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**SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF NORTH AMERICAN
KOREANS AS FACTOR OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING**

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Abstract

The processes of migration and Korean Diaspora formation in North America as factors affecting the improvement of social sustainability are analyzed by the authors. The ethno-cultural characteristic of Korean Diaspora in the USA and Canada is given in this regard. Common and specific features and factors of socio-cultural adaptation of Koreans in the USA and Canada are defined. This analysis proves that Korean Diaspora in the USA and Canada has specific features of different periods and history of formation in recipient countries. It also provides a migration background. Young Korean Diaspora in Canada has not adapted to local living conditions yet and it will be transformed in the future. American Koreans managed to integrate and occupy a niche in the USA. However, ethnic Koreans in both countries have common characteristics. The first characteristic is close relations with representatives of their motherland (friends and relatives on the Korean Peninsula). Korea towns (where people speak only Korean) play the important role for ethnic self-identification and unification of North American Koreans. Religion is another crucial factor of Korean reunification in the USA and Canada. Protestant and Catholic churches are also significant for North American Koreans. Apart from religious functions, churches provide different social and cultural services for better adaptation and integration of Koreans. All these factors help Koreans to become an essential part in the North American society.

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1. Introduction

The research relevance is connected with transformation of modern society which is changeable and globalized. Relations between countries and ethnic groups within countries are becoming stronger. Under



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these conditions, migration flows are tremendously increasing, ethnic processes such as acculturation and assimilation are intensified. Owing to migrations, new ethnic groups and sub ethnic groups are formed as an important fact of modern ethno-transformation processes. Newly formed ethnic groups have to adapt to new life conditions and local societies.

Migration mainly defines contemporary international processes. It forms not only the politics of countries but also ethno-confessional, social and cultural image of individual countries and regions.

Korean Diaspora is an essential part of contemporary migration processes. Koreans have different goals when they move from the Korean Peninsula to different regions and countries. These goals are employment, business links and even religious ties.

Nowadays, about 7 million ethnic Koreans live beyond the Korean Peninsula. Representatives of Korean Diaspora live in more than 150 countries of the world. So migration processes and ethno-cultural characteristics of Korean Diaspora in different countries are up to date.

2. Purpose of the study

The objective of the research is to define common and special socio-cultural characteristics of Korean Diaspora in the USA and Canada within the process of formation and at the current state.

3. Research methods

The research of ethnic Koreans migration beyond the Korean Peninsula and the analysis of socio-cultural peculiarities of Korean Diaspora in North America is based on inter-disciplinary methodology applied in history, ethnography and sociology. Special research methods such as systems thinking, comparative ethnographical, historical genetic allow us to study Korean Diaspora as a system with common and special characteristics, to point out special features by comparing socio-cultural adaptation of Korean Diaspora in the USA and Canada.

4. Findings

Ethnic Koreans migration beyond the Korean Peninsula has a long history and a specific background. First Korean immigrants began to leave their motherland in the second half of the XIX century. Korean migration flows differed in the reasons, goals and regions of immigration at different times.

By the early XXI century, the main countries for Korean Diaspora concentration are China, the USA, Japan, Russia, former republics of the Soviet Union and Canada. More than 2 000 000 ethnic Koreans live in the USA. It equals 30% of total representatives of Korean Diaspora in the world. The number of ethnic Koreans in North America including Canada is about 40% of total number of ethnic Koreans beyond the Korean Peninsula.

Migration of Koreans to North America started more than a century ago and had a specific background. The country was in a political, social and economic decline because of historic events of the time (government reforms, military coups, interference in the internal affairs of major foreign powers). As a result, migration was the only solution of the problem for many Koreans, especially peasants.

First Korean immigrants came to America in the beginning of theXXcentury (in 1903). They were mainly farmers who worked and lived in Hawaii. Migration of ethnic Koreans to Hawaii was organized

by the Americans. On the one hand, they wanted to have more representatives of different Asian nationalities among a big number of Japanese immigrants; on the other hand, Americans knew about Korean diligence and obedience. First Korean immigrants were mainly men from the lower class of the society. However, some of them were representatives of the upper class of the society.

During the first years of migration, the number of ethnic Koreans in Hawaii was constantly changing. Working conditions on plantation were extremely difficult and low-paid. So some Koreans came back to their motherland, while others moved to California and other states for more comfortable living conditions (Abu-Laban, & Garber, 2005).

After the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, Korean migration to the USA was virtually halted. Korean Diaspora in the USA did not expand up to the World War II. This period deals with internal migration to Cuba and Mexico.

However, some immigrants moved to the USA from Korea. They were mainly opponents of Japanese authorities on the Korean Peninsula. One of the most popular political immigrants was Rhee Syngman who became the president of the Republic of Korea afterwards.

Besides, there were some migration cases of “Korean brides” because first immigrants were mainly young men and marriage in the USA was quite difficult. The Migration authorities of the USA gave the permission for Korean brides who were going to get married to Hawaiian and Californian Koreans. This is a special group of early Korean immigrants in the USA called “picture brides” (Hyun, 2001) because Korean girls saw their future husbands only in the pictures.

Immigrants of the first wave were students, but they were not numerous in the first half of the XX century.

About 95 % of contemporary Korean Diaspora are immigrants who came to the USA after 1965 and their descendants. It was connected with the law of migration in 1965. The law provided South Korea with significant benefits. As a result, the Korean population increased from 70 000 people in 1970 to 2 000 000 at the turn of the XXI century (Abu-Laban, & Garber, 2005).

First Korean immigrants came to Canada in the beginning of the XX century. They were few students from local seminaries who worked under the ruling of Canadian missionaries on the Korean Peninsula.

Mass migration to Canada started later than to the USA. Upon the establishment of official relations between the Republic of Korea and Canada in 1963, Korean students came to Canada in order to get quality education. However, many students came home upon graduating from colleges and universities (Shin, 2015). The Korean population of Canada was about 70 people up to 1970. After 1970, Korean migration to Canada was not so intensive as to the USA. 35 000 ethnic Koreans moved to Canada during the period from 1970 to 1990. As a result, the Republic of Korea became the fifth donor country for immigrants who moved to Canada. Nowadays, Korean Diaspora is 200 000 people.

It should be noted that Koreans came to Canada by invitations of their relatives or as professional specialists, investors, students.

During a long period of time, ethnic Koreans in North America have changed their socio-cultural characteristics. Firstly, it is necessary to study settlement areas of Koreans in North America as a geographical position determines the social status, the field of activity and the level of socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants.

The first and second waves of Korean immigrants to the United States of America were mainly farmers and plant workers who mostly lived in Hawaii. Korean immigrants of the third wave were often well-educated. A big number of the immigrants was professionals, particularly medical practitioners. They immigrated to Los Angeles, New York, Washington, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, Honolulu and other big cities of the USA. Due to urbanization of Korean immigrants, the scope of activity had changed from agricultural sector to field of small business (Choi, 2003).

Korean Diaspora in the United States of America has close relations with other members of Korean community, relatives and friends in South Korea. Moreover Korea towns help to retain Korean culture and traditions. The biggest Korea town is located in Los Angeles. Its population is more than 120 000 people. The infrastructure functions only in the Korean language (mass media, television, restaurants, hotels). Most of the residents are employed in businesses owned by Koreans (Chang, 2004).

Confucianism had the greatest influence on Korean national consciousness and culture. An important component of Confucian ideology is its emphasis on children's education as the main channel for social mobility. Korean-Americans who obtained a college or University degree is almost twice the national average (Lee, 2004). A low level of English language proficiency implied that they could not continue their professional careers in the USA, but they demonstrated a commitment to get a further education and professional skills. As a result, Koreans start their careers in vacant niches in economics. This fact reflects national peculiarities and their abilities to adapt to new conditions.

The main trend of last ten years is a growth of the number of Korean professionals in such fields as medicine (including Oriental medicine), law, and insurance. At the same time, children of Korean immigrants of the last wave obtain education and professional accreditation in the United States of America and start up their business oriented towards Korean-American community (Lee, & Woo, 2013).

Nowadays Koreans demonstrate a high rate of entrepreneurship in comparison with average Americans. Moreover, Korean-American community is characterized by a high level of economic achievement, entrepreneurial activity and social mobility.

Another important part of socio-cultural particularities of Korean-Americans is religion. Buddhism, Protestantism and European Catholicism are three main religions both of Koreans in Korea and Korean-Americans. Roughly three quarters of the Korean population in the USA regularly attend Protestant or Catholic churches. Churches often function as community centers providing a variety of non-religious services such as the Korean language, consulting on various subjects related to American life (Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002). A number of Buddhist temples are much less than the Christian ones. They are located in metropolitan cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco and offer services only to 2% of the Korean population.

Korean Diaspora in the USA is highly homogeneous in the cultural and historical experience. This homogeneity in cultural and traditional spheres is the basis of ethnic identity. Language is the most significant element of Korean ethnicity. Koreans can speak, write and read in Korean, and it has strengthened their ties to the ethnic community in the USA and Korean Peninsula (Choi, 2015). Nevertheless, an assimilation process is inevitable. Young generation of American Koreans knows the English language in order to enter college or university and succeed in the American society. At the same time, they did not concern national ties and traditions. The number of intermarriages with other ethnic groups has been increased. It is necessary to mention that acculturation is an important element of

recipient countries. Korean-Americans live in the USA for a long period of time (Lee, & Woo, 2013). Their lifestyle, family values, social roles and habits of Korean community have been changed. On the one hand, it helps Koreans to adapt better in American society. On the other hand, Korean-Americans face the problem of marginality and identity crisis.

It should be noted that Korean Diaspora in the United States is one of the most successful in the world. They live in favourable conditions and retain main Korean ethnic and cultural traditions. In this way, it is fair to suppose that the United States of America is a pleasant area for Korean resettlement in the foreseeable future.

Another essential part of the research is studying Korean Diaspora in Canada and its comparison with American Koreans. Korean Diaspora in Canada is quite immature. Korean-Canadians origin makes up one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada. More than 80% of Korean-Canadians live in Ontario, and British Columbia. About 12% of Koreans live in Alberta and Quebec and very few of them live in the East region of Canada (Abu-Laban, & Garber, 2005).

Canada has an excellent educational system. A lot of Korean-Canadians have a higher education in comparison with the other number of the citizens. Moreover, they also have a post-graduate degree two times more often than other Canadians do.

Ethnic Koreans in Canada have their socio-cultural particularities which have a great influence on the life of the representatives of Korean Diaspora. Firstly it concerns the language. Almost all Canadians of Korean origin can speak at least one of the country's official languages. More than a half of Korean Diaspora members identify themselves as Korean speaking people. Korean immigrants, who arrived as adults, faced the problem of language barrier. They had serious difficulties if they did not know the English language before resettlement (Wang, & Kwak, 2015). Despite all difficulties, Koreans do their best to learn one of the official languages and adapt to a new society as soon as possible.

A high proportion of Korean immigrants in Canada have a higher education, many of them are highly-skilled specialists. Due to lack of English or French language proficiency, they have to change their area of activities (Frideres & Kim, 2010). Korean immigrants in Canada are mainly concentrated in small businesses in retail, food and accommodation, and other service industries. Many of them are self-employed business owners and unpaid family workers. About 40% of employed Koreans work in family businesses. About 70% of Koreans participate in ethnic business. Nevertheless, there are negative aspects of income. The income of ethnic Koreans is generally lower than the national average. The average earnings of part-time Korean workers is only 84% in comparison with the average earnings of Canadian counterparts (Choi, 2003). This fact indicates that despite the advanced education and middle class backgrounds, Koreans, who are still at the early stage of economic adaptation in Canada, have some difficulties.

The thing is that religion plays an important role for both American and Canadian Koreans. Thus, it is necessary to analyze religious preferences of Korean Diaspora in Canada. Most of ethnic Koreans in Canada are either Protestants or Catholics. At the same time, only a few Koreans are Buddhists. Korean churches are major social organizations that play a vital role in cultivation and maintenance of ethnic ties to their ethnic groups in addition to meeting the needs and providing social services for many Korean residents (Yoon, 2016). The church functions as a social centre within the ethnic community. Moreover, the church provides social services for recent immigrants such as various family counselling sessions,

language assistance and even job hunting. The church is also associated with cultural identification expressed in traditional values.

There are Korea towns in Canada. Toronto has the largest concentration of Korean population in Canada with almost 50 000 people living in the city. There is a special Korea town in Toronto with many Korean restaurants, bakeries, gift shops, grocery stores, and travel agencies. Although many Koreans work in this area, very few Koreans actually live in Korea town. It should be noted that the representatives of young generation of Canadian Koreans know their culture and traditions very well and use them in everyday life in contrast to American Koreans.

However, the influence of Canadian society is becoming more and more considerable. The life of Koreans is also changing. The most remarkable changes are in family life, relations between parents and children, a role of a man and woman in the family that are close to the international standards and traditions (Yoon, 2016).

Undoubtedly, Korean Diaspora in Canada is constantly changing because of a short living period in this country. Ethno-transformational processes in Korean Diaspora are increasing and it can lead to changes in socio-cultural characteristics of Canadian Koreans.

5. Conclusions

Based on a comprehensive analysis of Korean Diaspora in the USA and Canada, it is possible to say that Koreans have differences and particularities, and it is determined by different history, period of formation and immigration background. Thus, Korean-Americans are well integrated and have a strong position in the American society. Korean Diaspora in Canada is being formed during last decades and still has not completely adapted in Canadian society. However, Korean Diaspora in two countries has many common features.

Ethnic Koreans in the USA and Canada have close relations both with other members of Korean community and relatives and friends in South Korea. Korea towns play the most important role in ethnic identification and consolidation of North American Koreans. These are journals, magazines, TV, shops and services in Korean. All these services help to unite representatives of Korean Diaspora and maintain traditional culture of the community.

One more important factor of Korean community unification is religion. Protestant and Catholic churches play an important role in this process. Churches perform not only religious functions but also provide some social and cultural services for better adaptation and integration.

Despite a high level of education of the last wave of Korean immigrants, the incomes of ethnic Koreans are generally lower than the national average because of a low level of the language proficiency. The Korean community is mostly concentrated in small businesses in retail, food, and accommodation, and other personal service industries.

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