usage of the term ‘diaspora’ is being diluted (Cohen 1996). Despite its growing usage, ‘diaspora’ remains an undefined term, relying on those who claim it as their identity to define its parameters. Surely “the universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora” (Brubaker 2005, p.3), or at least the value it holds as an indicator of a dispersed people with a desire to return to a former homeland. Consequently, it is the adulteration of the terminology that will be a catalyst for diaspora studies to stretch beyond merely historic or case specific studies in the future.

As the discourse surrounding diaspora studies expands, Brubaker (2005, p.8) proffers the idea of the “age of diaspora” succeeding the age of the Westphalian nation-state. Certainly within the globalized world diasporas are becoming vital, and rather powerful, players in political and economic realms (Butler 2001, p.211) – as evidenced by the Korean diaspora community – but diaspora communities cannot be viewed as unified actors. Some diaspora groups are seeking to find a place for themselves in their communities, cities, and states, while others – along with their host-land and ethnic homeland – balance their relationships for economic and political gain.

Multi-generational separation from an historical homeland and subsequent development of a distinguishable ethno-cultural identity have resulted in a significant break between the *Koryo saram* and South Koreans. The *Koryo saram* are considered ethnically Korean by the South Korean government, although the extent of their “Korean-ness” should be scrutinized in an

effort to understand their identity. The *Koryo saram* see their Central Asian host-land as a new homeland (Diener 2009). While a lack of desire to return to South Korea does not negate ethnic belonging, it does question homeland validity and diasporic identity. While it is clear that the *Koryo saram* do not consider South Korea as an historic homeland, political and economic relations between South Korea and Central Asian republics indicate the vitality of the *Koryo saram* in South Korea's efforts to establish political legitimacy and economic vitality in the globalizing world.

Park and Chang (2005) question the Korean peninsula's utility as a homeland for the Korean diaspora community in regards to unification and return migration, while Calder and Kim (2008; 2009) consider the role of Central Asia as the key to reunification of the homeland. If reunification were a result, it would not be due to political endeavors, but South Korea's desire for a cheaper, more efficient overland oil pipeline from Central Asia. Despite Calder and Kim's (2008; 2009) optimistic outlook on potential reconciliation, a major argument by South Korean reunification activists was that the OKA overlooked ethnic divides between North and South Koreans, bounding Korean-ness while not "[embracing] our own people" (Kim 2013, p. 11). Implications of the *Koryo saram*'s potential impact of North-South relations on the Korean peninsula have only begun to be discussed by scholars.

As Butler (2001) notes, the identity of a diaspora group partially stems from the self-awareness that comes as the group discovers the existence of its place within the greater diaspora community. Shim and Khan (2013) postulate a distinction among different "*Koryo sarams*," as groups have acculturated to life within various Central Asian states factions of the formerly collective diaspora have developed separate diasporic consciousness.

Future identity formation of the *Koryo saram* may also provide a look into what is to become of adaptive diasporas. Like the formation of any culture and society throughout history, diasporic identity evolves over time and is never stagnant (Butler 2001; Goetze 1998; Malkki 1995). By definition, diasporas seek to maintain “a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements” (Safran 1991, p. 83). Ascribing to this mythologized concept allows the diaspora to imagine an ideal homeland to which current and future generations may look in order to make assimilation and acculturation difficulties more tolerable (Safran 1991). Yet, diasporas have been subject to a “wax and wane in diasporism” (Clifford 1994, p. 306). The term ‘diaspora’ cannot merely be defined or designated by a particular group, but fluctuates and is manipulated (Goetze 1998).

This research has revealed that the multi-generational attribute of diasporas is a double-edged sword. In the case of the *Koryo saram*, Jin (2007) articulates an adaptive identity following removal from the Far East. Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, the *Koryo saram* have become more aware of themselves as a distinct socio-cultural element within the wider Korean ethnic community, although they maintain the idea that they belong in their respective states of citizenship rather than South Korea. Given such circumstances, are the *Koryo saram* still a diaspora? They meet diasporic criteria, yet predominately maintain the notion of respective republics as homeland.

While multiplicity of host-land complicates issues of diasporic identity formation, the existence of two nation-states vying for legitimacy as the ethnic homeland convolutes issues of territoriality and belonging among the *Koryo saram*. In order to establish political legitimacy South Korea maintains ties with the Central Asian republics under the assumed role of ethnic homeland of the *Koryo saram*, but designating South Korea as a primordial homeland points to

frailties of modern geopolitical dichotomies of nation-states as exclusive containers of culture and nationality. Discussing identity formation of the *Koryo saram* may illuminate identity construction of adaptive diasporas, potentially creating a new category of liminal diasporism.

The *Koryo saram* have established territorial identity within various Central Asian states, and no longer maintain myths of “homeland” return. The absence of this vital diasporic characteristic suspends the *Koryo saram* in a state of “in between-ness,” or liminality.¹⁷

“Liminality is intended to describe a state of being ‘beyond usual categories’ and, as such forms a category itself,” or threshold category (Balduk 2008, p. vii). While diasporas are structurally liminal due to characteristics of transnationality – being “between” states, borders, and cultures – the *Koryo saram*’s diasporism is liminal.

Balduk (2008, p. 7) states that “liminal people are becoming better; they achieve a new ‘essence’ or ‘nature’,” and that “liminality implies that such a passage is irreversible.” While Clifford (1994, p. 306) indicates groups “wax and wane in diasporism,” the *Koryo saram* have maintained senses of belonging in places beyond the assumed South Korean “homeland” for multiple generations. Describing the *Koryo saram* diasporic identity as liminal designates they no longer maintain South Korea as a desired “homeland,” nor continue to construct a myth of return, if there ever was such sentiment. Home-towns of the *Koryo saram* in Central Asian host-lands have become homelands constructed as “liminal *space*” (Balduk 2008, p. 8). Liminality removes a group from attachment to place, and people begin to “*believe places used to play a role*” in identity construction (ibid, p. 21). The physical deportation of the *Koryo saram* acted as a territorial passage, and the liminal spaces have transitioned into places of meaning and identity,

¹⁷ The theory of liminality comes from Arnold Van Gennep’s (1909) works concerning social and personal rights of passage. My usage of the terminology stems from Victor Turner’s (1967, 1969) and Rob Shields’ (1991) expansion of the term into geographic theory.

reconstructing Central Asia as a place of identity for the *Koryo saram*, while South Korea no longer incites a myth of return.

In liminal, or threshold, spaces boundaries are indistinct (Balduk 2008), not only in the physical sense, but in the psycho-social realm as well. While the *Koryo saram* are labeled as ethnically Korean, they possess minimal attributes of ‘Korean-ness’ beyond physical features, and are more socially and ethnically akin to their fellow citizens in various Central Asian republics. While blood-relations may beckon to the “homeland” that kinship is irrefutable, socio-cultural boundaries are prominent between the *Koryo saram* and South Koreans. South Korea’s “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) has created a sense of togetherness so entrenched in nationalism and territoriality of the nation-state, and the *Koryo saram* no longer belong. Simultaneously, various Central Asian republics have been carrying out respective nation-building endeavors since independence from the Soviet Union. In an effort to establish territorial and state legitimacy, each republic has sought to distinguish its ethnicity as the dominant nationality and the *Koryo saram* could be considered an internal ‘other’ within a perceived homeland. “The more or less permanent nature of the in between-ness – or at least its undetermined duration” (Balduk 2008, p.32) suggests that the *Koryo saram* are a diaspora without a homeland.

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APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1:
Questionnaire distributed to 10 ethnic Koreans in Uzbekistan
who self-identify as *Koryo saram*.**

Your age: _____	Your gender: _____
Your place of birth: _____	Your occupation: _____
The country in which you live: _____	How long you've lived there: _____
Your native language: _____	Language you use most at work: _____
Your nationality: _____	Your ethnicity: _____
Your father's nationality: _____	Your mother's nationality: _____
Your religious affiliation (if any): _____	

Rate the following factors according to their importance to your personal identity:
(1= very important, 2= important, 3= somewhat important, 4= a little important, 5=unimportant)

Living in your town or region.....	1	2	3	4	5
Living in your current country of residence.....	1	2	3	4	5
Living in a former country (if applicable)..... (please specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	5
Your nationality.....	1	2	3	4	5
Your native language.....	1	2	3	4	5
Your religious affiliation.....	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please write: _____).....	1	2	3	4	5

Please rate how strongly you identify with the following groups of people:
(1= completely, 2= usually, 3=generally, 4= somewhat, 5= not at all)

People of your nationality living in your current country.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of all nationalities living in your current country.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of your nationality living in Central Asia.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of all nationalities living in Central Asia.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of your nationality living in South Korea.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of all nationalities living in South Korea.....	1	2	3	4	5
People of your nationality living in North Korea.....	1	2	3	4	5

People of **all** nationalities living in North Korea.....1 2 3 4 5

People of **your** nationality living anywhere in the world.....1 2 3 4 5

People of **all** nationalities living anywhere in the world.....1 2 3 4 5

1. What best identifies the ethnic Korean homeland: (rank in order of 1-6, 1 being the most representative and 6 being the least)

- _____ Territory controlled during the **Three Kingdoms Period**
- _____ Territory controlled by **Unified Silla**
- _____ Territory controlled during the **Koryo** dynasty
- _____ Territory controlled during the **Joseon** dynasty
- _____ Territory controlled currently by **South Korea** only
- _____ Territory controlled currently by both **North and South Korea**
- _____ Other (specify): _____

2. What do you consider your homeland? (multiple answers possible)

- a) place of birth
- b) country of current residence
- c) land of forefathers
- d) historical homeland (please specify: _____)
- e) Earth
- f) difficult to say

3. Who should be considered native or indigenous residents of your country of current residence? (multiple answers possible)

- a) only the ethnic majority
- b) all belonging to ethnic majority regardless of place of birth
- c) all belonging to ethnic majority regardless of country of residence
- d) all born in the country
- e) we do not have to define this category
- f) all citizens are indigenous residents
- g) difficult to say

4. Do you feel yourself to be a citizen of your country of current residence?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) difficult to say

5. What is your primary community of belonging? (multiple answers possible)

- a) own ethnicity
- b) own residential community
- c) own family
- d) own profession
- e) own religious group

- f) difficult to say
- g) other (please specify: _____)

6. Should South Korea render economic support its diaspora community and their host-countries?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) have not considered it
- d) don't know
- f) difficult to say

7. I can envision myself living in some other place

- a) yes
- b) unsure
- c) no

8. Have you considered migrating from your current county of residence?

- a) no
- b) yes, but not seriously
- c) yes

*If so, to where: _____

9. If I had the possibility to leave my current country of residence I would...

- a) definitely leave
- b) consider leaving
- c) stay

*If so, to where: _____

10. What would be a qualifying factor in selecting a new country in which to live? (multiple answers possible)

- a) economic opportunities
- b) prominent ethnic community (please specify: _____)
- c) ethnic/historic homeland
- d) multi-cultural/multi-national
- e) Other (please specify: _____)