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SOVIET KOREAN (KORYO-IN) IN CENTRAL ASIA AND KOREAN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many religious groups from various countries became actively engaged in Central Asia. In light of this development, this work examines post-Soviet types of religious development and re-imagining of religion based on several case studies of Korean religious activities in Central Asia. In particular, this paper examines how the Korean religious organizations have engaged in this new environment in Central Asia. Many Korean religious groups began their activities due to the presence of their ethnic compatriots (Koryo-in) living in Central Asia. The activities of the two major Korean religious groups, Christian and Buddhist, in Central Asia are explored. Before dealing with the subject, the religious condition and religious peculiarity of Korea and Koreans in the mainland (South Korea) are examined.

Keywords: Religious activities, Central Asia, Soviet Korean, Korea

Öz

Orta Asya'daki Sovyet Koreliler ve Sovyet Sonrası Orta Asya'daki Koreliler'in Dini Etkinlikleri

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılışından sonra, çeşitli ülkelerden birçok din topluluğu etkin bir şekilde Orta Asya ile ilgilenmeye başlamıştır. Bu çalışmada, bu durum göz önüne alınarak dinin tekrar tasarımlanması ve dini gelişmelere dair Orta Asya'daki Koreliler'in dini etkinliklerini temel almış olan Sovyet sonrası model araştırılmaktadır. Bu makale, özellikle Koreli din kuruluşlarının Orta Asya'da yeni oluşan bu durumla nasıl ilgilendiğini ele almaktadır. Birçok Koreli din topluluğu, Orta Asya'da yaşayan yurttaşları sayesinde harekete geçmiştir. Sonrasında Koreliler'den oluşan majör din kuruluşu, Hristiyan ve Budist etkinlikleri de incelenecektir. Bu konuyu ele almadan önce anavatandaki (Güney Kore) Kore'nin ve Koreliler'in dinsel durumu ile özellikleri incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Orta Asya, Kore, Sovyet Koreli, Dini Etkinlik*

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This work examines post-Soviet types of religious development and re-imagining of religion based on several case studies of Korean religious activities in Central Asia, particularly focusing on the ethnic Koreans (Koryo-in) in Central Asia. Under the Soviet system, religious intellectual life was eliminated but traditions continued to survive. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Islamic movements have emerged alongside ethnic and secular ones. To a certain extent, Islam has served as a symbol of identity and a force for mobilization in Central Asia. However, in the post-Soviet environment of expanded civil freedom with great everyday uncertainty, unhappiness, injustice, and suffering, (Ed- I suggest that the highlight is a very subjective view of this post-Soviet environment, and furthermore, cannot be completely true throughout this wide region. I suggest you reconsider your statement; it seems too generalized) various religious organizations in Central Asia are experiencing new opportunities. Many religious groups from various countries have been actively engaging in Central Asia.

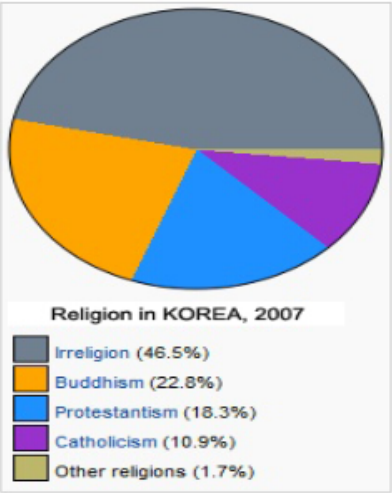
In light of these developments, this paper (Ed- by convention, present verb tense is used in the last paragraph of the Introduction when the paper outline is presented) examines how the Korean religious organizations have been engaging in this new environment in Central Asia. Many of them commenced religious activities due to the presence of their ethnic compatriots (Koryo-in) living in Central Asia. The activities in Central Asia of the two major Korean religious groups, Christian and Buddhist, are explored. This work is based on published materials, internet sources, documents and reports on Korean religious activities in Central Asia. Before dealing with the subject, the religious condition and unique aspects of Koreans in living in the mainland (South Korea) are examined.

Religion in Korea

Traditionally, Koreans were a people who often called on supernatural powers and carried out rituals for spiritual reasons. Historians tell us that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism have all been prominent in Korea since its early history, informing people's view of life both here and in the afterworld. It is thus no surprise that even contemporary observers remark that modernization has not affected the demand for religions in Korea, a land dotted with countless crosses above churches in the cities, while the countryside teems with Buddhist temples of every type. In addition, in many urban neighborhoods one can still encounter innumerable residences of fortunetelling (Korean: jeomjip), which were inter-mixed with shamanism, Buddhism and local traditional belief.

The statistics exemplify Koreans' resilient religiosity. Today, only half of its fifty million people profess to hold religious affiliations. According to a government survey conducted in 2007, more than 29% of Koreans identified themselves as Christian (18.3% Protestant and 10.9% Roman Catholic), while 22.8% were solidly Buddhist.[1] Almost half (46.5%) of those questioned claimed to be agnostic, but upon closer inspection, even they engaged in religious activities of various kinds: going to Buddhist monasteries to pray for a child's academic success, consulting Christian ministers for a healing prayer, and maybe visiting a shaman or two for fortunetelling and even an exorcism – all without thinking that one must be bound to the teachings of a single tradition.

It has been remarked that Koreans practice an "instrumentalist" approach to religious life, or simply put, subscribe to any religion so long as it proves beneficial to their goals here and now (Lee. 1998: 43). This trend may have had a influence on the Korean religious activities abroad, in our case Central Asia. Although Korean religious groups defend themselves passionately and not infrequently denounce others as a way of asserting their superiority, in reality many Koreans see little wrong in taking advantage of every religious option available to them. Even the most fervent Christians and Buddhists will consult the clergy of competing traditions if they believe it will serve some tangible purpose. Such is the classic formulation of Korean religiosity: people adrift in a sea of beliefs, relying on anything and everything to survive (Park. 2004: 29). As a result, Korea has an abundance of religious holidays, i.e., two New Years, which are celebrated according to both lunar (traditional belief) and solar calendars, Buddha's Birthday, Ch'usok (the Harvest Festival, traditional belief), Kaech'aonjol (Foundation Day, traditional belief) and Christmas. Korea is probably the only country in the world to have such a diverse range of religious holidays.



[1] "Hankuk Jong-gyo Hyun-whang (Religion of Korea 2008)", Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, http://culturestat.mcst.go.kr/StatisticsPortal/McstPortal/index.jsp : Cultural statistic of Korea

Given the great diversity of religious expression, religion has played a complex role in South Korea's social development. Some traditions, e.g. Buddhism and Confucianism, are adhered to as important cultural properties rather than as rites of worship. Confucianism remains important as a social ethic and its influence is evident in the immense importance Koreans ascribe to education. Christianity is identified with modernization and social reform. Many Christians in contemporary South Korea, such as veteran political opposition leader and ex-president Kim Dae-jung, a Catholic, have been outspoken advocates of human rights and critics of the government. Christian-sponsored organizations, such as the Urban Industrial Mission, promote labor organizations and the union movement.

Buddhism entered Korea from China during the 4th century, becoming the dominant religious and cultural influence during the Shilla (668-935) and Koryo (918-1392) dynasties. Confucianism was also brought to Korea from China in the 9th to 10th centuries, but it occupied a subordinate position until the establishment of the Choson Dynasty (1392~1897) and the persecution of Buddhism carried out by the early Choson Dynasty kings. These days, Buddhism is stronger in the more traditional east of Korea, namely the Yeongnam and Gangwon regions, where it accounts for more than half of the religious population. Buddhism in Korea is dominated by the Jogye Order, a syncretic sect traditionally linked to the Seon (Zen Buddhism) tradition. Most of the country's old and famous temples are operated by the Jogye Order, which is headquartered at Jogyesa in central Seoul.

Protestant missionaries entered Korea during the 1880s, along with Catholic priests. They converted a remarkable number of Koreans. Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries were especially successful. They established schools, universities, hospitals, and orphanages and played a significant role in the modernization of the country. These are also the main missionary methods of Korean Christians in Central Asia today. During the Japanese colonial occupation, Christians were in the front ranks of the struggle for independence. Factors contributing to the growth of Protestantism included the degenerate state of Korean Buddhism, the efforts made by educated Christians to reconcile Christian and Confucian values, the encouragement of self-support and self-government among members of the Korean church, and the identification of Christianity with Korean nationalism.

A large number of Christians lived in the northern part of the peninsula where Confucian influence was not as strong as in the south. Before 1948, Pyongyang was an important Christian center: one-sixth of its population of about 300,000 people were converts. Following the establishment of a

communist regime in the north, however, most Christians had to flee to South Korea or face persecution. The profusion of church steeples in most South Korean cities has often attracted attention. Christianity, which initially gained a foothold in Korea in the late 18th century, grew exponentially in the 1970s and 1980s, and despite slower growth in the 1990s, caught up to and then surpassed Buddhism in its number of adherents. Christians are especially strong in the west of the country, including Seoul, Gyeonggi and Honam regions. Seoul is home to Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest single church in the world. The Christian faith in Korea is heavily dominated by four denominations: Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists.

Many multi-religious societies live under the threat of disintegration, but Korea's diverse religions have managed to coexist since ancient times. During Korea's long history, dynastic change has been brought about under the name of religion, but religion has never led to the division of the people. Even among Koreans today, nobody wants to divide the Korean people on religious grounds. To this extent, Korean's homogeneity is considered to be more important to Koreans than any religious value.

Soviet Korean (Koryo-in) and the Korean Religious Activities

Koryo-in in Central Asia

Over half a million Koreans live in the former Soviet Union, about two-thirds of them in Central Asia: 100,000 in Kazakhstan, 180,000 in Uzbekistan, and 30,000 in Kyrgyzstan. The rest are living in Russia and other CIS states. Ethnic Koreans (around 200,000) arrived in Central Asia in 1937 after they were deported during the Stalinist purges from the Russian Far East to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Initially Korean deportees were concentrated in rural, agrarian regions, but today the majority of ethnic Koreans are located in urban centers. In the past, the term "Soviet Koreans" was used to refer to all Koreans living in the USSR, but the Koreans referred to themselves as either "Koryo saram" or "Choson saram" interchangeably. Nowadays the former term is preferred by local ethnic Koreans. Recently in South Korea "Koryo-in" has become most commonly used in reference to post-Soviet Koreans.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of titular states in the former Soviet Union opened a new page in the history of the Koryo-in. Compare with many other ethnic minorities, ethnic Koreans had no option but to stay in their titular states. Officially or legally they have all been undesirable in, or unable to move to, their original homelands. Consequently, a decade later, the majority of Koreans in Central Asia now

seems to accept their status as ethnic minorities in the newly independent states and are adapting rapidly to their host-states (Oh. 2006: 38).

Hence Koryo-in are in the process of reconstructing their national identity or diaspora identity in the newly formed environment to unify themselves. The flow of migration has dropped off, particularly after the mid-1990s, and it has become clear that at least a significant portion of the Koreans residing in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will remain in the region, at least for the foreseeable future.

The character traits emphasized by the Soviet Koreans during the Soviet period, actively coping with the situation (or social change), have served them well in the post-independence circumstances. Indeed, this is one of the defining features of the Korean diaspora society against the historical backdrop and regional peculiarities of Central Asia. In addition, the outstanding human resources built up among Koryo-in during the Soviet period in many specialized fields have been diverted into commercial fields. Many Koryo-ins are currently engaged in various commercial activities. In this respect, the Koryo-ins are said to be the leading diaspora who are quickly adapting to a new economy. However, some Korean diaspora intellectuals worry that such a situation might lower their intellectual level in the future by influencing the younger generations to choose commercial activities rather than educational or academic achievements. This phenomenon is perhaps best understood as a temporary, adverse phenomenon arising from social and economic transitions (Oh. 2006:19). In this transitional period, material independence or economic well-being is important in mobilizing the diaspora movement and various activities. Abundant funding would enable the Koryo-ins to organize and maintain their associations and centers more effectively and powerfully throughout the republic.

It had been speculated that the Koryo-in had long been assimilated into the Russified society. Lacking the proper conditions to develop diaspora activities, their assimilation seemed inevitable. However, for the Korean diaspora, speaking Russian as a first language did not mean a renunciation of their ethnic identity (*ibid*.). They have identified themselves unequivocally as Koreans since the Soviet period. Despite centuries of assimilation, it is worth noting that the Koryo-in have somehow managed to perpetuate their ethnicity and diaspora nationalism. The Koreans' strategy of adaptation was integration rather than assimilation. As Berry argues, integration implies some maintenance of the group's cultural integrity, as well as some movement to become an integral part of the host-society (Berry. 1997: 299). Despite the absence of any political mobilization or cultural associations

during the Soviet period, the Koryo-in somehow preserved their traditional customs, values and cuisine. Like many other deported nationalities, the Koryo-in also mythologized the deportation and utilized its memory in preserving their ethnic identity and collective consciousness. The sufferings of deportation facilitated and strengthened the ties among Koreans. While they may not speak their mother tongue or may not always observe traditional celebrations, the Koryo-in have always had strong kinships and ethnic unity. Thus, their situation is better described as integration rather than assimilation because many of them still maintain and develop at least some degree of ethnic distinctiveness (Oh. 2007: 38).

The Korean diaspora simply integrated well into the main stream population for their socio-economical well-being and advancement.

Since the independence of the ex-Soviet titular nations, i.e., Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the South Korean government overtly and continuously announced its inability to repatriate its compatriots of the Korean diaspora in the region but guaranteed to help and protect their peaceful and prosperous future in their home states. This consistent policy of the homeland induced the Koreans of the diaspora to vest their future in the titular states and actively participate in the diaspora activities (including politics) to maximize their benefits and advantageous position in each republic. Many Koryo-ins in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and South Korea have been able to capitalize to varying degrees on their shared ethnicity to further their socio-economic prospects (*ibid*., 42).

Religious Belief of Koryo-in and Korean Religious Activity

Historical experience shows one characteristic feature of the Koryo-in: their special ability to adapt to new ecological, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. The first generation of Koryo-in tried as quickly as possible to adapt to the new living conditions of the Tsarist Empire and later of Soviet Russia. That generation learned Russian and accepted orthodoxy, and then two decades later abandoned the religion, following the Communist Party line. For the Jewish Diaspora, Judaism is its ethnic essence and the main identifier of Jewishness, but for the Koreans in Central Asia, their religious belief has not been a core ethnic identifier. Likewise, the atheism of the Soviet period halted the traditional Korean beliefs, religions, and rituals, as well as certain forms of Confucian ceremonies. The diaspora's elder generation taught succeeding generations only the basic aspects of such ceremonies (birth-age celebration, wedding ceremonies, funeral and commemoration rites and some traditional festival), without delving into their religious and semantic meanings. As a result, religion did not play a significant role in the lives of Koreans in Central Asia until the

establishment of titular states, when many Korean religious groups advanced to the region.

Korean religious groups, mainly various Christian groups and two Buddhist groups began to arrive after the establishment of the titular states in Central Asia. Actually, the pioneering religious groups were Christian. Only after 2005 did Buddhist groups start to enter Central Asia. Pioneers of Korean Christian missions began to arrive during "perestroika", when diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea were not yet established and pastors came with American passports. After official relations with the Central Asia republics had been established, the stream of South Korean pastors and missionaries increased. Some political, economic, ideological and ethnic factors contributed to this. At first, the proselytizing of the South Korean missionaries was addressed to the local Koreans as the most fertile and this did not lead to any counteraction from the official authorities in Central Asian countries who were pursuing a balanced policy of state support to moderate Islam.[2] However, as the number of South Korean churches sharply increased, with a 100-fold increase in congregation number, the influence of the introduced Christian confessions became tangible among local populations who used to be considered Muslims or Orthodox Christians only on the basis of their ethnic origin. Hence, the attitude towards the South Korean missionaries / Korean religious groups / South Korean churches (Ed- 'them' is not clear; specify what is the object here) changed.

The official authorities admit that missionaries have carried out significant work for the consolidation of the Korean Diaspora. Why do churches established by South Korean pastors attract Central Asian Koreans? This question has multiple answers: the missionaries organized free lessons in the Korean language and clubs of a non-religious nature, they carried out charitable activities, rendered material and financial support to people in need, stimulated attendance by offering possible trips to Korea, and created the possibility for obtaining a theological education and career as a member of the clergy. Thus, not only religious content, but also the so called "social package" offered to community members attracted many individuals to South Korean missionary churches (Ahn. 2010: 7).

Numerous churches around the region, even in the rural areas, provide Korean language courses to the Korean diaspora free of charge whenever an interest is expressed. However, initially such classes are not a part of any larger revitalization effort on the part of the churches. As pastor Lee Bumsuk

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[2] "Islam approach to Koreans, Understanding and Coexistence among Religions", a rep ort presented at the *Korean Conference of Religion for Peace*, Seoul Press Center, 20 10. June.1

in Tashkent explained, the Korean church is not seeking out Koreans *perse*, and neither is the church attempting to play any direct role in a nationalizing project.[3] Nevertheless, the existence of Koreans in the region has made it possible for them to gain a foothold in that country, which has in turn allowed the South Korean missionaries to play a role in fostering a transnational network among co-ethnics. As a consequence, many Korean churches, including the American churches run by Korean-Americans, hold Korean language classes for church members and other locals (including Korean diaspora and titulars) on a formal basis. As a result, these churches indirectly contribute to the revitalization activities, even though this may be unintentional. In other words, their contribution to the language (or tradition) revival can be assessed as an unintended consequence of the missionaries' evangelizing work and later this project became one of the important projects of many Korean churches.

Generally, sizable Korean missionary churches are mainly concentrated in large cities in Central Asia, which have the highest share of the Korean population. For instance, in Almaty, where more than 20 thousand Koreans, or 20% of all Kazakhstani Koryo-in, live, about 30 South Korean Christian churches operate. Due to these Korean churches' operation and activities, many Koryo-in converted their religion to Protestantism. The exact number of converts remains unknown due to the lack of any official statistics; however, according to the unofficial approximate data from the local Koryo-in, around 30-40 percent of Koryo-in confess themselves as Protestants.[4]

South Korean missionary churches, utilizing different forms and methods of ideological indoctrination, managed to pass the initial developmental stage in Central Asian soil. However, numerous political, social-economic, demographic and cultural factors have prevented Protestantism from achieving structural integration in the confessional life of the post Soviet states of Central Asia. The South Korean pastors preaching Christianity and fundamental principles of Protestantism among the multi-ethnic community are trying to correct the mistakes originally made in the proselytism of the masses, including the Korean Diaspora. Interference of missionaries in the ethno-cultural life, prohibitions by pastors to carry out traditional rites, especially funeral and commemoration rituals, caused protests among elder Koreans who do not want to lose their Confucian-Buddhism-based customs and traditions. Many elder ethnic Koreans diaspora think that the Protestanization process in the Koryo-in

[3] Interview with Pastor Lee Bumsuk, Tashkent, 2005.- cited in (OH. 2007).

[4] Interview with local Pastor and Christian, Tashkent, 2005.- cited in - cited in (OH. 2007).

community is creating a strong tendency to lose ethno-cultural traditions among young people.

From the very beginning, the Korean Church was enthusiastic about evangelization, and by officially launching missionary work, it transformed itself from a self-evangelization church into a self-missionizing church. It has widened the scope of its mission from national saturation mission to diaspora mission and to cross-cultural mission. It is reported that over twenty thousand Korean missionaries went abroad in 2009 (Ahn. 2010: 9), 2,000 of whom are doing their evangelization mission in Central Asia.[5] The Korean Presbyterian Church, the largest church in Korea, is a key player in the missionary movement in Central Asia. Later, the Baptist church and the Korean Methodist churches also participated in the missionary activities.

Korean Missionary Abroad - 2007

<table>
<tr><td>Korean Missionaries sent abroad</td><td colspan="3">2007</td></tr>
<tr><td>Korean Missionaries sent abroad</td><td colspan="3">18,625</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Top 10 areas sent by Korean missionaries

Korean Missionaries sent to Asia : 10,594</td><td colspan="3">USA, Japan, Philippines, India, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Germany, Canada
[Total: 9,946]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Far East Asia</td><td>South East Asia</td><td>Central Asia</td></tr>
<tr><td>5,034</td><td>2,999</td><td>2561</td></tr>
<tr><td>Missionary Gender</td><td colspan="3">Male: 47% / Female 53%</td></tr>
</table>

Source: www.kwma.org. (The Korea world Missions Association)

[5] Since 2007, due to the strict religious policy at the Titular states in Central Asia, the size of Korean missionary is decreasing.

Also, Moon Sun Myung's Unification Church tried to enter Central Asia but failed to establish operations in the region.

There is no exact statistics of Buddhists in Central Asia; however, according to various sources it is estimated that there are approximately 168,186 Buddhists in post-Soviet Central Asia, the majority of whom are assumed to be from the ethnic Korean diaspora and the minority from the ethnic Chinese and Mongolian. In case of Uzbekistan, 0.2% of its population is Buddhist and the most of them are from ethnic Koreans, according to US State Department's International Religious Freedom Report of 2004.[6] However, these days Buddhism in Central Asia is adhered to as a cultural phenomenon rather than as rites of worship.

Buddhism by country in the Central Asia

National flag	Country	Population(2007E)	% of Buddhists	Buddhist total
	Kazakhstan	15,422,000	0.53% [7]	81,843
	Kyrgyzstan	5,317,000	0.35% [8]	18,610
	Mongolia	2,874,127	94% [9][10]	2,701,679
	Tajikistan	7,076,598	0.1% [11]	7,076
	Turkmenistan	5,097,028	0.1% [12]	5,097
	Uzbekistan	27,780,059	0.2% [13][14]	55,560
Total		**95,456,735**	**3.106%**	**2,965,535**

source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Central_Asia

The expansion of Buddhism throughout most of Asia was peaceful and occurred in several ways. Shakyamuni Buddha set the precedent. Being primarily a teacher, he traveled to nearby kingdoms to share his insights with those who were receptive and interested. Likewise, he instructed his monks to go forth in the world and expound his teachings. He did not ask others to denounce and give up their own religion and convert to a new one, for he was not seeking to establish his own religion. He was merely trying to help others overcome the unhappiness and suffering that they were creating for themselves because of their lack of understanding. Later generations of followers were inspired by Buddha's example and shared with others his methods that they found useful in their lives. For instance, Buddhism spread throughout northern India due to the personal endorsement of King Ashoka.

[6] http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2004/ , 2004 Report on International Religious Freedom.

This great Buddhist empire-builder did not force his subjects to adopt the Buddhist faith. But by posting edicts engraved on iron pillars throughout his realm exhorting his people to lead an ethical life and by following these principles himself, he inspired others to adopt Buddha's teachings. King Ashoka also actively proselytized outside his kingdom by sending missions to distant lands. For others, he sent monks as envoys at his own initiative. These visiting monastics, however, did not forcefully pressure others to convert, but simply made Buddha's teachings available, allowing people to choose for themselves. Consequently, "Buddhism" spread far and wide. Such a process occurred with Buddhism in Korea as well. Accordingly, there has been no missionary movement of Buddhism in Korea since 2005, when Korean Buddhism started to think about its global mission to heal the people living in various cities. Such movement was started in Korea when the popularity of Buddhism increased in the Western world. It was Zen Buddhism (Seon in Korean), which emphasized meditation for self-healing, that attracted many Western city dwellers.

'Seon Buddhism', which stresses meditation, monasticism, and asceticism, was the mainstream of Korean Buddhism, and thus it was an easier movement for Korean Buddhism to spread since there was outside demand. As a result, many Korean Zen (Seon) Centers were opened in the Western societies (mainly the US, Australia, Canada, UK, Germany, etc.) since the new millennium. Currently, Korean Buddhism is in a state of slow transition from passive to active policy in missionary activities. It was within this trend that Buddhist missions entered Central Asia in 2005.

Since 2005, Monk Joju master is leading the Korean Buddhist movement in Central Asia. He has established Buddhist shrines in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 2005 and 2006. However, due to the nature of Buddhism, it is not asking others to denounce or give up their original religion and convert to Buddhism. Generally, the main mission of these Buddhist shrines is to expound Buddha's teaching to ethnic Koreans and titular people. However, to the ethnic Koreans, Koryo-in, Buddhist centers in Tashkent and Almaty are playing a crucial role in reviving the traditional rites and commemoration rituals of the Korean people, which were generally inter-mixed with Buddhism and Korean traditions and value. Since Buddhist methods and styles were modified to fit the local mentality, without compromising the essential points of Buddha's wisdom and compassion, many Korean values, customs and traditions were combined in Korean Buddhism. Thus, Korean Buddhism is attempting to recover Koryo-in's ethno-cultural life by preserving Buddhist-Confucian-based customs and traditions of Koreans. This movement is particularly welcomed by the elder generation of ethnic Koreans in Central Asia who do not want to lose their traditional values and customs.

In addition, some Won-Buddhist communities, followers of a Buddhist sect founded in Korea in the early 20th century, have recently appeared in Almaty and Bishkek, but they few and quite new to the locals and Koryo-in.

Concluding Remarks: Religiosity of Koryo-in in Central Asia

The religious outlook of many Koryo-in is still vague and in the embryonic stage. It seems that the official religions of the Central Asian countries, Islam and Orthodoxy, have not attracted Koryo-in. In this circumstances, energetic and diverse in its forms Proselytism of South Korean Christian missions (mainly Protestantism) are giving new roots to younger generation of Koryo-in. But considering the scale of Korean Christian missions its results seem to be limited to certain groups and region. Also instrumental reason and other various merits beyond religious confession are important factors that gathers Koryo-in in the Church. As mentioned, not only religious content, but also the so called "social package" offered to community members attracted many individuals to South Korean missionary churches. On the other, traditional rituals and customs their roots going back to the religious Confucianism and Buddhism are reviving with the efforts of Buddhism and the elder generation of Koryo-in. However, the scale of the Korean Buddhist activities in Central Asia is very small and limited.

Presently, any discourse about the typology of the religious consciousness of Koryo-in is premature. Similar to mainland Korea, religion has not occupied an important or strong position in the ethnic consciousness of Koryo-in. Nevertheless, it would also be incorrect to underestimate the role of the confessional aspect in the life of Koryo-in in Central Asia. Today, many local Koreans observe that the activities of the Korean religious group have stagnated, possibly because Koryo-in practice an "instrumentalist" approach to religious life, like the mainland Koreans. Many Koryo-in see little wrong in taking advantage of every religious option available to them.

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