

PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF ETHNOCULTURAL TRADITIONS OF KOREANS IN KARAKALPAKSTAN

Berdibekov Muhammed Konisbayevich

E-mail: konisbayevichmuhammed@gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines the preservation and transformation of the ethnocultural traditions of Koreans living in Karakalpakstan, highlighting their historical migration, social adaptation, and cultural integration processes. The research emphasizes how traditional values such as language, cuisine, rituals, and folklore have been preserved across generations while simultaneously undergoing transformation under the influence of globalization, urbanization, and intercultural exchange. Special attention is paid to the role of family institutions, community associations, and cultural centers in maintaining the identity of the Korean diaspora. Furthermore, the article discusses the challenges and opportunities in balancing cultural continuity with modernization and integration into the multicultural society of Karakalpakstan. The findings demonstrate that the ethnocultural heritage of Koreans serves not only as a marker of identity but also as a bridge fostering intercultural dialogue and social cohesion in the region.

Keywords: Karakalpakstan; Koreans; ethnocultural traditions; cultural preservation; cultural transformation; diaspora studies; intercultural communication; globalization; identity; cultural heritage; adaptation; integration; multicultural society; folklore; rituals.

Introduction. The study of ethnocultural traditions has become increasingly important in the context of globalization, modernization, and migration processes. For ethnic minority communities, the preservation of cultural heritage is not only a way to maintain identity, but also a key factor in ensuring social stability and fostering intercultural dialogue. The Korean diaspora in Karakalpakstan represents one of the most vivid examples of how ethnic groups adapt to new environments while striving to preserve their traditions.

The history of Koreans in Central Asia is closely linked to forced migration in the 1930s, when thousands of families were relocated from the Far East to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, including the territory of modern Karakalpakstan. Despite the challenges of resettlement, Koreans managed to preserve elements of their traditional culture, such as language, cuisine, customs, folklore, and family rituals, which have been transmitted from generation to generation. At the same time, these traditions have undergone gradual transformation under the influence of the local Karakalpak, Uzbek, and other cultures, as well as the broader social and economic changes of the region.

Today, the ethnocultural heritage of Koreans in Karakalpakstan reflects a dynamic balance between preservation and transformation. On the one hand, Korean cultural centers, community organizations, and family institutions continue to play a decisive role in safeguarding traditions. On the other hand, new generations are more exposed to urban lifestyles, mass culture, and global communication, which inevitably modifies their cultural practices. This dual process of continuity and change raises questions about the mechanisms of cultural resilience, adaptation, and integration in a multicultural society.

Therefore, the analysis of Korean ethnocultural traditions in Karakalpakstan is not only of historical and cultural interest but also has practical significance for understanding interethnic

harmony, cultural sustainability, and the development of social cohesion in modern Uzbekistan. The question of how diasporic communities preserve their cultural traditions while adapting to new social environments has long been central to anthropological and sociological inquiry. Diasporas are not only carriers of memory and heritage but also agents of transformation, negotiating between inherited practices and the realities of their host societies. In this sense, the Korean diaspora in Karakalpakstan represents a vivid example of resilience and adaptability.

Historical migration patterns have played a decisive role in shaping the identity of Koreans in Central Asia. Their forced relocation in the 1930s created conditions of hardship, yet it also led to the establishment of tightly knit communities that relied on cultural traditions as a means of survival and solidarity. Over time, these traditions evolved into symbols of identity, ensuring both continuity and adaptation in a multicultural setting.

In recent decades, globalization, digital communication, and urbanization have further influenced the cultural practices of Koreans in Karakalpakstan. Traditional rituals, clothing styles, and folklore continue to be observed, but they are increasingly intertwined with modern lifestyles and global cultural trends. This process highlights the dynamic nature of identity construction in diasporic contexts, where cultural preservation and transformation coexist.

Moreover, the study of Korean traditions in Karakalpakstan contributes to broader debates on cultural sustainability and multiculturalism in Uzbekistan. As the country promotes policies of ethnic diversity and intercultural dialogue, the experiences of the Korean diaspora provide valuable lessons for fostering social cohesion and cultural pluralism.

Thus, the examination of the preservation and transformation of ethnocultural traditions of Koreans in Karakalpakstan is not only a matter of historical and cultural interest but also a lens through which broader issues of migration, identity, and globalization can be understood.

Literature Review. The study of ethnocultural preservation and transformation within diaspora communities has been widely discussed in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. Scholars emphasize that diasporas play a crucial role in maintaining cultural diversity while simultaneously adapting to new sociocultural environments. According to Cohen (2008), diasporic communities are defined not only by their shared historical experiences of migration and displacement but also by their ability to maintain cultural cohesion across generations.

Research on the Korean diaspora in Central Asia has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Kim (2013) highlights the forced migration of Koreans from the Russian Far East in the 1930s as a turning point that shaped their collective identity and socio-economic life in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Similarly, Pak (2016) stresses the importance of family institutions and community organizations in preserving language, rituals, and folklore, despite the challenges of assimilation.

Other scholars, such as Safarov (2019), note that while many elements of traditional culture have been preserved, they have also undergone transformation due to intercultural interactions with local populations, particularly Uzbek and Karakalpak communities. This process of cultural hybridization has created a unique ethnocultural synthesis that distinguishes the Korean diaspora of Central Asia from other Korean communities worldwide.

In the broader context of globalization, authors such as Appadurai (1996) and Hall (1997) argue that cultural identity is never static but is constantly negotiated and reshaped under external influences, including mass media, education, and global migration flows. These theories are

particularly relevant for analyzing the cultural dynamics of Koreans in Karakalpakstan, where traditional practices coexist with new, modernized forms of cultural expression.

Additionally, studies on cultural preservation in multicultural societies (Smith, 2009; Vertovec, 2012) emphasize the importance of state policies, community initiatives, and intercultural dialogue in sustaining ethnocultural traditions. In Uzbekistan, the government has supported national cultural centers, which have played a significant role in promoting cultural diversity and strengthening the identity of ethnic minorities, including Koreans.

Overall, the literature suggests that the Korean diaspora in Karakalpakstan exemplifies a dual process: the preservation of core traditions such as rituals, folklore, and cuisine, alongside the transformation and adaptation of practices in response to social, economic, and cultural changes. This makes it a valuable case study for exploring broader questions of identity, resilience, and integration in multiethnic contexts.

Research Methodology This study employs a qualitative and interdisciplinary research design to analyze the preservation and transformation of ethnocultural traditions among Koreans in Karakalpakstan. The methodological framework integrates elements of ethnography, cultural anthropology, sociology, and history in order to capture both the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

First, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in several settlements of Karakalpakstan where Korean communities are concentrated. Participant observation was applied during cultural events, family gatherings, and religious ceremonies to document living traditions such as folklore, rituals, and cuisine. This approach allowed the researcher to gain an insider perspective on how traditions are performed and transmitted across generations.

Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with representatives of different age groups, including elders, community leaders, educators, and youth. In total, 35 respondents were interviewed, with an emphasis on intergenerational perspectives. The interviews focused on themes such as language use, family customs, integration into local society, and perceptions of cultural change.

Third, documentary and archival analysis was undertaken, examining historical records, migration documents, and publications related to the forced relocation of Koreans in the 1930s. Archival materials from local libraries and cultural centers provided essential background for understanding the historical roots of ethnocultural transformation.

In addition, case study analysis of Korean cultural centers in Karakalpakstan was used to evaluate the institutional role in preserving traditions. These centers function as hubs for organizing festivals, teaching the Korean language, and transmitting folklore, thereby playing a crucial role in cultural sustainability.

For data analysis, thematic coding was applied to categorize interview transcripts and field notes, allowing the identification of key patterns in cultural preservation and transformation. Comparative analysis was also employed to highlight differences between older and younger generations in terms of cultural practices and values.

By combining qualitative fieldwork, interviews, archival research, and case studies, this methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of how Korean ethnocultural traditions in Karakalpakstan are preserved, adapted, and reinterpreted in the contemporary social context. The research is based on a qualitative and interpretive methodology that seeks to capture both the historical depth and contemporary dynamics of Korean ethnocultural traditions in

Karakalpakstan. The methodology combines ethnographic fieldwork, archival analysis, and comparative cultural studies, allowing for a holistic examination of preservation and transformation processes.

Fieldwork was carried out between 2022 and 2024 in several districts of Karakalpakstan where Korean communities are concentrated. Participant observation was conducted during family ceremonies, seasonal festivals, and community gatherings, which provided insight into the living performance of traditions. This method made it possible to document how rituals, songs, dances, and food practices are adapted across generations.

To complement observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 participants of varying ages and occupations, including elders, youth, educators, and leaders of cultural centers. The interviews explored participants' perspectives on cultural identity, the importance of traditions in everyday life, and the challenges of maintaining heritage in a multicultural environment. The inclusion of both older and younger generations enabled a comparative view of continuity and change.

In addition, archival and documentary research was undertaken in regional libraries, state archives, and cultural centers. Materials included government documents related to the forced migration of Koreans in the 1930s, memoirs, photographs, and publications in both Korean and local languages. These sources provided a historical context for understanding the roots of community resilience and adaptation.

The research also applied a case study approach, focusing on the activities of Korean cultural associations and educational initiatives in Karakalpakstan. These institutions serve as platforms for language teaching, folklore preservation, and intercultural dialogue, and their role was analyzed in detail to assess their effectiveness in sustaining cultural identity.

For data processing, thematic coding and comparative analysis were employed. Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded into key categories such as "language use," "rituals," "family traditions," "cultural transformation," and "integration." Comparative analysis was then used to highlight differences between generational perspectives and between urban and rural communities.

To strengthen the reliability of the findings, triangulation was applied by cross-checking field observations, interview data, and archival documents. This methodological approach ensured a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the preservation and transformation of Korean ethnocultural traditions in Karakalpakstan.

Research discussion. The research findings demonstrate that the ethnocultural traditions of Koreans in Karakalpakstan are preserved through a strong sense of community and cultural pride. Family institutions, elders, and cultural centers remain central to the process of transmitting traditions such as cuisine, folklore, and rituals. For example, traditional dishes and ancestral rites are still performed regularly, reinforcing a sense of identity among community members.

At the same time, the study reveals significant cultural transformation, especially among younger generations. Due to urbanization, mass culture, and increased exposure to global influences, traditional practices are often simplified or modified. Language is one of the most noticeable areas of change, as Korean is increasingly being replaced by Uzbek, Russian, or Karakalpak in everyday communication. This points to a gradual hybridization of culture, where Korean traditions merge with local customs.

Another important dimension observed is the intergenerational gap in attitudes toward cultural preservation. While elders emphasize continuity and authenticity, young people seek balance between heritage and integration into the broader society. Interestingly, many youths still express pride in their Korean roots, which suggests that identity is not lost but rather reshaped to fit modern realities.

The broader social and political environment in Uzbekistan also plays a crucial role. Supportive state policies, multicultural initiatives, and cultural centers create favorable conditions for maintaining minority identities. In Karakalpakstan, where multiple ethnic groups coexist, this has fostered intercultural dialogue and strengthened social cohesion.

Finally, the case of Koreans in Karakalpakstan provides valuable insights into global diaspora studies. Similar to other diaspora communities worldwide, their traditions illustrate the dual process of cultural preservation and transformation. This highlights that identity is not static but a dynamic process shaped by both historical memory and contemporary influences. The research findings confirm that the Korean diaspora in Karakalpakstan has managed to preserve many of its cultural traditions despite historical displacement and ongoing social changes. Rituals related to family life, seasonal celebrations, and cuisine remain central elements of community identity. These traditions not only strengthen social bonds within the diaspora but also enhance intercultural awareness among neighboring communities.

At the same time, the study highlights how these traditions have been transformed under the influence of modernization and globalization. For instance, wedding ceremonies, which once lasted several days with highly ritualized customs, are now often shortened and integrated with local Karakalpak and Uzbek practices. Similarly, traditional costumes are still worn during festivals but are increasingly replaced with modern clothing in daily life. This indicates that cultural practices are selectively maintained and adapted to new realities.

Another significant finding is the intergenerational negotiation of identity. Older members of the community emphasize the importance of speaking Korean and practicing ancestral customs as markers of authenticity. By contrast, younger generations—while proud of their heritage—often prioritize education, career, and integration into broader society, which sometimes leads to reduced use of the Korean language and simplification of traditions. This dynamic reflects a broader pattern of cultural hybridization seen in diasporic contexts.

The role of state policy and multicultural initiatives cannot be overlooked. The establishment of Korean cultural centers in Uzbekistan, supported by the government, provides a platform for teaching language, folklore, and history. Such initiatives ensure that traditions are not confined to family spaces but are celebrated at the community and national level. These institutional supports enhance the visibility of Korean heritage and contribute to interethnic harmony.

From a theoretical perspective, the case of Koreans in Karakalpakstan supports the argument made by diaspora scholars that cultural identity is not static but a process of continuous negotiation between memory and change. While globalization and modernization exert transformative pressure, strong community institutions, family structures, and cultural pride provide resilience. This dual process of preservation and transformation demonstrates the flexibility of diaspora identity in multicultural environments.

Finally, the discussion highlights the broader implications of this study. The experience of Koreans in Karakalpakstan can inform policies aimed at strengthening cultural sustainability and interethnic harmony in other multiethnic societies. It shows that when minority cultures are

supported through education, cultural institutions, and inclusive policies, they can thrive while also contributing positively to national cohesion.

Conclusion. The study of the Korean diaspora in Karakalpakstan demonstrates that ethnocultural traditions are both resilient and adaptive. Despite the historical trauma of forced migration and the challenges of integration into a new environment, Koreans have succeeded in preserving core elements of their cultural identity, including rituals, folklore, cuisine, and family values. At the same time, these traditions have undergone transformation under the influence of urbanization, globalization, and interaction with local cultures, resulting in a unique cultural synthesis.

The findings reveal that the preservation of cultural heritage is largely supported by family institutions, community organizations, and cultural centers, which continue to play a vital role in transmitting traditions to younger generations. However, intergenerational differences indicate that younger members of the community reinterpret traditions in ways that align with modern lifestyles, highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural identity.

Importantly, the case of Koreans in Karakalpakstan underscores the significance of state support and multicultural policies in ensuring the sustainability of minority cultures. By creating an environment of tolerance and intercultural dialogue, these policies not only safeguard the heritage of ethnic minorities but also strengthen social cohesion in the wider society.

The ethnocultural traditions of Koreans in Karakalpakstan should be seen not as static relics of the past, but as living, evolving practices that serve as both a marker of identity and a bridge for intercultural understanding. This dual process of preservation and transformation provides valuable insights into the broader dynamics of diaspora identity, cultural resilience, and integration in multicultural societies.

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