

## Discussion

### *On the need for more multi-faceted studies*

Dr. Jinhye Lee (Researcher, Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University) and  
Dr. German Kim

Dr. Lee:

As a Korean researcher at Kyoto University's ASAFAS, I am also studying Koreans, called Koryosaram, in the diaspora, including in the post-Soviet Union. I focus on contemporary Koryosaram. Until now in Koryosaram Studies, the premise of race or ethnic discourse has been dominant. It can be said that Koryosaram as a research target have been highlighted as a "sacrifice" of Stalin's forced migration in 1937. However, such an approach does not fully examine the complex aspects of the Koryosaram identity.

It should also be pointed out that within Koryosaram studies, studies with a gender perspective are extremely rare. Some related research has been conducted, not only in Korea, but also in Kazakhstan by Kazakh scholars, such as like Yum Natalya, on the living conditions and rituals of Korean women, and on their marriage. Such studies, however, have been limited since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ultimately, despite the many studies related to identity, including on language preservation and lifestyles, it is unfortunately difficult to find female voices.

Recently, Western forced migration studies have tended to study women's images as representations of forced "sacrifice." The Canadian researcher Doreen Indra pointed out that such studies overlook the diversity of classes, cultures, and situations that exist among women. Meanwhile, Natalya Kosmarskaya (Наталья Космарская) places Russian women who moved to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the intersection of race and gender, and studies various deviations of their migration. In this regard, I think her research has significant implications for studying Korean women both before and after the forced migration from a gender perspective.

All of this research is part of the effort to fill the void in the study of Koryosaram and is an attempt to approach the complex and multifaceted identity of the Koryosaram from the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender. Such an approach can bring new perspectives to better understanding Koryosaram.

In researching International Women's Day in the Soviet Union, I have examined articles that appeared beginning in 1925 in *Senbon* (선봉 *Vanguard*, 1923-1937) and *Lenin Kichi* (레닌 기치, *Lenin's Way*, 1938-1991). These included speeches on International Women's Day, slogans, literary works with themes such as "Mother," the social performance of women, foreign women's performances, interviews, statistics on women (such as the proportion of women in higher education institutions and the proportion of professional women), and so on. The largest number of articles in these two publications are interviews with women active in their society. Among these, farmworkers and education workers were the most numerous. These interviews, however, did nothing more than project an image of the "good" Koryosaram women following the Soviet slogans. It is therefore difficult to say that they truly represent Koryosaram women, or if they rather simply served to provide the impression that the publications were highlighting women as a subject of their articles.

In order to study Koryosaram women from a gender perspective, there is a need to present the

intersection of race or ethnicity *and* gender, and in turn examine how these intersect with social structures (like the Soviet Union). Due to class and ideological discrepancies, the image of a Soviet woman is interpreted differently in Soviet and Western academic literature, mass media, and art. In the Soviet Union, it was typical to demonstrate only visible, considerable achievements in the field of emancipation and gender equality. In the eyes of the Western world, the image of a Soviet woman was also stereotyped, often with a negative connotation. Such opposing approaches in the interpretation of a Soviet woman can be compared to an iceberg, with each side revealing only its visible tip, hiding the deep waters underneath. Dr. German Kim begins to shine a light on these waters, presenting both visible and “invisible” images of Korean women from the photos of the Soviet-Korean newspapers *Senbon* and *Lenin Kichi*.

Dr. Kim:

Absolutely there are intersections of race, gender, education, age, and other factors related to Soviet-Korean women. The status—Korean or non-Korean—of a woman’s husband is also important. It will take time to study all of these inter relations and how they relate to the status, position, and social-cultural status of Korean women. It is complex and we need proper research based on appropriate sources, such as in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and so on. I cannot present a clear picture on these issues, but I will pass this topic on to the young scholars.

I do not study the inter-related aspects of the identity of Korean women, but apropos of other sources and from previous studies, I understand that in the socialization of children, when it comes to the choice of ethnic identity, the most important factor is the father, not the mother. In the case of Jewish people, for example, the mother is important to inherit the Jewish ethnic origin. For Koreans, however, the lineage of the father is paramount. I have met young girls in Russia and Ukraine who look totally like white girls, but they are Korean. This is because their family last name is Kim or Lee and they identify themselves as Korean, not Russian. The image of Koreans is very high, the kids are quite proud to be Korean in the post-Soviet space; Korea is a very developed country and K-pop is very popular. Today the reaction is “oh you are Kim, you are a Korean guy with ‘Kangnam style.’” In other words, today it is now “ok” to be Korean.

#### *Historical background*

Dr. Chika Obiya (associate professor at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies specializing in Central Asian studies and modern history, specifically Uzbekistan) and Dr. German Kim

Dr. Obiya:

The Soviet emancipation of women, not only for the Soviet Koreans, but for all women in the Soviet Union, was an effort by Soviet power to make women *workers*. They should be working, and at the same time, they should be a good mother. This was the overarching goal, with three sub-goals: 1) to attain socialistic equal rights of men and women, 2) to increase women’s social participation, and 3) to socialize childcare and housekeeping (which was, in my opinion, amazing for the 1920s). In the Central Asian context, Soviet power wanted to bring women out from the home and specifically out from the influence of Islam to make them workers. In Uzbekistan, the target of the women’s emancipation was specifically the abolition of the veiling of women and an end to the segregation of women.

The Central Asian national republics, including Uzbekistan, were established mainly as a result of national delimitation of Central Asia in 1924 under the Soviet regime, though Kazakhstan was formed earlier, in 1918. Each national republic or territory, or each Soviet nation had its own priorities and practices in the activities aimed for emancipation of women, discourses and images of which we saw in the presentations of Professor Kim and Dr. Karimova.

It is astounding that a cinema industry began in the territory of today's Uzbekistan so soon after the Soviet Revolution there, even before the formation of the Uzbek Republic, when there were Soviet Republics of Turkistan, Bukhara and Khiva. As is well known, Lenin said the cinema and the circus were the most important forms of Soviet culture while the people were still illiterate. Cinema played a very important role as a form of socialistic art and the state supported it very much and it was used for propaganda. Although there was a strong initiative from Moscow to develop the cinema industry in Central Asia, there might also be local initiative in the republics, and the interaction between Moscow and Central Asia, if there was, seems to be quite interesting to study. In order for the cinema industry to develop, the support of some local Communist politicians in the Central Asian republics might be needed. Former Jadids, or Muslim reformers before the Russian Revolution, aimed to reform Muslim society by introducing a new system of education. We know that they promoted the theater and plays as useful and effective education tools to influence people to modernize society. In some ways, the development of cinema may be seen as a kind of continuation of these methods.

Dr. Kim:

In the emancipation of Korean women in the Far East, the first two tasks were education and employment. As the Koreans were surrounded by the dominant Russian population, the first task of the Russian government after the Revolution was the struggle against illiteracy among Korean women. All Soviet Koreans of the Far East were provided an education during the Soviet time; there were over 400 schools, three colleges, and one Korean Pedagogical Institute. In traditional Korean society, the married woman should care for the parents of her husband. This is very heavy burden of care. In the old Korea, girls were not educated and when they married, they did not work. Therefore, to achieve gender equality for Soviet Korean women in the Far East, providing education and a job were most important.

#### *Literary works of Soviet-Koreans*

The first contemporary modern Korean writer was a Soviet-Korean who published a couple of books. Cho Myung-hee is something of a father of the contemporary Korean novel and is respected by the literary circles in South and North Korea. Until the 1950s, a group of Soviets were able to write in Korean and they published from the deportation to the collapse of the Soviet Union on topics in all fields. However, during 50 years of Soviet power (from 1937 to 1987), only 17 literary books were published in Korean. Of these, 15 are anthologies of lyrics. This is primarily because Soviet-Koreans could not earn enough money and survive as writers. Writers worked as journalists for Korean newspapers, not publishing books.

Another group of writers is those working in the Korean theater established in the Russian Far East in Vladivostok, which is still functioning today. These people worked in the theater, but not they are not writers per se. They are the playwrights for the Korean theater. However, even at this Korean theater, Moscow and local authorities decide that 20 percent of the plays performed on stage should be Russian classics, 20 percent, western classics, and 20 percent, plays written by Kazakh playwrights. The rest are

classical Korean dramas and plays about the contemporary life of the Korean diaspora living in Soviet Central Asia.

Another phenomenon is that of Korean writers who write in Russian. There are about a dozen of such writers who are quite good, including Anatoly Kim, who is a quite famous Russian-speaking writer. After the 1970s, only a few writers in the Soviet Union were writing in Korean. They belonged to the Sakhalin Koreans, who still used their native language, and to the small group of former students from North Korea who refused to return home and obtained political asylum in the Soviet Union. All of them were able to write in Korean, but only one of them, Han Dae-yong (Han Jin), became a well-known Soviet-Korean writer.

#### *Recovery of silent films*

Eljon Abbasov (film director)

I and Dr. Karimova initiated a project to recover Uzbek silent movies that were kept in the archives for a long time. For example, the film *A Daughter of the Saint* has not been seen by anyone for more than 80 years. These films are striking in no small part because they are silent. Actresses and actors must show their emotions through their facial expressions and body language. Cinematographers are able to use this to clearly demonstrate the process of the emancipation of women in Central Asia, and cinema of the time traces every step of the emancipation. The two silent films *Leper* and *Minaret of the Death* reflect the reality of Muslim women's lives in the 1920s although they were propaganda films. They were shown to the wider public when they were first produced, but after Stalin's repression, almost all the filmmakers were repressed. Half of the cinematographers were shot and killed. The fate of the heroines in these silent films were somehow repeated in real life, as these films were ended by the death of the cinematographers.