A BIOPOLITICAL APPROACH TO KAREISKY MIGRANTS: THE SUBJECT FORMATION OF "OTHER KOREANS" UNDER SOUTH KOREAN ETHNIC LOW-SKILLED LABOR MIGRATION POLICIES

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the low-skilled labor ethnic return migration to South Korea, which has substantially increased since the introduction of ethnic labor H-2 visa in 2007. While existing discourses on the issue focus on the importance of economic utility and economic national interests of South Korea for developing low-skilled ethnic migration policies, I aim to offer an alternative approach to the issue through the lens of Foucauldian biopolitics. This approach offers a more holistic understanding of the ethnic return migration that can account for how demographic changes such as fertility rate, education, shortage of particular labor force and globalization are closely interwoven with economy and politics in South Korea. I contend that it is this set of processes that constitute a biopolitical regime in South Korea within which low-skilled ethnic return migration policies have been developing, and it is within this biopolitical regime Koryo Saram are being racialized as inferior other Koreans. Furthermore, based on in-depth interviews with Koryo Saram, participant observation, Facebook groups' analysis, and autoethnography, I explore the ways Koryo Saram navigate and (re)negotiate their sense of who they are while working as low-skilled ethnic migrants in South Korea within the biopolitical regime. This research highlights how the intersections of nationality, labor, ethnicity, gendered and cultural aspects, and being a migrant can be both the tools for biopolitical racialization and an opportunity for a better live. It is along these lines that subject formation of Koryo Saram is taking place within the regime in South Korea. Finally, this thesis illustrates a multiplicity and heterogeneity of subject formation of Koryo Saram, albeit as low-skilled ethnic migrants.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed Albina Yun

(Signature appears on the hard copy submitted to the library)

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Chapter I. Introduction

1. Overview

Over the past few decades, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has undergone a considerable economic transformation from being one of the poorest states in the world in the 1970s to one of the wealthiest nations as of today. Such a radical alteration led to structural changes in the composition of the South Korean workforce; primarily there have been increases in the mean age and educational level of workers (Kim and Kwon, 2012; OECD iLibrary, 2019). The changes led to labor shortages in various manual and low-skilled manufacturing and construction sectors and, thus, an influx of foreign labor followed. As South Korea is one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in the world, the country is very cautious regarding whom to let in the country (Lee, 2010; Seol and Skrentny, 2009; Shen, 2017). South Korean government has developed policies targeting co-ethnic Koreans from China and post-Soviet countries as a source of low-skilled cheap labor. Such policies include H-2 visa, also known as 3D visa for dirty, difficult and dangerous jobs, which is issued exclusively to post-Soviet and Chinese ethnic Koreans.

Since the official statement of H-2 visa policies stipulates that the H-2 visa holders are "to contribute to national interests"[1], the prevailing majority of existing academic literature asserts that the visa was created with a clear goal – to serve the economic needs of the country. The economic discourse centers on low-skilled ethnic return migration policies as cheap labor from developing Central Asian countries to minimize social tensions "that presumably arise when culturally distinct groups "invade" an otherwise homogenous society" (Lim, 2008, p. 34). Moreover, the prevailing academic literature asserts that in South Korea, there is a hierarchization within one ethnicity based on nationality, where the host society is at the top of the hierarchy, then come American Koreans, Japanese Koreans follow, then Chinese Koreans, and, at the bottom are post-Soviet Koreans[2]. Hence, different types of ethnic return policies and visas. Despite being regarded as low-skilled, H-2 visa holders have preferential status over non-ethnic foreign labor migrants (Kim and Kwon, 2012; Lim, 2008; Seol and Lee, 2011; Seol and Skrentny, 2009). The majority of existing literature analyze the issue of low-skilled ethnic

[1] Official statement of the Korean Government is presented and discussed in Chapter II.

[2] I use the terms post-Soviet Koreans, Central Asian Koreans, Kareitsy (Kareisky migrants) and Koryo Saram interchangeably to refer to Koreans born in the post-Soviet Republics. The terms and usage will be discussed in more detail in *Historical Background* section.

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return migration to South Korea via a top-down approach, which significantly limits a deeper and better interrogation and research on the issue, specifically the ways migrants are affected and affect the process.

This thesis centers on and aims to offer an alternative account on low-skilled ethnic return migration policies of South Korea, particularly H-2 visa, and on its holders from Central Asian countries who are working in South Korea as low-skilled ethnic migrants. I argue and illustrate that South Korea's ethnic labor return migration policies for Central Asian ethnic Koreans is a biopolitical tool and, thus, is a constituent of the biopolitical regime of the country. I demonstrate how the economy, fertility rates, blood ancestry and international norms are closely interwoven and have a direct impact on the developing process of labor policies' formations, which in turn affect and is affected by the ethnic labor migrants. I examine the existing hierarchization process within one ethnicity in South Korea via the lens of biopolitical racism. Most importantly, I apply biopolitical approach, complemented by intersectionality and meso-level migratory processes, to explore the subject formation of Kareisky migrants. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in several cities of South Korea, digital ethnography, and auto-ethnography, I focus on how the experience under the low-skilled migration policies, as a part of the biopolitical regime, shape and/or redefine Central Asian Koreans' sense of who they are.

This research contributes to the literature on ethnic migration and labor migration processes. The experiences of Koryo Saram opens new questions on ethnicity and race and how countries of origin and destination, a period of immigration, and migrants are intertwined and impact adaptation, identities and lives of people. Moreover, this thesis highlights the heterogeneity and complex dynamics of the Central Asian region, which has not been of 'academic interest' apart from being studied as a lump of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes with Islamic tendencies. Research on ethnic Korean migrants from Central Asia renders the region from various new perspectives. This research, also, attempts to overcome the neglect of the 'Second World' by analyzing the characteristics of ethnic labor migration regime in South Korea and the rhetoric of racializing the other as part of a bigger, i.e. global, discourse on migration and ethnicity. In addition, I look at the experiences of Koryo Saram through intersectionality, which opens new questions on the role of women and gendered dynamics, which is virtually absent in the existent discourse on ethnic return migration to South Korea. Furthermore, I apply the framework of Foucauldian biopolitics, racism and subject formation to a very specific South Korean context, and through Foucauldian biopolitics, I provide a wider perspective on the issues of ethnic return migration, rather than just focusing on national economic interests.

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In the rest of this chapter, I first present the very often unknown history of the Korean Diaspora in (post) Soviet space; I, then, explain the methodology and research design of my work, where I lay out my methods, autoethnography and positionality. In Chapter II, I move on to locate my thesis within academic discussions on ethnic return migration policies of South Korea, hierarchization within one ethnicity, and gendered dynamics of the policies. In this chapter, I also lay out my theoretical framework by introducing Foucauldian biopolitics, racism and subject formation, the concept of intersectionality, and meso-level migratory processes. In Chapter III, I examine ethnic return migration policies and H-2 visa through the lens of biopolitics; how the biopolitical regime on migration deals with ethnic migrants' labouring bodies, and creates racism within one ethnicity. Finally, in Chapter IV, I link the biopolitical regime to subject formation of Koryo Saram community in South Korea. I render low-skilled ethnic labor status not just as a struggle but also as an opportunity, and examine the processes of how renegotiation of gendered and ethnic boundaries take place in post-Soviet Koreans' subject formation within the biopolitical regime.

2. Historical Background: Who are Kareitsy?

Due to a rather complicated history of the collapse of the Soviet Union, appearance of newly independent states, and migration, it is necessary to look at and examine the formation of Korean Diaspora in present Central Asian states and Russia. Such analysis will not only provide ideas for the urge of the Korean diaspora to 'return' migrate to South Korea but it also discloses the complexity of identity building of Kareitsy, especially considering the fact that the history of Kareitsy is often unknown both in South Korea and in post-Soviet countries. Therefore, in what follows, I provide a comprehensive historical background of Koreans in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, and on how the Korean Diaspora came, was incorporated and lived in such spaces.

Prior to introducing the historical background of Kareitsy, I find it important to note the following. As will be seen, Russian language has become the native language of the Korean diaspora from all over the post-Soviet space. Both in Russia and Central Asian states Koreans are called *Kareitsy* (plural noun), which is translated into English as Korean person, and *Kareisky* is an adjective: Kareisky migrants means Korean migrants. Thus, in Russian, and actually English too, one word is used to refer to all Koreans, including Koreans in South Korea, North Korea and in post-Soviet countries. But, because of power dynamics, I cannot use simply *Korean* to refer to my community since very often the international audience, including the

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academic one, think of either South Koreans or North Koreans because of the unawareness of the existing diaspora. Moreover, in all academic sources on the issue the word *ethnic* is added to Koreans from post-Soviet space. From my personal standpoint, I find it somewhat frustrating that I have to come up with something else since all my life before going to South Korea I referred to myself and my community and had been called and referred to as Korean - *Kareitsy*. It is in South Korea that I came to realize that the post-Soviet Korean diaspora in Korea is called *ethnic Koreans* or *Koryoin*. Therefore, despite the frustration, throughout this thesis, I interchangeably use Kareitsy or Kareisky migratnts, Koryo saram, post-Soviet Koreans, Central Asian Koreans and the Korean Diaspora to refer to the community. The term Koryo Saram will be touched upon below. As the Korean diaspora came to be under the Soviet rule - the term *post-Soviet Koreans* is also valid. *Central Asian Koreans* is important to take into account because even though there are many Koreans who go to South Korea from Russia and Ukraine, virtually all of them or their parents have lived in either Uzbekistan (mostly) or Kazakhstan because of the forced deportation.

The history of migration of Koreans from the Korean peninsula dates back to 1860s (Ahn, 2019; Kokaisl, 2018; Yoon, 2012, Yoon, 2000). It is important to mention that at that time there was one Korea under Joseon Dynasty and later the Korean Empire (1897-1910), neither the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) nor the Republic of Korea (South Korea) existed. The first documented immigrants from the Korean peninsula to Czarist Russia were in 1863, shortly after the 1860 Treaty of Peking by which Russia attained lands to the east of the Ussuri River (Yoon, 2012). Generally, the immigration process can be marked by two main events: 1869-70 severe famine on the Korean peninsula, and the colonization by the Imperial Japan in 1910 (1910-1945). By 1937, the amount of Korean migrants at the Russian Far East was close to 200.000 people (Kokaisl, 2018; Yoon, 2012). As Koryo saram provided good and cheap labor, perfectly dealt with agricultural tasks and, actually, introduced rice farming in Tsarist Russia, the Russian administration was tolerant toward the new migrants. Despite leaving the Korean peninsula, Koreans in the Russian Far East "tried to foster ethnic culture and education for the younger generations, and to set up their own army and military base to prepare for the war against Japan" (Yoon, 2012, p. 419). This is when, according to word of mouth and an ethnic Korean scholar German Kim, the term/name *Koryo Saram* (People of Korea) came to be. Because in Russian, as well as in English, Korea is pronounced close to [kəˈrɪə] as opposed to Hanguk (in South Korea) and Joseon (in North Korea), early Korean migrants started calling themselves *people of Korea (Koryo saram),* by using the most understandable transliteration of Korea, created by Marco Polo.

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As the relations of Russia and Japan worsened in the 1930s, according to the prevailing literature, the Russian administration started to view Koryo saram as possible agents of Japanese espionage (Kokaisl, 2018; Oh, 2007; Ro'i, 2009; Yoon, 2012). Subsequently, in 1937 in accordance with the Regulation of the Council of People's Commissars №1428-326ss under Stalin's administration, a mass forced deportation of 171,781 Koreans from the Russian Far East to Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) was ordered (Kokaisl, 2018). Koryo saram were given a short notice of departure and were allowed to take only their clothing and enough food for a month-long relocation process in train wagons meant for livestock. Some say that upon arrival in Central Asia, Koryo saram were promised monetary compensation for their properties and belongings left in the Russian Far East, most never received any (Yoon, 2012). During a two-month long journey in December and January though Russian Siberia in cattle wagons, approximately 500 people died, mostly elderly (Ibid.). Despite the tragic events of the deportation, certain archives suggest that several Korean families voluntarily migrated to southern regions of today's Russian Federation, which are closer to the northern border of Kazakhstan, as early as 1905 (Seo, 2010). Moreover, in 1920s, 70 Korean families were invited to Kazakhstan by the People's Commissariat on Land Cultivation "to learn (from Koreans) the rich knowledge of rice farming" (Ibid. p. 62).

In Central Asia, Koryo saram were given almost inarable lands and they had to start their lives from the very beginning. In 1946, the Korean diaspora members were given new passports and were prohibited to leave Central Asian borders for more than 15 years (Ro'I, 2009). Only during the Thaw period of the 1960s did the border restriction come off. As a result, in general the Korean diaspora fully accepted communist way of life in Soviet Central Asia and were considered as patriots. They have become "a Russified community" (Fumagalli, 2016; p. 40). Many Koryo Saram urged their children to be educated and speak Russian in order to better their social advancement and incorporation (Oh, 2007). This led to a virtually total loss of Korean language capacity of third and fourth generation of Koryo saram.[3] Almost 99% of Koryo Saram living today in the post-Soviet space have Russian as their mother tongue (Ahn, 2019; Chong Jin, 2013; Oh, 2007; Ro'i, 2009).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan had the biggest Korean diasporas in the post-Soviet space with smaller numbers in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, about 500.000 people in total (Seol and Skretny, 2009). In the wake of

[3] For example, in the 1926 population census 98.9% of Koryo Saram registered Korean as their mother tongue (Ro'I, 2009).

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independence, some predicted the restoration of the ties between the Korean diaspora and the historic homeland in terms of repatriation, however, Central Asian Koreans were descendants of the Far East Russian Korean immigrants rather than of Koreans from the peninsula, therefore, such a restoration did not take place (Fumagalli, 2016). Nonetheless, as the Central Asian republics developed bilateral relations with South Korea in the early 1990s, South Korea established various cultural exchanges, training programs, scholarships and foundations exclusively for the Korean diaspora. At that time, newly independent Central Asian states established diplomatic relations with both North Korea and South Korea. In the late 1980s early 1990s, North Korea tried to compete with South Korea over strengthening ties with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: three thousand Korean textbooks were sent from Pyongyang, Korean language professors and taekwondo instructors came to the region, hundreds of Korean diaspora members visited North Korea during that period (Oh, 2007). However, as the economic and political crises worsened in the North, its presence in the region shrank to the minimum, e.g. North Korean embassy closed in Almaty (Kazakhstan's capital until 1997), in Tashkent only minimal staff was left (Ibid.).

South Korea, on the other hand, was developing at a giant pace, becoming one of the four Asian Tigers.[4] Subsequently, such South Korean conglomerates as Daewoo, Samsung and LG and hundreds of other small companies have invested hundreds of millions of dollars and have opened joined ventures in the Central Asian region (Oh, 2007). Up until 2007, approximately 2500 Korean religious missionaries were sent to the region (Oh, 2013, p. 220). South Korean Cultural centers were opened and have since been providing free language courses, free social events, educational and career exchange programs with a focus of strengthening the Korean diaspora in the region (Oh, 2007). As a result, there has been a discourse among the Korean diaspora about the fact that "the image of South Korea as an economically developed country has contributed to the high status of the Korean diaspora" (Oh, 2007, p. 160). Due to the soft cultural power and economic investments of South Korea the Korean diaspora "started to embrace a new conception of themselves (one which puts more emphasis on Koreannes) and change their Soviet identities" (Ibid., p. 159).

Despite South Korean interest in Korean diasporas in the post-Soviet countries as a part of diplomatic bilateral relations, there is a tendency in some academic and oral discourses of South Korea to blame the Korean diaspora for not contributing enough to the fight for

[4] The four Asian Tigers are the economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, which underwent rapid industrialization and maintained exceptionally high growth rates in the world.

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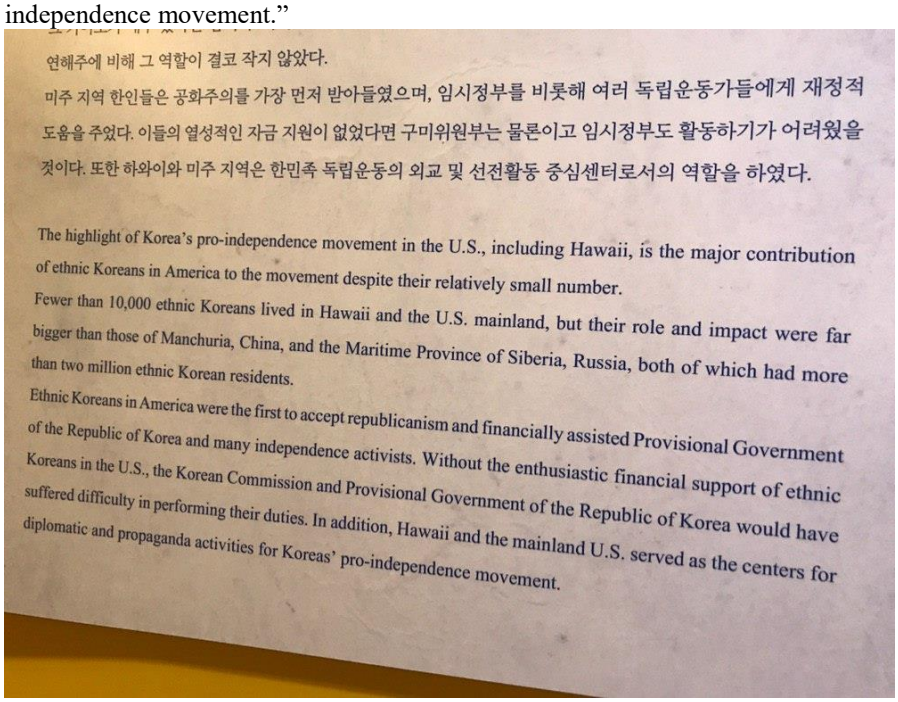
independence against Japanese colonization and not providing support during the Korean War. The role of the USA (as opposed to communist Soviet Union) in this rhetoric is beyond the topic of the paper. The evidence of such a claim can be the only museum in South Korea centering on emigration, which is called *the Museum of Korea Emigration History*[5]. The museum is situated in Incheon city. The only mentioning of Koryo saram on a very big stand in the whole museum was the following, below is the photo of the stand:

> "The highlight of Korea's pro-independence movement in the U.S., including Hawaii, is the major contribution of ethnic Koreans in America to the movement despite their relatively small number. ***Fewer than 10,000 ethnic Koreans lived in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland, but their role and impact were far bigger than those of Manchuria, China and the Maritime Province of Siberia, Russia, both of which had more than two million ethnic Korean residents.*** Ethnic Koreans in America were the first to accept republicanism and financially assisted Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and many independence activities. Without the enthusiastic support of ethnic Koreans in the U. S., the Korean Commission and Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea would have suffered difficulty in performing their duties. In addition, Hawaii and the mainland U. S. served as the centers for diplomatic and propaganda activities for Korea's pro-independence movement."



연해주에 비해 그 역할이 결코 작지 않았다.

미주 지역 한인들은 공화주의를 가장 먼저 받아들였으며, 임시정부를 비롯해 여러 독립운동가들에게 재정적 도움을 주었다. 이들의 열성적인 자금 지원이 없었다면 구미위원부는 물론이고 임시정부도 활동하기가 어려웠을 것이다. 또한 하와이와 미주 지역은 한민족 독립운동의 외교 및 선전활동 중심센터로서의 역할을 하였다.

The highlight of Korea's pro-independence movement in the U.S., including Hawaii, is the major contribution of ethnic Koreans in America to the movement despite their relatively small number.

Fewer than 10,000 ethnic Koreans lived in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland, but their role and impact were far bigger than those of Manchuria, China, and the Maritime Province of Siberia, Russia, both of which had more than two million ethnic Korean residents.

Ethnic Koreans in America were the first to accept republicanism and financially assisted Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and many independence activists. Without the enthusiastic financial support of ethnic Koreans in the U.S., the Korean Commission and Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea would have suffered difficulty in performing their duties. In addition, Hawaii and the mainland U.S. served as the centers for diplomatic and propaganda activities for Koreas' pro-independence movement.

Similar blame lies in criticizing the post-Soviet Korean diaspora for not knowing South Korean dialect of Korean language. As could be seen from the history, the diaspora was isolated as a part of Soviet Union, furthermore, Koreans in post-Soviet space had to fully re-integrate themselves to completely new milieu twice in less than 100 years – first in the Russian Far East and then in Central Asia. In addition, they were prohibited to leave Central Asia for many years.

[5] The Museum of Korea Emigration History, Incheon, South Korea. I visited this museum in February 2018

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This rhetoric can contribute to hierarchization and racialization processes within one ethnicity, which will be analyzed in the following chapters.

The history of the Korean diaspora in post-Soviet space sheds light on identity specificities of the people and the way they situate and adapt themselves in a new environment. Moreover, as a result of such complex history of migration, movements and political events, the Korean diaspora in the post-Soviet space is not a homogeneous group of people. Ahn (2019) contends that to explore the lived experiences of Koryo Saram by tracing the migration routes and language roots "it is the heterogeneity that provides the insight into how people navigated the central control of the Soviet apparatus and had shaped intergenerational attitudes, practices and ideologies about language and identity" (p. 222). As will be discussed in analytical chapters, the way Kareitsy (re)negotiate their ethnic boundaries and a sense of belonging, sticking for example to Soviet identity, to a large extent stems from their experiences as Korean diaspora during the Soviet Union. In addition, when it comes to ethnic return labor migration policies, as Seo (2010) points out, the poor knowledge of the social, political and historical background might have caused inadequate approach and implementation of ethnic migration policies for post-Soviet Korean diaspora.

3. Methodology

As a primary data for my empirical analysis, I draw on interviews and participant observation, digital ethnography (Facebook), and autoethnography.

a. Participant observation and interviews

Participant observation and interviews took place in several cities of South Korea in the period between June and July of 2019. As of today, there is a very scarce academic literature dealing with ethnic return migration that takes into account the experiences and voices of Koryo saram.

I conducted a participant observation in the Association of Koryo Saram in South Korea and a 7-days observation at the Cultural Centre for Koryo Saram (NOMO) in Ansan city. The Association is a type of social network with an office in Ansan city that organizes social events for Koryo saram, and with other NGOs lobby for accepting Koryo saram as full co-ethnics. The Cultural Centre NOMO provides free Korean language classes, free consultations on all aspects of adaption and integration in South Korea, holds sport and cultural events etc. In both settings, I offered my service as a volunteer during the period of my fieldwork; I was helping with administrative things. In all settings, I paid attention to the dynamics of social interaction and the way Koryo saram construct meanings of the places they operate and interact in: what

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specific issues were the most common for consultations, how they referred to themselves when speaking to South Korean staff members, how South Korean staff members referred to Koryo saram etc. As my research question is related to the categories of ethnicity and gender, I must, as Emerson et al. (2011) put it, "not only apprehend and convey members' categories, but must also explain how members use terms in specific interactional situations and how involved parties differentially understand and evaluate them" (p. 108).

Over the period of the ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted 10 interviews: 7 of the interviewees are ethnic Korean labor migrants from Uzbekistan holding H-2 visas; 1 interviewee is an ethnic Korean from Russia (but was born in Uzbekistan) and is a translator (Korean-Russian languages) at the Center for the Protection of the Rights of Labor Migrants with an obtained Korean citizenship through South Korean husband; 1 interviewee is an ethnic Korean from Uzbekistan working at a Korean outsourcing company and is a holder of F-5 visa (permanent residency); 1 interviewee is an ethnic Korean from Russia (but was born and grew up in Uzbekistan) and is a president of the Association Koryo-Saram in the Republic of Korea and is a holder of F-4 visa. 8 interviews were conducted face-to-face and took from 45 min to 1 hour and 30 minutes, remaining 2 interviews were conducted via a telephone call. During all interviews, a verbal consent for an audio recording was asked and all but one granted permission. I used a snowballing sampling method and had a semi-structured composition of interviews. 5 of the interviewees are men and 5 are women, age range is from 24 to about 50 years of age. Two of the interviewed people are my cousins from my father's lineage. Pseudonyms are used for all the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in Russian language as this is the mother tongue of all the respondents. I believe interviews and oral histories are best suited for my research because I intended to pay a particular attention to what Kareitsy have to say about their integration into a "different" Korean society, how they situate themselves in the context where they are regarded as low-skilled cheap labor but yet co-ethnics, how both ethnicity and labor contribute or change their post-Soviet or Central Asian gendered identities. As Portelli (1998) points out oral history emphasizes memory as "not a passive depositary of facts but an active process of creation of meanings" (p. 69). When it comes to interviews, I initially had certain concerns over the deliberateness and anxiety impacting what interviewees might say while being interviewed, however, as Boellstorff et al. (2012) contend "while there is an important difference between people's speech and actions, this does not mean that what people say they do is insignificant" (p. 92). Furthermore, I do not claim the interviewees' responses to reflect the objective reality, but rather I view them, as Burke (2007) states, "as discursive and partial accounts, which are produced in the specific situation of an interview" (p. 413). Considering

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the importance of both speech and act, I am convinced that using both interviews and participant observation method are the ideal research methods for my topic.

b. Digital ethnography – Facebook groups

Another important constituent part of my methodology is digital ethnography, in particular Facebook groups. Hallett and Barber (2014, cited in Airoldi, 2018) point out that in today's world "it is no longer imaginable to conduct ethnography without considering online spaces" (p. 661). Digital spaces no longer represent solely artificial and virtual worlds, rather digital spaces "are crossed by the everyday micro practices of individuals, who constantly scroll through social media feeds, query search engines, employ tags and interact in 'placeless' communicative streams" (Airoldi, 2018, p. 662). In addition, Hine (cited in Caliandro, 2018) argues that "the Internet, far from being experienced as a cyberspace apart from everyday experience, is strictly intertwined with the everyday life of participants, as it is a technology constantly used for empowering their actual identities as well as their social bonds and activities" (p. 554). There is a critique of using digital ethnography in terms of access and availability as having smartphones and unlimited internet access is not universally granted. However, South Korea boasts with the fastest internet and largest population with smartphones per capita in the world. There is a tendency for ethnic Korean labor migrants coming to South Korea to purchase new smartphones and have a constant internet access, even though they would not have either of it in Uzbekistan. In addition, the majority of ethnic Korean labor migrants start using Facebook groups to navigate through in Korea, for example to look for vacancies, to interact with compatriots in Russian, share advertisements, share available accommodation and to be informed about latest changes in the migration policies. Therefore, in this particular context, I am convinced that incorporating digital ethnography contributes to a deeper analysis of my research. I look at specific posts in various Facebook groups which are intended primarily for Russian speakers and ethnic Koreans from the post-Soviet space working in South Korea: such as "Понаехали Тут ! (Южная Корея)" *(Came here in large numbers! (South Korea) or Flooded South Korea)*[6], "82 авеню - Наши в Корее" *(82th Avenue – ours (our people) in Korea),* Южная Корея #1/Работа/Вакансии/Russian South Korea (South Korea no1/Work/Vacancies/Russian South Korea). The groups mentioned here are public open groups with 70.000 members on average. Through following and observing the posts and discussions in the groups, I consider that "the online world, similarly to the offline one, is populated by

[6] Translation is made by the researcher

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communities, which are not mere virtual entities, but instead real and complex social formations that have a concrete influence on the life of their participants" (Caliandro, 2018, p. 554)

c. Autoethnography and positionality

The term autoethnography is becoming widely popular and so its meaning is becoming more diverse. One has to always keep in mind that "the basic unit of culture is individuals who can actively interpret their social surroundings" (Chang, 2016, p. 44). I have been contemplating whether to incorporate personal experience in a form of "native anthropology", "ethnic auto-biography", "auto-biographical ethnography", or whether to include auto-ethnography at all. One of the main distinctions between ethnography and autoethnography lies in the assumption/fact that autoethnographers enter the research field with a familiar topic (self), whereas, ethnographers commence their research with an unfamiliar milieu (other) (Boylorn and Orbe, 2016; Chang, 2016; Jones et al., 2016). I would like to borrow Chang's (2016) definition of autoethnography from his book *Autoethnography as Method*, which describes autoethnography as the following:

> "autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self. … Autoethnography celebrates rather than demonizes the individual story. Yet, individual stories are framed in the context of the bigger story, a story of the society, to make autoethnography ethnographic." (Chang, 2016, pp. 48-49).

In addition, I adhere to Jones' et al. (2016) conceptual characteristic of autoethnography, outlined in their edited book *Handbook of Autoethnography*, which refers to the "use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 22).

Considering all that, autoethnography is an inalienable part of my research. However, it is not that the primordial fact that I am Central Asian Korean that automatically made me research the topic of this thesis. But rather, it is my personal experience of working in South Korea as a low skilled migrant that pushed and motivated my research. Up to this moment, I have been to South Korea three times, all three times I entered with H-2 visa. My experience of working in various farms, factories and plants is not unique. Prior to going to Korea and applying for H-2 visa, every Korean in Uzbekistan knew what was awaiting them – *"пахать как проклятый"* (working like cursed). The word of mouth through friends, relatives, relatives' friends was that all we, Kareitsy, do there is *грязнорабочие* (low-skilled/dirty workers). And no one seemed to question that, H-2 visa still looked like an opportunity. Proving that I am Korean as a part of visa application process seemed interesting – all I had to do to prove my

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Korean ancestry is to find either a birth or death certificate of my Korean grandparents. I was wondering *'but how do they know that my grandparents are the real Koreans then'*. Despite all that, I was very looking forward to going to Korea, albeit knowing that all I will be doing is a low-skilled job.

This is me sitting in a bus on the day of working on an onion field on June 23, 2017. Below is the photo of a part of the onion field. The working day started at 5 am and finished at 5 pm. My job, as I was one of the youngest, was to run after a tractor, which was ploughing/taking out the onions, and to collect/throw the onions to one side so that when the tractor makes the U-turn it doesn't ruin the taken out onions. June in South Korea is a quite hot month. As this field was in the middle of nowhere there were not any WC/toilets

It is primarily the experiences of my first and second stays in South Korea that made me reflect, reconsider and interrogate questions related to ethnicity, community, labor, migration etc. It is the encounter with South Korean culture and people that made me think over and over about what is Korean and the concept of ethnicity. When I was living in Uzbekistan, being Korean for me was a given postulate: I am a daughter of a *Korean* father, I have a *Korean* surname, I have a marked physical difference form majority of people in Uzbekistan, I have a lot of Korean relatives and we all have our own Korean cuisine, but we are not a lot of people. We, Kareitsy in Uzbekistan, have Korean cafes, Korean kolkhozs (collective farms), we used to have Korean schools in those kolkhozes, but we are not a lot of people. At my school - we were four Kareitsy out of 34 pupils in my class; in my college, we were three Koreans out of 33 students; at my university, we were three Koreans out of 66 students in my cohort. And when I arrived in Korea, Koreans were just everywhere, I simply blended in, I was no longer three out of 30… That is what I thought… In addition, it was so fascinating to see that post-Soviet Koreans created whole communities in South Korean cities with cafes, bars, bakeries, centers etc., just like in Uzbekistan, and, yet, everything was in Russian language. We might have blended in in terms of physical appearance but everything else was completely different.

It was long hours of manual 'low-skilled' work in South Korea that made me question the whole process of ethnic migration: why people still come to do all that work; and the concept of labor - hard exhausting labor. My very first job in South Korea was at a manufactory/storage of Korean pears. Pears from the farm were brought to our storage place, where there was an assembling moving line – at the start of the line pears are taken out of boxes (boxes with pears are coming in non-stop during the day from various farms), then unwrapped from the paper the pears grow in, and put on the line. Next, pears move on the line and being cleaned, re-assorted (good ones to one side of the line, less good ones to another side), then the pears are beautifully

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wrapped and put into boxes for sale. All that is happening quite fast so you have to be quick, and yet all this lingers from 8 am till 8 pm. I was assigned to the start of the line – it was the dirtiest and dustiest job as the pears in the boxes were directly from the farm full of dry clay, dust, dirt, insects etc. But, the most difficult part was to stand, the work had to be carried out in standing position – you are standing and unwrapping those pears as fast as possible from 8 am till 8 pm, with 10 minutes break every 2.5 hours, and a 30 minutes breaks for lunch and dinner. I think my body was shocked the first couple of days. My back and legs hurt so much and I was always covered with dirt and dust. The last 40 minutes of the 2.5 hour non-stop working time were just me staring at the clock and the clock it seemed would just deliberately stop. Sometimes, I would be so angry that those pears never stopped, in my head I was asking 'why on earth are there so many pears, where the hell are they coming from, do people actually eat so many pears?'.

In that pear storage, I was the only ethnic Korean migrant, there were two more Russian speaking migrants from Uzbekistan (named Almaz aka) and Kyrgyzstan, both were ethnic Uzbek men and both spoke good Korean. Out of about 30 people working there, the three of us were Russian speakers, about five or six were Thai migrants, the rest were South Koreans, majority of whom were Korean ladies in their 50-60s (*ajummas)*. Even though I did not speak a single word in Korean at that time, I was still allowed to work. The atmosphere there seemed nice, Korean *ajummas* tried talking to me, asking questions and with the help of Almaz aka I tried answering them. After about two weeks, I went to another city, to Gwangju, to meet my friends who promised to find a better job, they were ethnic Koreans from Tashkent, Uzbekistan. They found me a job at a factory that produced foil panels for refrigerators. This time, the manufactory shop had only about 11 people, 9 of whom were ethnic Korean migrants. And here was another shock – the atmosphere was so different from the pear storage. It might be that at the pear storage I did not understand anything as the majority there were South Koreas, whereas, at this refrigerator factory I could understand everything. The atmosphere was full of competition, hazing, 'us' (ethnic Koreans) versus 'them' (South Koreans). We barely talked to each other, unless the talk was related to the job. What was fascinating is that out of nine ethnic Korean migrants none could speak (South Korean) Korean. Since then, one thing has become a clear pattern for me – the more ethnic Korean migrants work at one place the more the place should be avoided. I saw a very interesting migratory dynamic, where boundaries and norms are created and imposed on migrants by migrants. I was perplexed by that pattern, I was sincerely shocked and angry too. However, I do not intend to demonize my own community, this pattern was present in the workplace for me and it does not mean that this is common in

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every sphere of societal life of ethnic Korean migrants' community. Despite all that was happening to me, I still liked it there and did not want to go home. And I was not the only one. I heard so many complaints from Central Asian Koreans about the condescending attitude of Hanguks (South Koreans), weird culture, South Korean food, jobs etc., and yet, people stay, people renew their H-2 visas and come back. And it is not that today, Kareitsy politically oppressed or prosecuted in the Central Asian states, not even close to that; neither is the Korean diaspora among the poorest levels of the society there; nor is it that in South Korea they are given easy and white collar jobs. This has become and remains the main puzzle for me.

Primarily during my second stay, I became very interested in what academic literature has to say about ethnic Korean migration. This was partly due to my close friends whom I kept in touch with during my stays in Korea. Those friends have MA degrees from Western universities in England and the US, and the fact that I, having one MA degree already, was doing low-skilled job in another country apparently seemed *brave and cool* to them. They encouraged me to read about the issue and most importantly write something about my experience. So, I decided to have a look at what there is regarding the topic. And to my surprise, there was virtually nothing: very few articles in English that talk about Korean ethnic return migration from the top-down approach. Nothing on questions of ethnicity, post-Soviet Korean community building in South Korea, or labor. I remember, it struck me at that time that not only the history of ethnic Koreans in post-Soviet space is virtually non-existent in national discourses of post-Soviet states, and of course South Korea, but, the present is also unknown and neglected.

It is important to mention that autoethnography is not the center nor main method of my work, but it is a significant part of it, it is a part of my methodology. I am aware of the pitfalls of autoethnographic approaches, such as imprudent focus on self in isolation from others; overemphasis on narration rather than examination and cultural interpretation; sole reliance on personal memory and recalling as primary data source; and inappropriate usage of the term autoethnography (Chang, 2016). However, I believe that as a student of Gender Studies with consideration of the feminist standpoint (Collins, 1997), self-reflexivity (Nencel, 2014) and situatedness (Haraway, 1988), I cannot just simply claim scientific objectivity and erase my personal experience that served as a catalyst for this research. Autoethnographic accounts help to overcome the crisis of representation and draws "attention to the absence of human stories, aesthetic considerations, emotions and embodied experiences in research projects" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 29). By incorporating autoethnography, I do not "claim to produce better or more reliable, generalizable and/or valid research than other methods, but instead [I aim to] provide another approach for studying cultural experience.

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As in any research, I am aware of the fact that power dynamics impact the interactions with interlocutors. Researcher's positionality has to be always considered. There is a debate in academia regarding "insider/outsider dilemma" (Davis & Craven 2016, p. 60) and I agree very much with a feminist critique of the dilemma and that the dichotomy of insider/outsider is always blurred and knowledges are socially situated. I value the fact that I am a member of the community I am conducting research in and about, that is I am ethnic Korean born in Uzbekistan and I have worked in South Korea with the H-2 visa doing the low-skilled job. Moreover, I interviewed my relatives. All this might be crucial in bridging certain distance and contribute to more trust with Kareisky migrants. However, my ability to speak English, and some (South) Korean, not many ethnic Korean labor migrants from post-Soviet countries speak (South) Korean; being a graduate student at an international university in Europe; and certain academic background in Korean diaspora studies bring up important concerns. To what extend did I dominate and impose my views from my experience regarding migration during interviews? To what extend did my biases and prejudices regarding both ethnic Korean labor migrants and South Koreans affect the interpretations of the research? What would be my contribution to my community and would it be a "contribution"? These questions are informed by "reflexivity as a corrective measure" (Nencel, 2014), p. 77), reflection and self-doubt are crucial for ethical research.

For me as a researcher, ethical approach is of the highest significance. Boellstroff *et al* (2012) contend that any ethnographic research must be approached and guided by "the principle of care" (p. 129), that is the asymmetrical power relations and imbalance are inalienable part of a research and this must be taken into account. To ensure the principle of care, as a researcher I am committed to not doing any harm to the community I am about to research, to protect participants and guarantee their confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. All the interviews are done after obtaining verbal consent. Furthermore, in each interview I strove to establish a "collaborative relationship" (Weiss, 1994, p. 61), that is I was open and explained the purpose of the interview, approximate time and I asked for the consent for recording. In addition, I wanted to contribute to the community, therefore, I volunteered at the Association of Koryo Saram and the Cultural Centre for Koryo Saram in Ansan city during my fieldwork by helping out with administrative work.

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Chapter II. Ethnic Return Labor Migration Policies to South Korea

In the late 1990s, the flourishing economy of South Korea started to lure a considerable amount of migrants. Koryo saram, along with other flows of migrants from South East Asia, also started migrating to South Korea. However, with a history of communism, sudden 'developing status' attribution after the Soviet Union demise, and almost total loss of Korean language by Koryo Saram, South Korea has faced considerable difficulties in dealing with migration policies for co-ethnics from Central Asia. As the focus of this thesis is low-skilled ethnic return migration policies of South Korea and the ways low-skilled ethnic return migrants affect and are affected by the policies, it is important to trace the development of labor and ethnic return policies. In this section, I, first, review the development of labor and ethnic migration policies and contextualize the appearance of H-2 visa. Then, I map out various approaches in academic literature on low-skilled ethnic labor migration in South Korea, and point out possible drawbacks of such approaches. Finally, I lay out my theoretical framework and the tools I will use for my analysis, such as concepts of Foucauldian biopolitics, subject formation, and intersectionality.

1. Development of South Korea's Ethnic Return Labor Migration Policies

According to Hi Korea[7] website there are two categories of co-ethnics abroad: Korean Nationals Residing Abroad and Foreign Nationality Koreans. The first category is rather straightforward and refers to Koreans holding passports of the Republic of Korea but residing abroad with permanent residency status. It is the second category that have become an issue when it came to the ethnic return policies. Due to the Japanese colonization (1910-1935) and Korean War (1950-1953), it is virtually impossible to trace clear and fixed definition of who exactly is considered as a Korean with foreign nationality. In general, however, Koreans lost their Korean nationality when they became nationals of foreign countries. The 1918 Constitution of the Russian Empire granted citizenship to any foreigners who were living within the Empire, so long as they were engaged in work and belonged to the working class. It recognized the equal rights of all citizens men and women, irrespective of their racial or national connections (George, 2013). The later constitutions of the Soviet Union would grant universal Soviet

[7] Hi Korea - the main site of the electronic government for foreigners, jointly created by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), with the purpose of providing investment, employment, residence, and everyday living related information and services from a single source to foreigners visiting Korea, there are two categories of ethnic Koreans residing outside of South Korea
https://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/InfoDetailR_en.pt?catSeq=&categoryId=2&parentId=405&showMenuId=378

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citizenship to the citizens of all member republics in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination laid out in the original 1918 constitution of the Russian Empire. That is how Koryo saram acquired Soviet citizenship. Yet to lose the Korean nationality one has to first have it. Korean Nationality Law was enacted in 1948 (Park, 2014). How then to treat those Korean diaspora members who migrated before 1948? This ambiguity in the Law did not become an issue during the Cold War, when about half a million of ethnic Koreans on the territory of the Soviet Union and about two million in China did not have any relationship with South Korea. The problems did, however, arise after the collapse of the Soviet Union when diplomatic relationships were established and ethnic Koreans began to look for opportunities to enter South Korea. In the late 1980s and early 90s, when the members of Korean diasporas from post-Soviet space and China wanted to visit South Korea they had to register as foreigners. Later in 1995, a Permanent Return program was established for ethnic Koreans from post-Soviet space and China to give them an opportunity to make a claim to the Korean citizenship. However, the program was closed in 1998 as "the South Korean government neither treated the rest as foreigners nor ascertained their Korean nationality, and refused to accept their applications for naturalisation or reinstatement of nationality" (Lee, 2012. p. 90).

At the same time, as South Korean economy was becoming highly industrialized, it had to deal with economic shortages by opting for foreign labor. Prior to 1987, the amount of foreign labor migrants was insignificant – 6409 workers; however, by 1991 the number reached 45,449; 92% of whom were undocumented workers (Kim and Kwon, 2012). To cope with the influx of undocumented labor migrants, the country gradually introduced several labor migration acts and laws since the 90s, part of which were the development of ethnic return migration polices.

The first labor migration policy was the "Industrial Technical Training Program" (ITTS) in 1991, which allowed Korean companies to legally hire foreign people as "trainees" for a period of six months, with a possibility of six moths extension (Kim and Kwon, 2012; Seol and Lee, 2011; Seol and Skrentny, 2009). "The trainees", who actually performed workload equal to actual workers, were deprived of minimum wages, basic benefits and earned on average 30%-40% less than the native staff (Kim and Kwon, 2012). Though this program had trainees from various countries, it *de facto* was implemented to cope with the bigger influx of ethnic Koreans from China (*Joseonjok*). In the mid-1990s, with the support of human rights activists and religious NGOs foreign labor migrants were protesting against humiliating working conditions and in 1995 the ITTS included minimum wages and some basic benefits. Because of very constraint opportunities for ethnic Koreans from China and post-Soviet space to enter South Korea, the ITTS was in practice the only way to get into the country legally. This program,

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however, did not acknowledge those Koreans as co-ethnics but rather accepted them as foreigners along with other nationalities.

In 1999, the Korean National Assembly introduced the "Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans" (the Overseas Koreans Act) to attract professional workers and investors of Korean ancestry from the West. The Act allows co-ethic Koreans who were born outside the country to receive F-4 visa, which grants the holders of the visa the right to stay in South Korea without any restrictions and enjoy the social benefits close to natives for the period of five years (Seol and Lee, 2011; Seol and Skretny, 2009). What is crucial to note is that even though the Act did not explicitly outline social and geographical distinctions, it specified that F-4 visas can be issued to "persons who have emigrated abroad after the birth of the Republic of Korea, i.e. 1948, and have relinquished their Korean nationality, and their lineal descendants" (Seol and Skrentny, 2009, p. 157). This automatically excluded ethnic Korean descendants from China (circa 2 million ethnic Koreans) and post-Soviet (circa 500,000 ethnic Koreans) countries since their ancestors left the country before 1948 (Seol and Lee, 2011; Seol and Skrentny, 2009).

In 2007, after ethnic Chinese Koreans, with the support of human rights activists, protested against the unjust implementation of the Overseas Koreans Act (OKA): the case was brought to the Constitutional Court of Korea, a special "Visit and Employment Program" (VEP) was established which acknowledged post-Soviet and Chinese ethnic Koreans as co-ethnics with foreign nationality. However, the VEP introduced, different from F- 4 visas, H-2 visa for exclusively post-Soviet and Chinese ethnic Koreans. The H-2 visa guarantees similar to F-4 rights: stay in South Korea without any restrictions and enjoy the social benefits close to natives. However, a crucial distinction is that the employment is restricted to low-skilled manual work (38 occupations)[8] and the duration is three years, with the possibility for extension for additional 1 year and 10 months without leaving the country (Hi Korea, 2010). Moreover, H-2 visa holders must undergo medical examinations both in their respective countries and in South Korea, must complete a 3-days employment education provided by the Ministry of Labor, and a 7-days education if they wish to be employed in construction sites. F-4 visa holders are exempt from all of the mentioned.

It is interesting that on the official site of the e-government for foreigners Hi Korea, under the section of Overseas Koreans, the description of Koreans with foreign nationality has an

[8] List of occupations open to participants in the H-2 Visa can be found here https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264307872-8-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264307872-8-en#component-d1e9717

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additional requirement stating: "... *overseas Koreans from China or the former Soviet Union who are going to apply for F-4 visa should be one of the following".* The last point number 12 refers to H-2 holders as 'contributors to National interests', below is an excerpt with the point number 12[9]:

> *⑫ Working visa(H2) holders who contributes to National interests*
> *- As a manufacturing industry, agricultural, fishery, nursing and housemaid, working at same work place over 1 year. (Here are the followings acceptable circumstances even if you work less than 1 year: If the company suspends, shuts down, bankrupt, delayed payment, or face other unexpected situations.)*
> *- Manufacturing industry, agricultural, fishery, nursing and housemaid who worked over 6 months can receive the certificate of qualification for related field*
> *- Recent 2years living in overseas over 200days.(ex: packman)*
> *- A person over 63 years old*

By looking at all that, there is an impression that H-2 visa holders are still not considered as full co-ethnics with foreign nationality, but rather H-2 is a something in-between foreigners and Koreans with foreign nationality. What is clear is that H-2 visa holders are to contribute to national interests. It is worth pointing out that, though Hi Korea website is considered as the official site of electronic government of South Korea for foreigners, the discussed page was last updated in 2010. Moreover, it is rather difficult to read the content as it seems that it has been directly translated from Korean without proper review. It is also not clear how a person over 63 years old (the last point in the excerpt) is to contribute to national interests. One of the widely used websites by post-Soviet Koreans is Vseokoree.com (allaboutKorea.com), it has regularly updated information in Russian language with links to official sources of various embassies from the post-Soviet space. The website itself is not official and is run by post-Soviet Koreans. This is what vseokoree.com has about H-2 visa[10]:

> "H-2 (Visit and Employment)
>
> Eligibility: Ethnic Koreans from the countries of the former Soviet Union and China who have reached the age of 18 years old (all generations according to the law of September 2, 2019).
>
> A multiple entry visa, which is valid for three years. Maximum stay without 4 years and 10 months. Employment in the field of simple physical labor is possible, such as production, agriculture, fishing, but only after completing specialized courses

[9] Full website page can be accessed here: https://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/InfoDetailR_en.pt?catSeq=&categoryId=2&parentId=405&showMenuId=378

[10] H-2 description in Russian: https://vseokoree.com/vizovye-voprosy/vse-o-vize-h-2

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on employment procedure and working in Korea stipulated by the Immigration service."

To receive H-2 visa, an ethnic Korean applies to the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in their country with the following documents:

- Prove of Korean blood lineage - birth or death certificate of all generations (parents and grandparents)
- Certificate of good conduct
- Certificate of proficiency in Korean language (this is a new amendment, put into force in July 2019)[11]

H-2 visa is given according to quotas set by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Employment and Justice, the ceiling usually revolves around 300.000 ethnic Koreans.

Гос-во (Country) Всего (Total)	Республика Узбекистан (Uzbekistan)	Республика Казахстан (Kazakhstan)	Республика Кыргызстан (Kyrgyzstan)	Украина (Ukraine)	Республика Таджикистан (Tajikistan)
11.000	**7.000**	**1500**	**1.000**	**1.000**	**500**

Table 1. 2018 Year Quota for H-2 applicants.
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, 2018

It is important to note that in 2008 certain amendments were made to the OKA as well, which allowed co-ethnics from the post-Soviet space and China to apply for F-4 visa. However, the requirements for a minority diaspora from such countries as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Ukraine are rather exclusive. Co-ethnic from the post-Soviet space and China can apply for F-4 visa if they are any of the following:

- has a permanent residency of an OECD member state,
- a member of the board of directors or an executive officer of a multinational corporation,
- the CEO or a registered director of a corporation,
- a member of the board of directors or an executive officer of a press company
- the holder of a doctorate,
- the holder of a master's degree or a higher degree given by a Korean higher education institution etc. (Hi Korea, 2010)

Thus, it can be claimed that ethnic return policies in South Korea developed as a part of labor migration paradigm rather than symbolic ethnic ties paradigm, which is more common in European ethnic migration, I will touch upon which further. As can be seen, it has been rather difficult for post-Soviet Koreans to enter South Korea on the sole basis of ethnic reconciliation,

[11] My ethnographic field work was conducted before the new amendment came into force, therefore, none of my interviewees had to submit the Korean language certificate

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and it is only with the appearance of labor aspect that made South Korea reconsider whether to allow Koryo Saram enter the country. South Korea dealt with labor shortages gradually and introduced special visas for post-Soviet co-ethnic Koreans relatively recently, during last stages of overall migration policies. Since the implementation of the policies, the issue of ethnic return migration to South Korea gained a considerable interest. In what follows, I review existing scholarship on ethnic return migration and on various interpretations of the policies and their effect on ethnic migrants.

2. Review of the Literature

Within the existing academic literature on the issue of low-skilled ethnic return migration to South Korea, two main threads and/or discourses can be easily identified. The first discourse is related to South Korea's economic interests. Prevailing majority of researches on the issue contend that considering South Korea's ethnic homogeneity, ethnic migrants from developing post-Soviet states and China are a cheap and exploitable resource used for labor shortage in low-skilled sectors (see for example Kim and Kwon, 2012; Lee, 2010; Seo, 2010; Skrentny et al., 2007; Song, 2019). Lee (2010), for example, argues that migration policies in South Korea in general, regardless of ethnicity, are based on national interests, competitiveness and economic utility. As South Korea has become highly industrialized, a strong labor shortage appeared. To compensate the labor shortage, the aforementioned labor migration policies have been introduced to allow cheap temporary labor from developing countries. Furthermore, Lee points out that because South Korea is ethnically highly homogenous country there is a process of "re-ethnization of immigration policy" (Lee, 2010, p. 41). The author demonstrates that since the implementation of ethnic return policies for ethnic Chinese Koreans (and post-Soviet Koreans), the number of migrants from China dramatically increased. In 2009, Chinese Koreans accounted for 60 percent of all migrant workers (Ibid., p. 41). Unfortunately, there was no data on post-Soviet Koreans. Lee asserts that ethnic Koreans with foreign nationalities constitute the majority of labor migrants in South Korea and, specifically, in low-skilled labor market. In addition, she notes that depending on the country of origin and current state of affairs, Korean diaspora members have different demands, which creates difficulties for the ethnic return migration policy makers. For example, according to the author, Korean Americans would like to strengthen their economic and legal status in their homeland, while, Joseonjok request more job opportunities. As a result, the country has built a structure of "differential membership" (Ibid., p. 36).

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The emphasis on the economic discourse is also predominant in comparative approaches to ethnic return migration to South Korea. Skrentny et al., (2007) take on a comparative analysis of ethnic return migration policies in Europe: Germany, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Romani and Poland, and Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China. The authors contend that the Asian states use co-ethnics as a means to an end for the sake of economic wellbeing, whereas, the European countries view co-ethnics as in need of protection and , thus, offer symbolic ties in a form of citizenship. Furthermore, Skretny et al. assert that there is not any European country that target co-ethnics abroad as investors and high-skilled labor source as is the case with F-4 visa. Therefore, the authors point out, in Asia "rather than the state existing to help co-ethnics abroad, the co-ethnics abroad have a role to play to strengthen the state" (Skrentny et al., 2007, p. 795). Seo (2010) suggests a comparative study of the Korean, German and Polish diasporas return to their homelands. Three cases are similar in a way that all three diasporas experienced both voluntary and forced deportation. Just like Skrentny et al., the author points out that while the German and Polish repatriation policies were efforts to protect the co-ethnics and recreate national cohesion in the homeland, the Korean policies were predominantly concerned with co-ethnics to contribute to the economy of the homeland. Seo reasons that that ethnic return policies of the Republic of Korea have been improperly drafted as a result of inaccurate analysis of the issues of the Korean diaspora from of the Maritime Province, such as well-being, mental safety, physical security and human rights. In addition, very scarce research of the Koryo saram society and the underestimated significance of the diaspora in the Korean academia are contributing to the issue. Seo advocates that unlike Germany, South Korea did not offer automatic citizenship. Moreover, compared to Poland and Germany, South Korea did not show much interest in ethnic Koreans from the post-Soviet space neither at the federal nor civic levels. Seo claims that South Korea was afraid of "economic and social problems that a mass influx of unskilled Koryoin would cause" (Seo 2010, p. 66). Therefore, "the rationale for co-ethnic preference in Korea is quite different from that of Germany, providing needed labor or skill for economic development with minimal disruption of Korean society and the Korean labor market" (Ibid.).

Lim (2008), by comparing migratory processes of South Korea and Germany, contends that both countries had the objective of institutionalization of a temporary and/or rotating migration worker system. Both countries' guest worker programs restricted labor migrations to specific jobs and areas. Lim makes an interesting observation by emphasizing that ethnic return labor migration policies are a result of "wink-and-nod" policy toward general migration to South Korea (Ibid., p, 33). He refers to wink-and-nod policy as government's unofficial

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allowance for international migrants with tourist visas or no visas at all to stay in the country and find jobs: there were very few crackdowns on illegal workers and finding jobs in non-authorized sectors did not require visas. Therefore, as was stated in previous sections, since 1980s the number or undocumented workers rapidly increased in hundreds of thousands. And as was mentioned, the biggest proportion of those undocumented labor migrants was constituted by Chinese co-ethnics Joseonjok. In this regards, Lim also maintains that through the wink-and-nod policy South Korea employed a policy of promoting ethnic return migration of Joseonjok to "minimize the social tension that presumably arises when culturally distinct groups "invade" an otherwise homogenous society" (Ibid,. p. 34). Thus, South Korea did not have preferential migration policies for ethnic return migration from the start, rather ethnic return migration policies derived from gradually changing general labor migration policies.

One of the very few academic sources that take into account the voices of Koryo Saram as ethnic return labor migrants also highlight the economic rationale. South Korea, according to Tsuda and Song (2018) in their edited book *Diasporic Returns to the Ethnic Homeland,* is the Asian country which is the most affected by ethnic return migration. Today, the approximately 800.000 ethnic migrants make up 39% of the country's total immigrant population; this is the largest percent than in any Asian country (Tsuda and Song, 2018, p. 5). In the case of ethnic return migration to South Korea, the authors point out that it is important not to assume that there is a natural attachment to the homeland that makes people return. The authors further assert that for Chinese and post-Soviet Koreans instrumental and economic factors are at stake. Tsuda and Song state that "this is certainly the case with the Korean Chinese as well as the former Soviet Koreans for whom economic difficulties, especially in the marginalized, rural areas where they live, have pushed them out of China, Uzbekistan, and Russia and pulled them to prosperous South Korea, where they can more readily find higher-paying, albeit, low-skilled, immigrant jobs" (Ibid., p. 25). The authors emphasize that ethnicity does play a role for ethnic return migrants form the Global North (primarily the US and Japan).

Second most common discourse within existing academic literature on low-skilled ethnic return migration to South Korea is related to, briefly aforementioned, differential membership or hierarchical nationhood. Seol and Skrentny (2009) contend that South Korea's ethnic migration policy fits in with the state's geopolitical and economic interests, moreover, the country builds a "hierarchical nationhood" (p. 148). Based on literature review and conducted interviews, Seol and Skrentny demonstrate how ethnic Koreans from China are being regarded as "lesser members" compared to, for example, American Koreans (Seol and Skrentny, 2009). By hierarchal nationhood, the authors refer to the opposite of horizontal nationhood – where

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despite actual inequality people within one nation are equals to each other. According to the authors, hierarchal nationhood is characterized by two aspects of lesser status: legal and social. Legal status refers to the inequalities in the development of migration policies: Jeosonjok were automatically included in the training program for low-skilled jobs having a very limited access to social benefits and healthcare in the 1990s, automatically excluded from the Overseas Korean Act, and given only H-2 visas later on. Social dimension is based on the attitudes of South Koreans toward Joseonjok versus Korean Americans and South Koreans themselves. According to the interviews, conducted by the authors in collaboration with other organizations in 1994, 1995 and 2006, "existing poll data show the Korean people do not embrace Joseonjok as full members" (p. 158). Chulwoo Lee (2012) stresses the fact that South Korea's idea of nationhood and citizenship is unique in a way that its taxonomy of ethnicity sanctifies the myth of common ancestry based on blood. He urges to pay attention to the politics of identity rather than on the politics of interest when talking about ethnic labor migrants from China and former Soviet Union. Lee further points out that because Chinese and Central Asian Koreans acquired citizenship in their respective countries they lost their Korean nationality. Therefore, based on studies of Baubock, he asserts that South Korea extended its national membership to the ethnic Chinese and Central Asian Koreans in a form of "ethnizenship (non-citizen membership)" (Ibid., p. 85). Lee refers to F-4 visa as a first class ethnizenship and H-2, which "was invented more than seven years later to placate the grievance of the diaspora groups precluded from the benefits of F-4", as a second or lesser ethnizenship (Ibid., p. 93). Despite hierachization within one ethnicity, Lee, along with the majority in the academic literature, emphasizes preference of ethnic Chinese and post-Soviet Korean labor migrants over foreign ones due to ethnic homogeneity (e.g. Chung and Hosoki, 2017; Kim and Kwon, 2012; Lee, 2010; Lim, 2008; Park and Chang, 2005; Seol and Lee, 2011).

Apart from the economic and hierarchical categorization discourse, there is a growing body of literature focusing on globalization and human rights aspects (see for example Chung and Hosoki, 2017; Lim, 2008; Park and Chang, 2005; Park, 2017; Seol and Lee, 2011). Park and Chung (2005) explore the controversies regarding the Overseas Korean Act based on interviews with 1000 South Koreans conducted in 2003. Despite the fact that according to Seol and Skrentny, South Koreans do not regard Chinese Koreans as full members, according to Park and Chung 77.4 percent of respondents said that Chinese Koreans and post-Soviet Koreans should be included as the beneficiaries of the Act (Park and Chung, 2005, p. 11). Moreover, the survey demonstrated that 97.3 percent of the respondents did not know the contents of the

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Overseas Korean Act.[12] (Ibid.). The authors contend that despite the presence of certain legal categories in the Act, such as defining overseas Koreans in relation to the Republic of Korea so that only those who migrated after 1948[13] could be included, the Act also entails primordial notions of Korean identity, which is subject to social and political negotiation. Moreover, authors point out that globalization has played a tremendous role in redefining local, regional and global boundaries and it is in this vein that the South Korean government "emphasized the significance of overseas Koreans in forming a globalized ethnic Korean community" (Park and Chung, 2005, p. 2). In addition, Seol and Lee (2011) argue that South Korea's policies specific to ethnic return migration are constantly evolving to balance economic development, human rights and stable civil society. The authors observe that the differential treatment of ethnic return migrants from various host-states has been weakened. As can be seen from the development of implementation of various policies, the status of Choseonjok and Koryo saram did change: initially they did not have any legal rights, whereas at present, ethnic return visas provide at least minimum wage, social benefit and health insurance. It is however, the authors confirm, the differential treatment of high-skilled workers versus low-skilled workers which remains.

One of the most important constituents of the migration policies of South Korea is its gendered dynamic. Due to a rapid industrialization, the country experienced vivid demographic changes. Kim and Kwon (2012) point out that advancements in South Korean education system and improvements in mobility infrastructures led Korean women to resist conservative family norms and allowed them to move from rural areas to urban ones to seek better job and life opportunities. This state of affairs affected and had been affected by a rapid fertility decline since industrialization as can be seen from the Figure 1 (Kim and Kwon, 2012, p. 181) below.

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[12] The respondents were give a brief description of the Act

[13] The year of the establishment of the Republic of Korea (South Korea)

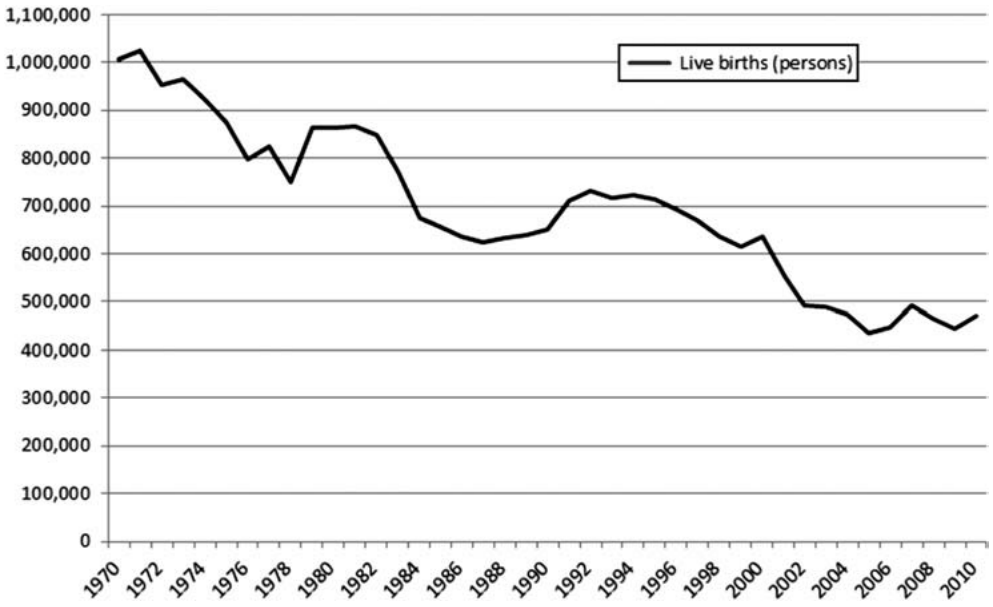

Figure 1: Live birth in South Korea 1970-2010

By the 1990s, large numbers of rural South Korean men could not find local wives. This resulted in organization of "Rural Bachelors Marching Drives" and marriage tour to China to look for potential wives from Chinese Korean diaspora, later the location expanded to include South East Asia and Central Asia (Kim and Kwon, 2012, p. 181). Kim and Kwon further contend that "given the increasing reluctance of South Korean women to marry men from rural areas, immigrant women have become especially important for the survival of rural communities" (p. 191). Due to that matchmaking commercial agencies have become a billion dollar industries. Moreover,

> "The rise in the number of women immigrants and international marriages has had a substantial effect on the attitude and policy toward immigration. This is reflected in the amendments to South Korea's "Nationality Act" that gradually extended the eligibility for becoming a citizen. The amendment in 1998 included among others, recognition of children born of South Korean mothers and foreign fathers as eligible for citizenship and the granting to non-Korean husbands of South Korean wives the right to naturalize. The amendment in 2004 includes, among others, the easing of the process of citizenship acquisition for foreign immigrant women who marry South Korean men, especially those who have borne children".
>
> (Ibid., p. 191)

Thus, the explicit gendered dynamic is a constituent part of South Korean migration policies. In addition, Lee (2010) asserts that the multiculturalism that is being advertised by the South Korean government is actually patriarchal. The author points out that multiculturalism policies aim predominantly at families with children where the father is Korean and the mother is Asian or ethnic Korean. Indeed, in the prevailing majority of Multicultural Family Support centers

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(다문화가족지원센터) the participants are exclusively women. Though marriage visas are different from the low-skilled ethnic visa (H-2 visa), this gendered dynamics of overall migration policies indicate the concern of the ethnic cohesion and demographic changes of South Korean population. Moreover, as was demonstrated earlier, ethnic return migration policies, both high-skilled and low-skilled, derived and developed from general labor migration goals. All this is crucial when approaching the policies via the lens of biopolitics (see Chapter III).

Thus, the academic literature on ethnic return migration to South Korea emphasizes that the reasons behind making co-ethnics from developing countries into low-skilled labor mainly contribute to economic benefits and cheap labor, and minimization of social tensions. Moreover, the prevailing literature points out that there is a hierarchical membership within one ethnicity and there is a strong rhetoric on blood relations. Yet, despite being regarded as low-skilled, H-2 visa holders have preferential status over non-ethnic foreign labor migrants. An important aspect to consider is that the policies are gendered and patriarchal. What deserves to be pointed out is that despite a sophisticated critique of the ethnic return migration policies, almost all the scholars discuss the issue through the top-down perspective and render ethnic migrants as purportedly passive victims of the policies. Furthermore, even though almost all the literature mention post-Soviet Koreans, only very few (Lee (2012) and Seo (2010)) go beyond just the mentioning act and take post-Soviet Koreans as a part of primary focus. Only Seo rightly points out that the lack of sufficient knowledge of the history of Koryo Saram might have contributed to inadequate framing of the policies. As a result, of over focusing on the top-down approach, the existing literature on ethnic return labor migration to South Korea lacks labor dimension, human experience and meso-level migration discourses. Chung and Hosoki (2017) rightly point out that when it comes to ethnic return migration "any theoretical explanation of a single pressure – economic, social, or cultural – is inadequate to understand labor migrant inflows" (p. 85). Yes, the policies are there but can the existence of the policies be the single answer of why people choose to migrate? Can economy be a single rationale for creation of such complicated and money consuming ethnic policies? Why people choose to migrate even though they know that all they are going to do is to perform low-skilled jobs? Is the difference in income between countries can be the primary reason? Does the fact that South Korea presents itself as a historic homeland play any role? How do post-Soviet Koreans navigate their lives, experiences, ethnic and gendered attachments, and desires while being low-skilled ethnic migrants? These questions are what my research aims to unpack, and in order to do that I offer an alternative

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approach to low-skilled ethnic migration to South Korea through the theoretical framework of Foucauldian biopolitics, racism and subject formation, intersectionality and meso-level migratory processes.

3. Theoretical Framework

The main arguments of my thesis are engaged with Foucault's concepts of biopolitics, racism, and subject formation. I supplement Foucauldian biopolitics with intersectionalilty and meso-level migration processes.

According to Foucault (1976), at the beginning of the 18th century, a new mode of power appeared where the conventional power of the State or the sovereign has modified into a new technique. The new technique presupposes that direct oppression, force and discipline, that is the sovereign's "right to take life and let live", have now become secondary and indirect power of normalization and regularization through monitoring, optimizing, reinforcing, protecting, managing and multiplying life are mainly utilized (Foucault et al., 1976, p. 241). The power of the State or the sovereign transformed into "to make live and let die" (Ibid.). Foucault calls it biopower, which derives its knowledge from such biological techniques as the birth rate, the mortality rate, biological disabilities and effects of the environment. Mechanisms and techniques of biopower intervene in all spheres of live: institutional, social, and biological, most importantly, they intervene at the level of "generality of general phenomena" (Ibid., p. 246). A crucial aspect of biopower is that it deals and cares about not just "individual-as-body" but about the population, "the population as political problem" (Ibid., p. 245). And it is this is what I will treat as a key objective of Foucault's biopolitics. When Foucault talks about the mechanisms of biopolitics in the modern states, he refers to the context of Western Europe, I apply biopolitical approach to a very specific South Korean ethnic migration context, thereby, I expand on Foucauldian biopolitics further. Whereas, the prevailing majority of academic sources claim economic interests to be at stake for the ethnic low-skilled migration policies, I, without completely negating the claim, render economic aspects as parts of a bigger biopolitical regime, which involves a discursive set of factors such as fertility rate, education, industrialization, politics and ethnicity. Thus, I assert that biopolitics, the biopolitics with the goal of preserving and multiplying life, and the mechanisms that focus on labor and docile bodies can provide a deeper and more holistic understanding of ethnic migration regime in the South Korean context. And it is within this ethnic migration regime that I look at the experiences of Kareisky migrants and their subject formation.

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In spite of Foucault's works very often being used in deterministic ways to show the complete hold by the oppressive mechanisms of the technologies of power, Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and subject formation do not contradict one another. It is within the regime/power that subject is formed and agency is situated. Throughout his works, Foucault pointed out that subject formation takes place discursively, that is in and through disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms of power. In today's modern world, governmentality is at place. Governmentality refers to "the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other" (Foucault cited in Skinner, 2013, p. 908). Therefore, subjectivation does not take place only in imperative and imposing way. Rather, it is "a process of internalization that involves taking decision about a particular type of subject" (Skinner, 2013, p. 909). As will be shown further, South Korean ethnic return migration policies through the discourses of ethnic belonging and labor created a target group of post-Soviet Koreans as low-skilled co-ethnics, and thus, as inferior other Koreans. As a result, virtually all existing academic literature on the issue renders post-Soviet low-skilled ethnic migrants as passive victims of the migration policies. Foucault's approach to subject formation gives the opportunity to understand better how through the conditions and processes, which ensure subordination to power a person becomes a self-conscious subject. That is, how within the migration regime where post-Soviet Koreans are posited as low-skilled dirty workers they actively (re) negotiate their sense of who they are.

As my research focuses on labor, migration and subject formation, to provide a deeper analysis of how low-skilled migrants situate themselves within the neoliberal labor migration regime, Foucault's economic analysis of labor is what I engage with. When it comes to economic interests, which as was mentioned in the literature review section are at stake for both South Korea and ethnic migrants, it is important to take labor not just as merely and primarily situated between capital (the price of labor) and production (added value). But to take as a point of departure the question of "how the person who works uses the means available to [her]" (Foucault et al., 2008, p. 223). Once this is done, according to Foucault, "we adopt the point of view of the worker and, for the first time, ensure that the worker is not present in the economic analysis as an object – the object of supply and demand in the form of labor power – but as an active economic subject" (Ibid.). Here, Foucault is talking about the return of *homo economicus,* but with a complete change in the conception of the term. At this point, *homo economicus* is not simply a man of consumption and production in terms of exchange. *Homo economicus* is

> "The [wo]man of consumption, insofar as [s]he consumes, is a producer. What does [s]he produce? Well, quite simply, [s]he produces [her]his own

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> satisfaction. And we should think of consumption as an enterprise activity by which the individual, precisely on the basis of the capital [s]he has at [her]his disposal, will produce something that will be [her]his own satisfaction" (Foucault et al., 2008, p. 226).

This approach can better account for a specific form of subjectivity of Koryo Saram within the biopolitical regime. Within this terrain migration, according to Foucault, "is an investment; the migrant is an investor" (Foucault et al., 2008, p. 230). Migration, the author points out, does have a cost since you have to have some basic financial resources which will be spent on adaptation, which in turn will have a psychological impact. But, all this is an investment to improve own life. All this, along with meso-level migration processes, provides a chance to render ethnic return low-skilled migrants in conceptually various ways without victimizing and depriving them of their own human experience.

Foucault's concept of racism is another significant terrain that my thesis engages with. Though Foucault did not extensively write on racism, his stance on the issue is of great value as he introduces a new modified version of racism – racism within one race, within one population to make that population purer and healthier. Racism within biopolitics deals with "distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure and hierarchize…" (Foucault, 1990, p 144). As could be seen from the literature review section, majority of scholars on the issue of ethnic return migration assert that there is a process of hierarchization within one ethnic migrant community in South Korea: at the top are American Koreans, followed by Japanese Koreans, below them are Chinese Koreans and at the very bottom - post-Soviet Koreans. In biopolitics, hierarchy acts under the framework of racism as "a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control… It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population" (Foucault 1975, 255-256). Foucault implied that as long as the biological existence of a population is at stake, power/State will be racist. Applying Foucauldian racism to the ethnic low-skilled migration issue allows deeper examination of how the aforementioned hierarchy operates on different levels, and allows interrogation of new questions about ethnic belonging and *(non)*integration, development and migration processes. Most importantly, the biopolitical racializing mechanisms play crucial role in the ways Kareitsy position themselves within the biopolitical regime.

As my research deals with migration, it is important to consider what kind of migratory processes are at place. Since the 1980s, the diversity of migration processes and the role of migrants' agency in actively and creatively overcoming structural limitations, social insecurity, social exclusion and racism, have become highlighted in various studies. The studies focus on

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> "the micro- and meso-level and are interested in what motivates people and social groups to migrate, how they perceive the world and how they shape their identity during the migration process. They also show how migrants' agency can create social networks, which can make migratory process partly self-perpetuating" (Castles et.al., 2014, p. 37).

Meso-level structures which refer to intermediate mechanism, such as immigrant communities, migrants networks, new business sectors catering to migrants, and the 'migration industry' are crucial in migrants' experiences and such processes reflect the subjectivity as well. New economics and household approaches, which deals with micro and meso-levels are important to consider. The approaches assert that migration decisions are often not made by isolated individuals but usually by families and/or households. There is also a focus on relative deprivation, when people decide to migrate not because they are extremely poor but rather by feeling less well-off compared to another community member who migrated and send good remittances home (Castles et. al., 2014). All these are crucial to consider, yet it seems to be absent in the literature on the ethnic return migration to South Korea. Meso-level migratory processes expand on the biopolitical approach in a way that they deal with the specificities of migration and being a migrant and is expanded by the biopolitical approach, which complements meso-level with macro-processes directed at the management of an entire population. Community building at the meso-level is astonishing within Koryo saram community. Kareitsy have been diasporic ethnic minority in the post-Soviet space and now has become a diaspora yet belonging to the ethnic majority. There are literally whole post-Soviet Korean towns within South Korean cities, which differ in terms of language, culture, customs and even cuisine. Despite the fact that there is such a diverse process of migrant settlement undertaken by people, none of that is present in academic literature on post-Soviet Central Asian Koreans working in South Korea.

Better understanding and analysis of hierarchization, subject formation and migratory processes requires intersectional approach. I complement Foucauldian concepts with intersectionality. Intersectionality is crucial to resist and disarm subordination, inequality and oppression. The term intersectionality was coined and mainstreamed by Kimeberle Crenshaw (1989) in her article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," where she points out the failure of antiracists and feminists to pay attention on how race and gender intersect in violence against women of color. Melissa Wright (2006), in her book *Disposable women and other myths of global capitalism*, explores the myth of disposable third world woman in capitalism. She states that "determining how the body as a site of multiple identities,

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where no single identifier establishes the sole definition of the subjects existence (or its "essence") is vital if we are to understand how the laboring body, …, emerges as an embodied site of exploitation and accumulation" (Wright, 2006, p. 11). To recognize issues as systemic and social rather than isolated and private is what intersectional approach strives for. Therefore, as intersectionality is discursive, it is a process, it is not defined by what it is but by what it does (Cho et al., 2013). For my work, I borrow Tsuda and Song's intersections to focus on. In their edited book *Diasporic Returns to the Ethnic Homeland,* the authors center on three variables: the nationality of the migrants, their social class status, and their generational distance from the homeland (Tsuda and Song, 2018, p. 9). I complement their variables with labor and gender, which are crucial to take into account when examining human experience, yet these factors are heavily underreseasrched in relation to ethnic return migration of post-Soviet Koreans to South Korea. Such differences in nationality, generation, labor and gender among ethnic return migrants inevitably mean that they are positioned differently in the homeland. Moreover, it is through the same intersections that Koryo Saram renegotiate their subject formation and find agency as a response to racialization.

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Chapter III. A Biopolitical Approach to Low-skilled Ethnic Labor Migration

In the previous chapter, the reviewed literature showed that the prevailing amount of research on the issue of low-skilled ethnic return migration to South Korea implement a top-down approach and render the introduction of low-skilled ethnic return migration as a mean to primarily economic ends. In this chapter's first section, I would like to refute the overemphasis on the economic aspect. I demonstrate that a biopolitical approach provides a deeper and more holistic interrogation of low-skilled ethnic return migration. Therefore, I argue that a biopolitical regime on migration is at place and economy is not the primary driving force and rationale for low-skilled ethnic migration but rather that economy is a part of a much bigger biopolitical process. In the second part of this chapter, I contend that within this biopolitical regime on migration Koryo saram, albeit important for the biopolitical regime, are positioned as inferior other Koreans through the technique of biopolitical racism. I analyze how this type of racism operates within one ethnicity through multiple intersections, such as nationality, and labor, and creates racialization and the sense of otherness/difference in post-Soviet Koreans.

1. Ethnic Low-Skilled Migration as a Part of Biopolitical Regime on Migration

As was demonstrated earlier, the majority of arguments in the academic literature contend that South Korea introduced ethnic labor migration policies to pursue mainly economic interests, i.e. cheap labor. In this section, I, without negating the former claim, contend that ethnic labor migration policies are a part of a biopolitical regime. Within the biopolitical regime "a set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, … together with a whole series of related economic and political problems … become biopolitics' first objects of knowledge and the targets it seeks to control" (Foucault 2003, p 243). As will be demonstrated below, it is this set of processes, such as fertility rate, improvement of education, shortage of low-skilled labor force and international norms that are closely intertwined with economy and politics, and all of that is directed to improve the well-being of South Korean nation. It is precisely this set of phenomena which constitute the biopolitical regime in the country, and, most importantly, it is this set of processes that have become an object of knowledge through which ethnic low-skilled migration policies have been developing. And it is this set of processes that economy is a part of in the South Korean context, not just a sole rationale. I would like to point out that Foucauldian biopolitics does not render

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the processes in strictly linear timely manner nor does it involve clear causality of effects. The process is rather more holistic and can involve various phenomena taking place simultaneously, that is discursive processes are at place. In what follows, I engage with demographic changes such as low fertility, shortage of low-skilled labor force and international norms through the lens of biopolitics arguing that H-2 visa is a part of biopolitical regime in the country with the main goal of improving and protecting the life of the population.

a. Fertility rate and women

According to OECD Social and Welfare Statistics Family Indicators, South Korea has one the lowest fertility rates in the world (OECD Data, n.d.). As was pointed out earlier South Korea's economic transformation from a labor to a capital economy led to demographic changes. This was resulted from the early stages of industrialization in the 1960s when the government introduced population management policies to compliment economic programs. In the period of 1961-1987 a "National Family Planning Program" was in place and included strategies for popularization of a smaller family as a normative ideal, use of contraceptives, sterilization services, tax deductions and incentives for families with one or two children (Kim and Kwon, 2012, p. 180). Furthermore, industrialization and family polices led to severe gender imbalance resulted from male preference in children (Ibid.). In addition, as the country became more industrialized and economically developed, a higher age of marriage, increase of costs for education and childcare took place (Lee, 2010). All that contributed to the rapid decline in the fertility rate and aging population.

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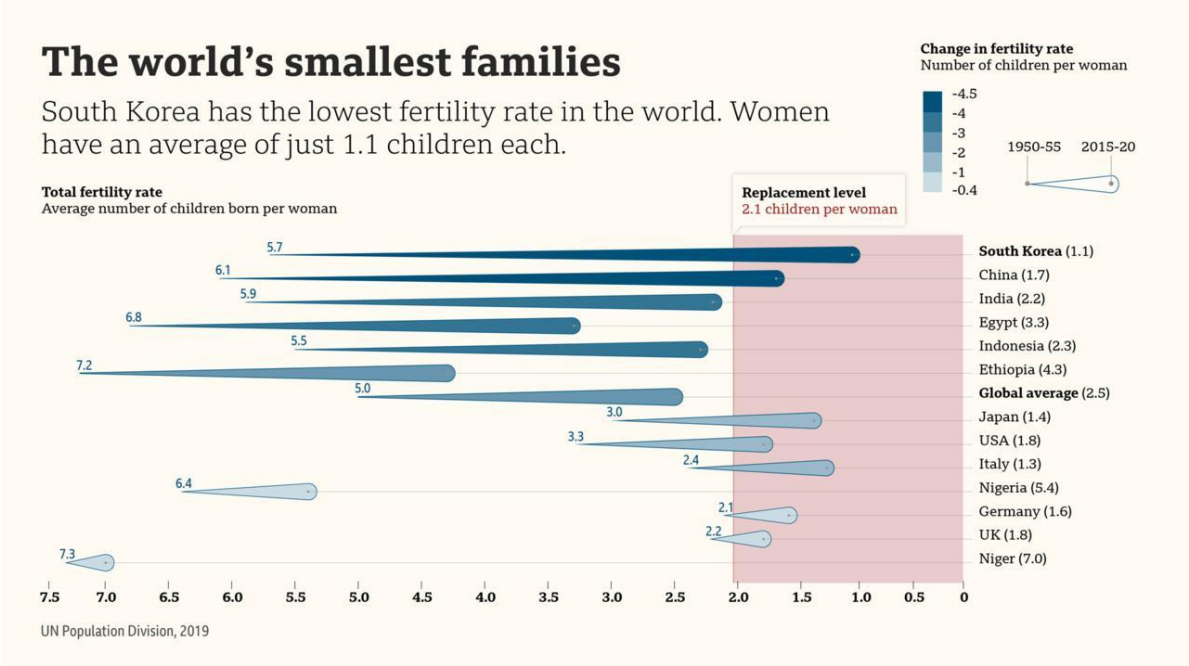

Figure 2 (Quick, 2019) **The World's Smallest Families**

The low birthrate and aging society means that there is not stabilization of the population or the "replacement rate - the point at which the total number of children born per woman in a population exactly balances out the number of elder generation deaths" (Quick, 2019). This, in turn, "threaten to deprive industries of needed labor in the long term, put doubts in the long-term sustainability of its economic growth, and more importantly, threaten the survival of the Korean nation" (Kim and Kwon, 2012, p.181). Such kind of rhetoric is quite common in today's milieu due to the rise of ethno-centric nation-building processes worldwide. As for biopolitics, "the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at state is the biological existence of a population" (Foucault, 1976, p. 137). Therefore, in today's world, such problems will have to rely on migration. Within the biopolitical regime, to cope with the issues of fertility rate, migration is stratified into two types. The first type is related to foreign brides. As was mentioned in the literature review, migration policy de facto promotes not just labor migration but immigration of *fertile* women, preferably of Asian ethnicity (including post-Soviet Korean women), to rural areas. Due to industrialization and National Family Planning Programs, which resulted in gender imbalance in children preference, and led to higher educational standards of women, there is reluctance of women to marry and have children. This made local governments to establish programs for brining foreign wives from South East Asia and Central Asia. This element of the biopolitical regime of migration entails a clear objective. Moreover, being a fertile woman who agrees to 'contribute' the country has far less legal constraints to become incorporated into the South Korean society. In the case of Central Asian

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Korean women, it might be the only way to obtain a higher status than H-2 and/or receive citizenship. It is worth to note that based on the personal experience and participant observation, among all Central Asian Koreans I have encountered who would have F-5 visas (Permanent Residency) and citizenship are women only.

The second type is the low-skilled migration. Low-skilled ethnic return migrants are not directly the target of reproduction strategies, but they are certainly part of the coping mechanism within the biopolitical regime. The aforementioned demographic changes also led to labor shortage in specific sectors – predominantly low-skilled manufacturing and construction. As could be seen, the migration and immigration policies of South Korea have been implemented gradually since late 1980s when the demographic changes started affecting the lives of the population. Low-skilled ethnic migrants are important for the fertility rate issues as low-skilled laboring bodies. Moreover, ethnic cohesion is preserved. The latest amendment to the H-2 policy indicates the concern over low-fertility and aging society. Since 2007, the year of introduction of H-2, there have been made several amendments only regarding taxes and work requirements. However, in August 2018, the inclusion of the fourth generation[14] of Koryo saram and reducing age to 18[15] years old came into force, and later in July 2019 inclusion of all generations of Koryo Saram as eligible to apply for the visa. The eligible age was reduced from 25 to 18 years old, that is a very vivid indication for the need of young laboring bodies.

b. Shortage of low-skilled labor force

One of the crucial reasons to attract ethnic low-skilled migrants, apart from destabilization of replacement rate, is related to skills mismatch in the country. South Korea has one of the highest literacy rate – 99%, and tertiary education enrollment rates – 67.7% worldwide (Statista, 2020). South Koreans with higher education degrees tend to reject working in low-skilled sectors. This led to the fact that the overall number of foreign labor migrants are being employed in low skilled sectors as illustrated in Figures 3.2 and 3.5. below.

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[14] Prior to the amendment only three generations of Koryo Saram could apply for the visa, i.e. a visa of this category could be issued to Russian and post-Soviet Koreans up to three generations, including those who were born and / or lived in the USSR before August 15, 1945 (these persons will be taken for the first generation) (MOFA in Russian Federation, 2018).

[15] i.e. from 2018 Koryo saram can apply for H-2 visa as soon as they become 18 years in contrast to 25 years old, which was before the amendment (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea, 2018).

Figure 3.2. Annual quotas have largely favoured the manufacturing sector

Annual admission quotas for E-9 visas programme, 2004-18.

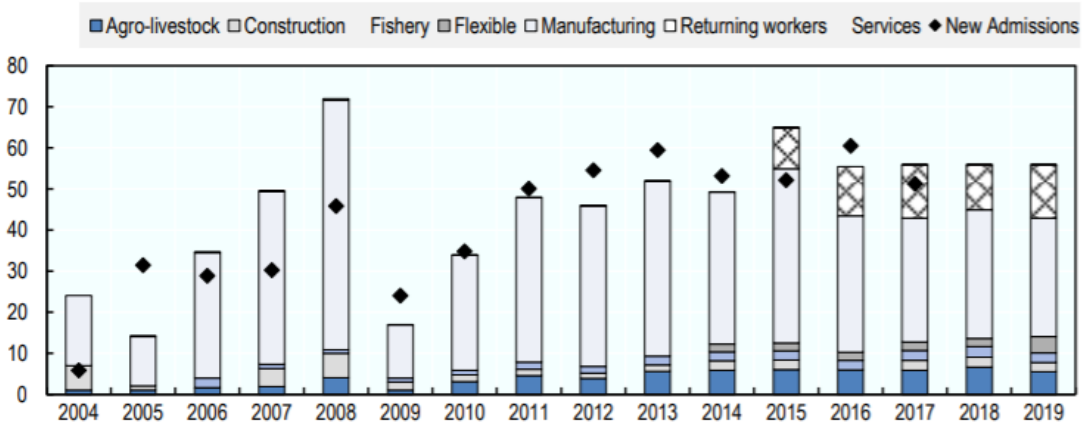

Figure 3.2 Source (OECD iLibrary, 2019, p. 76)

Figure 3.5. Most Working Visit (H-2) holders are in manufacturing, construction and hospitality

Sectors of employment for H-2 foreign workers, 2016.

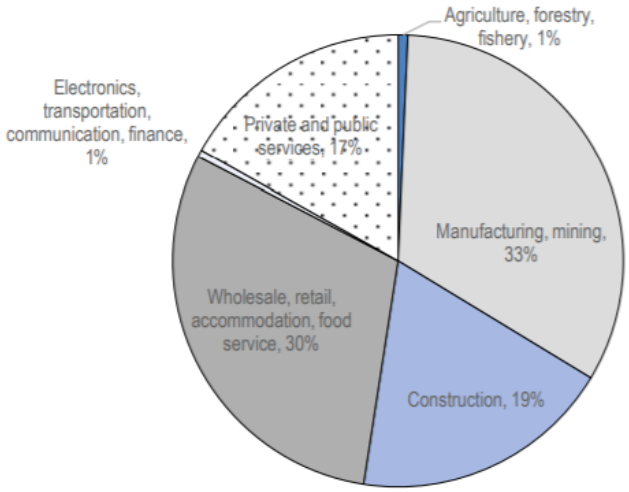

Figure 3.5 Source (OECD iLibrary, 2019, p. 93)

E-9 visa[16] and H-2 visas holders together constitute the biggest flow of foreign labor in South Korea, and both constitute predominantly low-skilled sector. Adding aged people, extremely low replacement rate of South Korea, and the entrenched ethnic homogeneity, low-skilled ethnic labor migrants are crucial for the biopolitics of the population. It is worth mentioning

[16] Non-professional employment visas under the Employment Permit System, began to be issued in 2005. These visas are issued to non-ethnic Korean labor migrants (OECD iLibrary, 2019)

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once more that the period of introduction of ethnic return labor migration policies and the introduction of H-2 visas for post-Soviet ethnic Koreans and Chinese Koreans coincide with the deterioration of demographic changes (see birth ratio Figure 1, p. 27).

c. Common ancestry and international norms

The idea of ethnic relatedness plays an important role in the case of South Korea and the biopolitical regime on migration. As was mentioned above, the amendments regarding the eligible age and generation imply that there is a vivid need for young bodies, however, not just any bodies but fit ethnically related biological bodies. Race and ethnicity have always been important for the sovereign and power. And the concepts are of crucial significance in current political world where the majority of countries worldwide have ethnocentric nation-building processes. South Korea is one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world. Such an ethnic homogeneity has been formed due to a narrow definition of nationhood and strong ethnic nationalism based on the concept of sanguinity fortified by anti-Japanese independence movements, the Military government's nationalistic mobilization, and nationalist democratic movements (Lee, 2010). There is a strong believe in common ancestry of all Koreans. Therefore, ethnicity is an important aspect to consider when thinking about protecting and multiplying life. As Lee notes, "migrant workers in low-skilled sectors … are less likely to disrupt ethnic order in Korea" (Lee, 2012, p. 37). To receive H-2 visa, a Central Asian Korean, from Uzbekistan for example, has to first 'prove' that she/he is of Korean ethnicity by providing a certificate of birth or death of her/his grandparents who would have a Korean surname. And, then, must first have medical examination in the home country, and then, upon the arrival in South Korea, this aspect refers to the fitness of the body. Only after they have been medically 'approved' are they allowed to apply for migrant ID card and work. The aforementioned body within a factory and the body being medically fit falls under the objective to "incapacitate, put them out of the circuit or neutralize them. … [if and when] they fall out of the field of capacity and activity" (Foucault 2003, p. 244).

The aspect of proving the Korean ethnicity is taken for granted in academic literature on ethnic migration policies. However, there has been a long process of redefining what and who can be considered as Korean and/or part of the Korean nationhood. It is interesting to see that, as was mentioned in the literature review section, re-ethnization of migration polices in low-skilled sector took place because of Joseonjok (Chinese Koreans). Joseonjok constituted the biggest number of undocumented low-skilled workers in the late 1980s, and still constitute the biggest amount of both low-skilled migrants in total, as well as, among the ethnic labor migrants.

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In the case of Central Asian Koreans, because of the Soviet Union and the Cold War the relations of Central Asian states with South Korea were virtually non-existent. It was only by the 2000s that diplomatic bilateral relations were firmly established and ethnic Koreans received an opportunity to visit South Korea. As soon as the utility of ethnic bodies was discovered, the biopolitical regime took hold of the process.

Here, I reckon that another important point has to be considered and that is globalization and international norms. Many researchers with an interest in South Korean ethnic labor migration policies emphasize the power of globalization, human rights rhetoric, democracy values and internationalization as having a continuous impact on the evolution of the policies (for example Kim and Kwon, 2012; Lim, 2008; Park and Chang, 2005; Park, 2017; Seol and Lee, 2011). This is a very important contribution as there is finally a shift from overemphasis on economic reasons. South Korea is a country that strongly believes in common ancestry of all Koreans, has experienced profound democratization and embracement of human rights norms, and has become a valuable international player, therefore, the country has to keep up with the image. And this reveals the intrinsic nature of biopolitics. In a context of South Korea with the consideration of the rhetoric of democracy values and human rights and globalization, it is too costly not to consider legality and legitimacy of using and maneuvering race and biological bodies. All these ideological institutions come in place as seemingly random events but all is to ensure a successful longevity, economic and political well-being both inside the country and on international level.

In this section, my aim was to challenge and controvert the excessive centering on economic interests with regards to the issue of ethnic return labor migration. Such a focus limits better understanding and interrogation of development of ethnic return migration policies, and most importantly, it deprives Koryo saram of any voice and renders them as passive victims to be utilized for only economic needs. I apply biopolitical approach as it allows a wider and more holistic examination. Thus, I demonstrate that along with economic aspect fertility rate, labor mismatch, belief in common ancestry and globalization are absolutely crucial to consider to better understand low-skilled ethnic return migration dynamics in South Korea. This approach also allows to see the importance of Koryo saram for the regime, albeit as low-skilled laborers, and for the well-being of the country's population. There is a need for ethnically related laboring bodies, however, as the regime for the betterment of the population is at place there will be all possible mechanisms to prevent the low-skilled, albeit ethnically related, to fully incorporate into the host society. In the following section, I analyze how the process of racialization and hierarchization within one ethnicity takes place, and I refer to this process as biopolitical racism.

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2. Biopolitical Racism

"we are veguks(외국인 - foreigners), do not forget that! (мы же вегуки, не забывай)"

"we are anyway always foreigners for them" Oksana, 9 years in Korea.

"I am no-one here, and I will never be here one of them (я никогда не буду здесь своим), even if I learn the language I will not be able to be one of them, I don't why but I always knew it"

Lena, 4 years in Korea

The three quotes above are very common and during my three stays in Korea, I heard them multiple times. To a certain extent, feeling alien in a new country is not a new phenomenon, academic literature has a lot to say on belonging and exclusion during migration processes. In the reviewed literature on ethnic return migration to South Korea, a considerable amount of scholars pointed out the hierarchization process among ethnic return migrants and their co-ethnics in the host country based on citizenship and nationality (Lee, 2010, 2012; Seol and Skrentny, 2009; Song, 2019). I would like to expand the hierarchization process further as it is much more complex, and apart from citizenship and nationality, the process is very intersectional since it also includes classed racialization, migrant by migrant discrimination, and creation of new migrant identities. All of which are very much neglected in the academic literature on the issue. In what follows, I would like to examine the complex hierarchization process by applying intersectional analysis and refer to it as biopolitical racism, which is a technique of the biopolitical regime with the goal of betterment of the population.

Prior to commencing the analysis, I find it necessary to note the ways I will be using *ethnicity* and *race* in this chapter. The debate over the specificities of the definitions of race and ethnicity has produced an infinite amount of academic works, which are beyond the scope of this thesis. For my research, it is important to point out the following. Conventional wisdom holds that ethnicity is usually seen as an attribute of minority groups, however, many scholars argue that everybody has ethnicity, which refers to a "a sense of group belonging based on ideas of common origins, history, culture, experience and values" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 58). Koryo Saram and South Koreans do believe in common origins and history. It does not, however, mean that ethnic consciousness and culture within an ethnic group are static and homogenous. That is, due to migration Koryo Saram, Joseonjok, and South Koreans, despite assuming one co-ethnic origins, have different cultures and norms, which highlight the heterogeneity within one ethnic group. Race on the other hand, is usually, commonly, understood through visible

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markers of a phenotype such as skin color, facial features, hair color and so on, whereas, within political discourses race is defined primarily as a social construct produced by racism. Migration studies scholars approach race and racism as a "process whereby social groups categorize other groups as different or inferior, on the basis of phenotypical markers" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 59). Kareitsy, arguably, do not have a visibly different phenotype in South Korea, they belong to one ethnicity - common ethnic origins is what enable them to go to South Korea and work, albeit as low-skilled workers. Yet, Kareitsy are hierarchized as inferior other Koreans, they are racialized even though they belong to the same phenotype. This is where biopolitical racism is important as it is a new fluid type of racism, which can deeper and better explain the hierarchization process within one ethnicity.

I use a new approach to racism introduced by Foucault within the biopolitical theory. The biopolitical approach to racism refers to it as "a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control….It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population" (Foucault, 1976, 255-256). Here racism is not a division between races but within a given race. South Korean state claims common ancestry of all Koreans, however, because of the biopolitical regime in the country with the main goal of betterment of its population, the regime allows to discriminate against own co-ethnic people, in this case ethnically related Koryo Saram and Joseonjok, by making them do the most difficult and dirtiest jobs. Most importantly, "racism as biopolitical government, [is] a flexible technology of power that entails a new and novel form of government" (Su Rasmussen, 2011, p. 40). This type of racism can interact with traditional racisms in certain aspects, however, biopolitical racism is different from traditional notion of aforementioned racism not only because there is no visibly different phenotype nor is it just a merely ideological prejudice. Biopolitical racism is a different type of governmentality with the aim to make the South Korean population purer and better and not to allow own people ('other' Korean people), who are deemed abnormal/inferior, to fully integrate.

a. Nationality and citizenship

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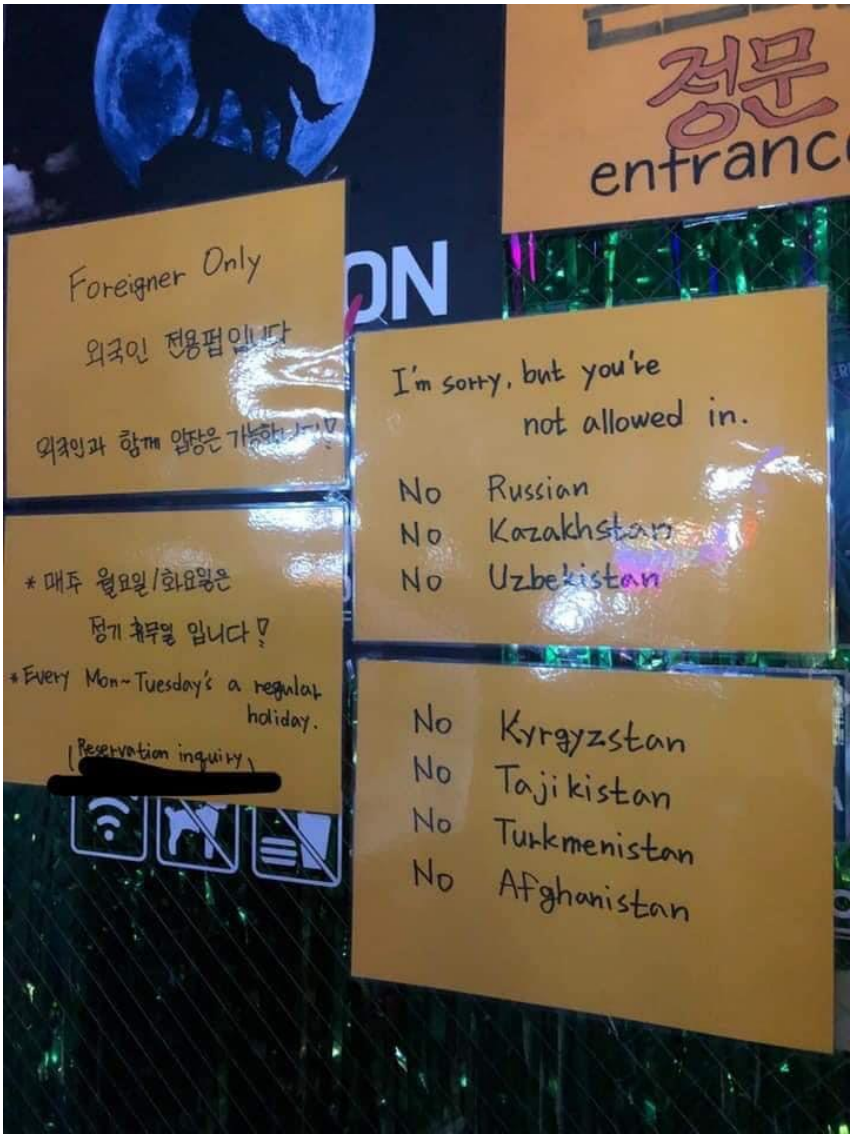

This photo was uploaded in the Avenue 82 Facebook group with the author's comment: "Either we became cheeky (irreverent/brash) or the (South) Koreans" (Либо корейцы либо мы оборзели). The post seems to be meant as more of a joke rather than something very serious so were the comments. The photo seems to be taken of a pub for foreigners only, where accompanying (South) Koreans can enter, however, people of the mentioned nationalities on the photo are not allowed at all. This represents a widespread prejudice in South Korea based on nationality/citizenship

The way nationality and citizenship operate in introducing hierarchy has been mentioned by multiple authors within the existing literature. The visa regime with F-4 and H-2 visas and the ways these visas were introduced placed American ethnic migrants at the top of the hierarchy among the migrants, then comes Chinese Koreans with the consideration of China's growing role as a valuable international player, and at 'the bottom' are Central Asian Koreans who are coming from 'developing' Central Asian states. Considering the countries of origin of ethnic migrants and different statutes attached to the countries, ideological prejudice of traditional racism is also present here. However, it is hierarchization within one ethnicity.

Biopolitical racism, by creating caesuras within one ethnicity, creates feeling of enmity between racialized groups. This process seems rather acute between Chinese Koreans and Soviet Koreans. Because of undeniable value of China's ever growing presence in the world

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and Joseonjok's capacity of Korean language, Chinese Koreans have preferential status over post-Soviet Koreans. Kareitsy are very well aware of such state of affairs. *One summer weekend day in 2019, during my third stay in South Korea, I met with two female friends, both were working as low-skilled migrants at that time. All of us were living in Ansan and we decided to go to Seoul to have a picnic on the bank of the Han river, a very popular place for picnic. We were sitting on the grass and having samgak kimpab and sandwiches, and the girls were also having some wine. As we were chatting, we started discussing the issue of Korean language and how hard it was for all of us because we did not speak the language fluently. One of my friends started sharing her previous day's working day and mentioned how sometimes one of her co-workers does not understand what she is saying in Korean, and mentioned that the person who does not understand her is Chinese Korean. Once my second friend heard "Chinese Korean" she was just triggered. The second friend was quite vocal about how*

> *"Chinese Koreans pretend not to understand Central Asian Koreans during working hours when we try to say something related to work in broken Korean. They [Chinese Koreans] always complain and annoy us for not knowing Korean language. They are so cocky".*

Me and my first friend, who started the conversation, both were trying to explain that because of different history of immigration and integration, Chinese Koreans did not lose the proficiency in Korean. And if it was us [post-Soviet Koreans] who could speak Korean and Chinese would not be able to, we would have treated them similarly and would have been even cockier.

I personally worked very closely with a Chinese woman for 7 months and I did not experience anything like that. On the opposite, the Chinese woman was the only vegukin (foreigner) in our shift before me, so when I came we of course got along well due to being the only foreigners at that time, and she really helped me a lot.

Since Chinese Koreans can speak the language, and thus, are quick in getting the gist of the work that must be done, whereas, this is not the case with Central Asian Koreans there is this deep growing feeling of enmity between Chinese Koreans and post-Soviet Koreans. During my interview with Lena, even though I did not have any specific questions regarding Chinese Koreans, she mentioned the following:

> "For us, Russian speaking Koreans there is not much work these days compared to earlier times, the priority is always given to (factories always prefer more) Chinese Koreans because they speak Korean"

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Language, according to my observations and interviews, is one of the main elements of the racialization process and one of the hardest aspects of being an ethnic labor migrant in South Korea. Not knowing the dialect of South Korean Korean has implications for other aspects, such as attitude, feeling of alienation, and feeling of enmity with Chinese Koreans. All interviewees expressed their utmost concern over not knowing the language. For example, Timofei described his first experience of working in South Korea in the following way:

> "At first, it was very hard for me, because when I first came, it was hard in a sense that I came... uh… I didn't know (speak) the language, plus ... I had to get a job as soon as possible. So... literally, on the third day, I went to another town... to the dorm (на кисуксу) to work at a factory. The conditions were spartan... in a sense that usually if you go to the dorm, the conditions would be ok, one room for a couple of people, right? maximum well three people, but usually two. We lived in a trailer, and in the trailer six people had to live together ... So around the trailer there are only fields everywhere, the closest shop was very far can you imagine that, 30 minutes one way, 30 minutes return. And we also didn't have a proper stove but a cooker with a gas spray....
> And consider that I came to Korea in winter, so in January I went to that factory. It was 'dog cold' (холод собачий - very cold). So you are lying and ondol (floor heating) is warming your body under the blanket but steam still comes out of your mouth. And a toilet with a shower were at the other end of the factory also about 30 minutes away from the trailer, can you imagine going there to take shower in winter. Overall the conditions were spartan, I am telling you...
> ...
> And yeah in the trailer there were only our Koreans...
> ...
> So it was my first factory and it was very hard, in fact I was like a monkey, because I couldn't understand what they are saying how they are saying it... yeah.... I tried to use my broken English, but they don't understand English at all. That is why I quarreled with one Bajan or whoever he was, he was hanguk (South Korean). I wanted to quit... I told him something like "I am sorry, I don't understand what you are saying", something like that, but he suddenly started shouting at me... I … in short, I took off the gloves, threw them away and left for the trailer. That guy in fact is just the same worker as I am... Later that day, after some time, he came to the trailer and started saying sorry and I just took my pride and put it somewhere far far away, and decided to stay for a little more…"

Timofei's narrative demonstrates the significance of the language. Despite awful and humiliating living and working conditions, it is inability to understand and communicate in

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Korean that caused Timofei to lose his temper and stop working in the middle of the working hours. Timofei's experience is quite representative of the overall picture regarding hardships.

What my ethnographic fieldwork revealed is not only that there are divisions between Chinese and post-Soviet Koreans, but there is a division among post-Soviet Koreans based on nationality/citizenship as well. During my participant observation, part of which was volunteering for the Association of Koryo Saram in the Republic of Korea, I was invited to the General meeting of members of the Board of Directors of the Association. *The meeting took place in June, in Siheung (port) city in a big flat, specifically rented that day for the meeting. I was picked up by the Director of the Association and he told me that the meeting will last from 10 am till 4 pm and that my assigned job would be taking notes. At that moment, as it was General meeting of members of the Board of Directors of the Association, I thought it would be a very formal meeting. When we arrived at Siheung, we stopped and met other four members and started doing some shopping, and to my big surprise a lot of food products and meat for samgyeopsal were bought. We arrived at the flat with a huge Korean style table (no chairs) and started setting up the table, during which women were preparing the food and utensils, and the men were just sitting on the sofa and chatting and catching-up with each other. During the setting up, the last 7th member arrived. As he was making himself comfortable, he started saying that "it is good that we gathered as we should be more active". Then he continued by saying that "Look how Chinese Koreans are united and there are so many of them". Then he remembered an incident where Sakhalin Koreans were telling him that "you fled while we in Sakhalin had to go through all the hardships". The 7th member was quite unsettled by what Sakhalin Koreans (apparently) told him and even though no one asked him anything he continued by defending himself saying that "they don't know our history, yes maybe they [Sakhalin Koreans] fought here and but we also fought from the Far East, they just don't know". "You know what", he went on, "we should work better [here he must have referred to the Association], it is not fair that Russian Koreas have F-4 visa, we are all Koreans, why do some get F-4 and some don't". As the setting up was complete, the 7th member stopped his revelation and we started the meeting and discussed things according to the agenda which included the following: the mission, goals, objectives, history and further activities of the Koryo-saram Association in the Republic of Korea; joining the Koryo-saram Association in the Republic of Korea and membership fees; about working on social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, and maintaining updates on these networks regarding the activities of the Association.*

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All of my interviewees, expressed *resentment* (обидно) regarding the fact that Russian Koreans do not have H-2 visa and they automatically get F-4. It is specifically painful because as Timofei said "when it comes to Russian Koreans everyone knows that all of them, all of them originally come from Uzbekistan, yet they get F-4". Yulya pointed out the following:

> "to be honest I feel a bit sad (vexatious) for Uzbekistan that there is such a division because people you know… are all the same, but somehow [Russian Koreans] all get F-4, but for us only people with higher education can get F-4. And so there are a lot of skilled, smart and hardworking people, who just because they don't have formal higher education can't get F-4 and can't get other jobs here, better ones. Because earlier when there was no discrimination based on F-4 or H-2, it did not matter what visa you had. But now there is a division that good factories with good conditions and salaries take only F-4, whereas, people with H-2 get the hardest and dirtiest jobs. That's why I feel sad (vexatious) for our people because Russian Koreans work on better factories and our Uzbek Koreans do the worst jobs"

All this indicates to the intricacy of post-socialist histories within the post-Soviet ethnic Korean migrant community, which under the biopolitical regime enables hierarchy within one migrant community. Nationality and visa type is a significant marker of hierarchization and racialization which affects one's relation toward self and others, and identity building in general. Considering South Korea's global importance, this intersection of hierarchization plays an important role in international relations, and profoundly affects post-Soviet Koreans' consciousness reminding them what place they occupy within South Korean nation.

b. Labor

By racializing based on nationality/citizenship from the beginning of the migration process, the system of biopolitical racism preserves its goal of separating out the groups that exist within a population and not letting the deviant and less powerful integrate. As Yulya pointed out above, H-2 visa holders do the dirtiest and most difficult jobs, thus, they are also racialized based on work, I will refer to it as labored racialization. Within biopolitical regime with the help of H-2 visa, a target group is created to perform only low skilled jobs, and to implement governmentality that will ensure full utilization of the bodies' capacities of the racialized. Here H-2 visa is a tool of governmentality that positions South Koreans as superior and post-Soviet Koreans as inferior via a process of racialization through labor – through a marker of class. According to intersectional scholars, racialization through a marker of class is "a form of application of the imperialist view toward oneself and other and the pains associated to this hierarchical positioning" (Fathi, 2017, p. 129).

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Below is a poem by Phillip Tyan, posted in the public Facebook group called Avenue 82. The poem vividly illustrates the everyday routine of an ethnic labor migrant. The poem originally is in Russian and has a very rhythmic rhyme and includes some words in Korean, those Korean words are related to work. Very often, if a Central Asian Korean does not speak Korean language, the person still would learn and know the meaning of these words.

계속 주간 (kesok chugan) – continued week. Here the meaning is – day shift as opposed to night shift. To work in kesok chugan means to constantly work from morning till evening.
야간(yagan) - night shift. To work in yagan means to work from evening till morning.
월급(wolgeub) - monthly salary
잔업 (chaneob) - overtime work
열심히 (yeolsimhi) - hard, diligently
빨리 빨리 (palli palli) – quickly, quickly
씨발 (sibal) – fuck, shit

Original Russian Version	*Translated Version (the rhyme is lost in translation)*
Что сказать Вам про Корею? *Что о ней Вам рассказать.* *Я почти здесь не старею,* *Годы некогда считать.* *Время здесь так быстротечно,* *Нету шансов на разбег.* *Не пойдет тут, жить беспечно,* *Длинным должен быть забег.* *Если ты в "кесок чугане",* *Вроде время есть поспать.* *Но "вольгып"поменьше станет,* *И в "чаноб"идти опять.* *В "ягане"дела попроще,* *Нет начальства по ночам.* *И "вольгып"гораздо больше,* *И "чаноб"не нужен Вам.* *"Ельсими"здесь ,дело чести,* *Всех достал их "паль-пали".* *Здесь нельзя сидеть на месте,* *Чтоб не слышать "щибали"!*	*What to tell you about Korea?* *What to tell you about her.* *I'm almost not getting old here* *I don't have time to count the years.* *Time here is too fast* *There is no chance to get ready.* *You can't come here to live carelessly/blithely,* *The race will have to be too long.* *If you are in 계속 주간 (kesok chugan),* *It seems like there's some time to sleep.* *But the 월급 (wolgeub) will become smaller,* *And so 잔업 (chaneob) you'll have to do again.* *In 야간 (yagan) things are much simpler,* *Because no bosses here at night.* *And the 월급(wolgeub) will be much larger* *And you don't need to do 잔업 (chaneob).* *열심히 (yeolsimhi) here is a matter of honor,* *and everyone's fed up with 빨리 빨리 (palli palli) .* *you cannot just sit here doing zero* *if you don't want to hear 씨발 (sibal)*

The majority of H-2 visa holders work at factories and construction sites. The work hours are usually from 8 to 12 hours a day, and it can be either a night shift or day shift. Based on the ethnographic observation and interviews, everyone said that they had not experienced this type of hard work prior to coming to work in South Korea, neither had I. Lena's account is representative of what Central Asian Koreans think about working in South Korea:

> Me: What was the most difficult thing to adapt to?
> Lena: The most difficult was to get used to/adapt to work. I don't think that we work the way they work, always overtimes, so hard and difficult, you have to stand on your feet the whole day. For me it was like some kind of nightmare. At first, I thought it is impossible to work like that ... to work for 13 - 14 hours a day... it is... I don't know ... yeah it did seem unbearable. Now of course you get used to it, and it doesn't seem odd and weird anymore.

The long hours of performing manual and very often routine and repetitive labor literally *extorts all forces*, it pushes to the limits of physical endurance up to the point of almost complete exhaustion. What is striking is that the interviews also revealed that as time went by everyone got used to it. Feeling of being racialized and put at the bottom affects people negatively and so migrants start adapting and trying to stick where they think they can become part of the social system. The body gets disciplined to increase the productive force. It is the disciplinary technology of labor. Central Asian Koreans with H-2 visa became a target group of a regime that is centered on ethnically related laboring body to do the difficult and dangerous jobs. Performing hard labor for long hours on a daily basis works as a powerful disciplining and regularizing mechanism of the biopolitical regime. As I pointed out in methodology section, prior to coming to South Korea post-Soviet Koreans know very well that all they would be doing in South Korea is low-skilled jobs. The biopolitical regime, including H-2 visa, programs the feeling of the self as a hard laborer from the initial stage of migration on a mass level.

c. Racializing the Self

All of my interviewees when asked about South Korea referred to the country as *civilization and development.* The category of South Korean through the biopolitical regime has become constructed as the unachievable Other but also as the ideal. The rhetoric of deserving and undeserving migrants appears. Ivan was very expressive while saying the following:

> "To be honest, a person is such a creature, it adapts everywhere. You just have to try, not do for me and give me. For example, our Koreans do not know the Korean language and this is a big problem for adaptation of ethnic Koreans in Korea. And here comes the question why they don't learn it? They just do not see the need and necessity. Take even Tekkol (post-Soviet Korean district in Ansan city) as an example. There, South Korean sellers already speak Russian. Therefore, everything is available for them. Therefore, they do not need Korean. They feel too comfortable. There are free Korean courses available. Why do other foreigners go there after work and study in order to learn Korean? And why do they need the Korean language? In order to get a job officially and renew their visa by any means. Our ethnic Koreans do what? We got visa from our

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> ancestors, because we are Koreans. So there is visa and all is okay, there's nothing to worry about.
> I came to Korea and because of not knowing the language, I could not even enter the subway. Therefore, I realized that I needed to learn Korean. For a year, I worked for the trash collector from 3:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. After lunch, I went to study at the Wuguk Center. At that time, there were no such conditions as NOMO center now provides. That is, you can adapt in Korea, we just want, pardon my language, WE just don't want to do shit and get everything".

Looking up to South Koreans has become an important element of racializing between deserving and undeserving. All this illustrates the multiplicity within an ethnic group under the regime of labor racialization. An influential person within Koryo saram community said:

> "Where (cities and towns in South Korea) ours are not many there are chances for integration, but not in Ansan. The contingent who comes here (to South Korea) for work are unapt for education"

When it comes to Ansan city and Tekkol neigbourhood, mentioned by Ivan, this neighborhood is primarily known as Koryo saram ghetto. When I first visited the district, I was very surprised to see the dynamics of the post-Soviet Korean life style there: everyone speaks Russian on the streets; cafes, shop, barbershops - all have Russian inscriptions.

In Russian: Canteen God Loves You, Tekkol, Ansan

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In Russian: Russian Karaoke, Tekkol, Ansan

However, the district did seem dirtier and messier than other South Korean districts. My interview respondents similarly expressed their surprise when they saw Tekkol for the first time. Artyom and Timofei compared it to Kuylyuk – one of the biggest bazars and districts in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where a big Korean diaspora lives. In the process "involved in constructing identities spaces and places matter" (Fathi, 2017, p. 81). And here ambivalence takes place. Despite the fact that generally post-Soviet Koreans are very happy that there are such places as Tekkol, they do not want to be associated with them. Artyom and Lena also mentioned that they moved away from Tekkol because "it is a mess there, it is noisy and ours are everywhere there, and if you go there in the evening during weekends all you see is our guys being completely drunk and disgusting". What is interesting is that even though they move away from the district they still move to places somewhere nearby. Both Artyom and Lena lived 15 minutes walking distance from Tekkol.

All this reveals the heterogeneity of the post-Soviet Korean migrant community within the racialized labor regime. Racialization resulted in ideas of superiority and inferiority being internalized by ethnic migrants and are now applied to migrants by migrants. Here, biopolitical

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racism interacts with traditional racism from a post-colonial perspective (see for example Bhabha, 1995; Fanon, 2007), where the ideas of superiority and inferiority between the colonizer and colonized are projected onto inability to be incorporated into South Korean community. Racialization created new racialzed identities but it does not mean they are passive victims. Based on national and labor hierarchization, Koryo saram are also actively involved in creating 'us versus them' process. They are also active in creating their own meaning of hard labor, meaning of post-Soviet Koreanness, meanings of boundary formation and belonging. All this will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Chapter IV. Koryo Saram Subject Formation within the Biopolitical Regime

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how within the biopolitical regime through the mechanisms of biopolitical racism, Koryo Saram became a target group as laboring racialized bodies constituting Other inferior Koreans. In this chapter, my aim is to claim that, despite discursive racialization, which does result in hardships, presenting Koryo saram as mere passive victims of the regime is rather limiting and inadequate. It is the beauty of Foucauldian biopolitics that it is through the same oppressive disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms within the regime that agency and subject formation is taking place. Kareitsy are actively engaged in their subject formation within the regime. In what follows, I argue and illustrate how Koryo Saram as racialized laboring bodies within the regime creatively navigate and renegotiate their sense and meaning of being low-skilled ethnic return migrants in South Korea, and sometimes even outside, and how this process is contingent upon economic, ethnic, cultural and gendered perceptions. There is a constant encounter between structures and the Self, therefore, there is a constant identity/self-negotiating, a fluidity of some sort depending on the situations Koryo Saram face.

1. Koryo Saram as a New Homo-Economicus

Wage inequality between the sending and receiving migrants states is commonly referred to as one of the key reasons for migration (Castles et al., 2014). Indeed, all of the interviewees when asked about reasons for coming to South Korea mentioned *earning money (заработок).* All but two interviewees referred to earning money as the primary reason. Considering the wage difference between Uzbekistan and South Korea, which equals, according to informal estimates and words of mouth, on average to approximately 150$ (Uzbekistan) versus 1800$ (South Korea), sole economic rationale does stand out as a strong incentive. However, rendering Koryo Saram as merely "economic opportunists" (Cook et al., 2011) would be rather simplistic. This sole economic rational cannot explain a certain form of subjectivity of Kareitsy within the biopolitical regime, including racialization. I look at economy and earning money as a ground for subject formation. From this point of view, Foucault talks about migration and mobility as a choice and capacity for a better life. He outlines the following:

> "The mobility of a population and its ability to make choices of mobility as investment choices for improving income enable the phenomena of

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> migration to be brought back into economic analysis, not as pure and simple effects of economic mechanisms which extend beyond individuals and which, as it were, bind them to an immense machine which they do not control, but as behavior in terms individual enterprise, of enterprise of oneself with investments and incomes." (Foucault et al., 2008, p. 230)

Migration comes with a cost since some basic financial resources will be spent on adaptation. However, all this is an investment to improve own life. And here, the technologies of the self are also involved,

> "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault et al., 1988).

Within the biopolitical regime, including biopolitical racism, migration is a way to becoming *homo economicus* as working laboring bodies. For Foucauldian *homo-economicus* embracing economic mode of reasoning is not in conflict with subject formation and agency, it is the way of becoming a proper subject within neoliberal regime. Within this domain, Koryo Saram become *homo-economicus* as working labor migrants. Income, here, is not a mere economic indicator that forced Koryo Saram to migrate as a low-skilled laborer, but income is a part of the process of subject formation and part of the technologies of the self.

Moreover, this mode of economic reasoning that Koryo Saram chose to be subjected to contributes to making their lives better not only through economy. Along with earning money, all interviewees mentioned comfort, stability and security as one of the primary reasons of why they still prefer staying in South Korea, albeit performing hard low-skilled labor.

> "I like it here, I like this country. I like their progress, that they are constantly developing. I like that they are doing everything for the people - parks, events, everything for the people . You enter a shop, and everyone treats you as a businessman – 'annyonghaseyoe' (Hello), how can I help you, what are you looking for?' … very attentive. Out mentality should learn from this. And of course many people are grateful to Korea for their work and their temperament. For them work comes first, then family, then the rest. You know they literally spent nights at work. Of course all that for a proper payment. We… you know what we earn here … I remember recently we received payroll statement (급여명세서) and

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> our sajan (director) opened it, like really what this salary is for him, oh my god… it is one tooth[17]*(laughing)*!
>
> Oksana, 9 years in Korea

> "I like it here because there are rules here. Even how to throw out trash. And all of them follow these rules, that is, no matter how hard it sometimes can be, everyone here follows the rules and so overall people live well in the country and I feel myself secure (peaceful) here.
>
> …
>
> And the work conditions are good here – you have insurance, rights, they feed you, they provide transportation, and the salary is good."
>
> Sergey, 3.5 years in Korea

Based on personal experience and participant observation, I must note that I, along with the majority of Koryo Saram people I have encountered, found public transport infrastructure, especially intercity buses, in South Korea the most reliable and comfortable among all the countries I have been to. Also, the level of security of walking at night stood out. In addition, as Oksana partly mentioned, the service sector in South Korea is simply on another level with the whole world. During my third stay in South Korea when I was conducting my ethnography, I did not have a proper Korean bank account as I was staying for a relatively short period. However, it happened to be so that I had to transfer money to a friend of mine's bank account, and as I did not have a bankcard, I decided to transfer cash via ATM. Just to note, South Korea is one of the few countries in the world where transferring cash to another bank account via ATM without having an authorized bank account and/or bankcard is available. One late evening, I found an ATM, which was located in a bank. The bank was closed as it was late, but the ATM room was open. I started the operation by following instructions on the screen in Korean language, and soon the ATM took my money, however, as soon as the ATM took the money it showed that 'the operation cannot be completed, please try later'. The money, however, were already inside the ATM. I started being confused and frustrated as I was waiting to repeat the operation, but nothing worked and the money were gone. At that point, I was frustrated and wanted to go upstairs to the bank and ask for help, but then realized that it was quite late and everything is closed. I vividly remember that while I was trying to calm myself down, a thought struck me "you are in Korea, they will definitely return it". And it was quite powerful. On the

[17] A common joke among post-Soviet Koreans. Average price for one tooth implant is approximately 1800$ in South Korea. As was mentioned, 1800$ is approximate average monthly salary of Koryo Saram without overtimes, and added premiums.

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way home, I called and explained everything to my friend whom I was supposed to send the money, and he said almost exact thing "you are in Korea, so don't worry just call the bank tomorrow morning". The next day in the morning, I called the bank and within three hours, my friend received his money. The friend is Sergey, who is quoted above.

This level of comfort, stability and security is something Koryo Saram choose to be subjected to. The income in a form of merely bigger wage is not the sole driving force. Especially, considering the fact that at the moment of the interview, both Oksana and Sergei were unemployed for a month and more than three months respectively. Furthermore, simple personal satisfaction and unanticipated positive impressions and impacts are crucial in self-formation and self-positioning process.

> "I dreamed to come here since I was a child by watching those doramas. You can earn here and afford to buy something you couldn't afford in Uzbekistan. There I worked as a waitress, it was just … simply earning for food… to go somewhere or to buy something for yourself was out off question. It was difficult there for me. Here there is stability and I can buy for myself anything I want".
>
> Nina

> "I even like the way people dress here, it's all for comfort you know, so I can wear simply comfortable clothes"
>
> Lyusya

> "Me: Tell me about your first impression when you arrived in Korea, airport for example?
> Oksana: Oh Albina airport is a separate topic *(laughing)*. I didn't see much of it but what I saw just shocked me. It (airport) was so huge, I even forgot I was at the airport. It seemed like something totally different, you know all those fountains and flowers *(amusement in voice)*, glass everywhere. I don't know … it seemed that I came to … I don't know to another planet *(laughing)*. You know I have never been anywhere except Tashkent. I liked the airport so much that whenever someone either was about to come to Korea or go home I would always say 'I'll accompany you to the airport'. So for these nine years, I have explored the airport to the fullest."
>
> Oksana

> "Here anyway you feel that you are among people like yourself, it's just nice"
>
> Sergey

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Such simple yet powerful aspects and revelations are often omitted and/or neglected in academic works on biopolitics, migration, and, especially with regards to ethnic return labor migration of Kareitsy. There are of course tensions between being laboring racialized bodies and *homo economicus*. As was mentioned in previous chapter, performing low-skilled jobs for long hours does have an impact on self-perception and there are hardships and difficulties. However, it is the same racialized laboring regime that allows Koryo Saram to become enterprises of themselves via migration and income, and being subjected to what is for them better and more secure, comfortable, and stable lives.

It is important to try to look at H-2 visa not just as a mere oppressive tool of the biopolitical regime. The existing academic literature overemphasize the oppressive element, and, of course, there is a logic to that, and as was outlined in Chapter III, mechanisms of technologies of power that produce racialization are at place. However, Foucault mentioned multiple times, though it seems it is deliberately forgotten in academic circles, that biopolitical regime has elements of life protective and creative powers and humans as a thinking being influences the process. The H-2 visa, which brings certain grievances, is at the very same time an opportunity. This is what all ten interviewees, in spite of some of them holding better visas such as F-4 and F-5, called H-2 – "an opportunity". One very important point must be made here. Almost all the interviewees are originally from Uzbekistan, even if they were not born there, they would have still lived there. All H-2 visa holders are Uzbekistan passport holders. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian republics have developed at a slightly different pace from each other (see for example Nessipbayeva and Dalayeva, 2013; Perlman and Gleason, 2007). As the biggest Korean diasporas are in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I will briefly point out the following. Due to the amount of natural resources (especially oil) and, arguably, more liberal politics in economic terms and education, Kazakhstan has on average higher salaries and higher tertiary education enrollment than in Uzbekistan. This state of affairs also affected the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. In Uzbekistan, on the other hand, due to a limited amount of natural resources and a rather hard authoritarian regime for almost 26 years (until 2016), higher education enrollment rate is quite low. This affected the Korean diaspora in Uzbekistan – fewer Koreans with higher education diplomas than in Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, there is not official statistics[18] on the matter due to, as I mentioned, rather

[18] Higher education enrollment rate in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be found here:
https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/central-asia/Uzbekistan-Higher-Education-Report-2014-en.pdf
and here
http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Kazakhstan-2018.pdf

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neglected history of Koryo Saram in the region. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, digital ethnography and personal experience, it was revealed that the amount of Kazakh Koreans with H-2 visa is considerably lower than Uzbek Koreans H-2 visa holders. I personally met only two Koreans from Kazakhstan, and even those two had F-4 visa. The point is that H-2 can be an actual opportunity, capital-ability and satisfaction for its holders. Kareitsy would have to do similar blue-collar work in Uzbekistan but for a much lower income and with no opportunity to be associated with the civilization – South Korea.

2. Renegotiation of Gendered and Ethnic Boundaries, and of the Self as a Response to Racialization

a. Gendered boundaries

Throughout my stays and ethnographic fieldwork, I heard many times Kareitsy saying "We are all Koreans, all the same". Nina even mentioned that she had problems being a migrant in Russia because of her physical appearance, whereas, in South Korea she feels better: "In Russia you still look different from them, you know what I mean, I was even afraid to ask anyone anything in Moscow". Yet, there is a deep feeling of ambivalence in post-Soviet Koreans as gender norms coupled with cultural markers evoke strong feelings of difference in Koryo saram as opposed to South Koreans.

Timofei:

> In general when you talk to them they (South Koreans) look very friendly and nice just like other people... At my work the young ones you know bow all the time, I even sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable that they bow as soon as they see you. Plus they know that you don't speak Korean so they say "bye bye" to you just so that you could understand. But…
>
> ...
>
> Women are different here, the way they look, the way they dress. You know ours have our own mentality, you know Soviet one.
> Men here... well (a bit scornfully) men here are feminine. Honestly... they wear make up, I mean I already ignore the fact that all of them dye their hair in brown/red or blonde. And I don't know they are very feminine, weak compared to ours.

Lena said the following:

> "We are absolutely different in everything, starting from food and behaving in public places. I can't even remember any similarities. They

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> munch while eating, well I guess it is their culture but we don't do that. There is ostensibly this culture here of respecting elderly, but if you take a metro you can see that there is no any respect. No one ever gives a seat to a near standing grandma, they all would just be sitting without a grain of shame. The mentality is different here I guess.
> ...
> Women here are simply big children! Ours in their 20s can't allow themselves certain behavior. Here in their 50s they (South Korean women) can stomp and scream and behave like small kids, talk in high pitch voice. And men also, just look at them, what is this, its so weird.... Men here wear make up, I don't think I have ever seen separate shops for men's cosmetics in any other country in the world. This is so unnatural for me."

As a response to and encounter with the racialization Koryo Saram dissociate themselves from certain gendered and cultural aspects, and are becoming *homo economicus.* All this takes place within the racialization regime where Koryo Saram are expected to be a laboring body. Timofei's and Lena's responses are representative of the way post-Soviet Koreans think of South Koreans. An important point to note is that despite the fact that everyone mentioned these differences, for some post-Soviet Koreans the differences do not evoke strong emotions. They just see these aspects as different mentality and culture. For other post-Soviet Koreans, however, the 'femininity' in men, munching, and aegyo (in Korean refers to a cute display of affection often expressed including but not limited to through a cute/baby voice, facial expressions, and gestures) cause very strong negative attitudes. Due to constructed gendered norms, men and women perceive the new culture in different ways, and the consequences vary for men and women. Networks and gender are inalienable constituents in understanding migration and cultural change, cultural expectations of migrants of both sexes impact migration structure (Curran and Saguy, 2001).

Koreans in South Korea have a very different culture from post-Soviet Koreans. It is important to take into account that due to masculinity norms, for men it might be harder to adjust. At least this is what my research revealed. Along with 'feminine' men, in South Korea there is a very unusual for outsiders practice between men, "which involves draping arms over each other, sharing umbrellas, massaging each other, stroking" (Elwood, 2010), which is called male skinship (스킨십), it is quite widespread. Throughout my stays and ethnographic fieldwork, I witnessed quite homophobic and obscene language from, mostly, post-Soviet Korean men toward South Korean men, especially their employers. There is an undocumented anecdotal evidence that there have already been violent attacks of post-Soviet ethnic male migrants on South Korean employers. Adaptation hardships can also lead to "masculinity crisis" for men,

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where a man cannot deal with the pressure of constructed masculine norms of being "the real man" (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2012), i. e. to be the breadwinner, to be tough, to earn more. The masculinity crisis can, in turn, lead to domestic violence and alcohol abuse (De Visser and Smith 2007). And this is something important to consider. I will not focus in my thesis on alcohol abuse but this problem is quite acute in post-Soviet Korean migrant men. Since the very first time I arrived and started working in South Korea with people I knew since childhood, I was shocked at the amount of alcohol they drank in Korea, and most of them had not even been drinking prior to coming to Korea. And all as one say that with such dirty and hard 12-14 hours work you need something to relieve the stress.

Such state of affairs makes it harder for men to adjust to a new workplace, and arguably, opens more job opportunities for ethnic women migrants. What I have noticed throughout my experiences in South Korea is that it is usually women who are the first migrants and it is women who on average speak at least some level of Korean compared to post-Soviet Korean men. Out of 10 interviews, 7 of the interviewees stated that when they arrived to South Korea either their mother or aunt were here to meet them, not fathers or uncles. The same pattern is evident in my relatives' process of migration. The three families of my uncles, my father's brothers, who have worked in South Korea with H-2 visa had first their wives or daughters come to South Korea first. Husbands and/or brothers would arrive on average a year later. When it comes to language, throughout my three stays and about 10 different workplaces, I have met a lot of different people and among those who had been staying in Korea for more than a year I have met a lot of men who still did not know a word in Korean, whereas, all women who had been staying in Korea for more than a year could usually speak at least some level of Korean. Considering the importance of fertility rate and women outlined in the previous section, somewhat better adaption of women might be logical. In addition, I have also mentioned that that based on my three stays in South Korea, among all Central Asian Koreans I have encountered who would have F-5 visas (Permanent Residency) and citizenship are women only. However, I do not aim to generalize and make any conclusions on this matter. What I have demonstrated is for the sake of showing that such phenomena exist and has its place to be. The topic of women and their, arguably, more successful adaption is not the primary focus of my research, and therefore, I did not have specific questions during interviews, nor any conceptual assumptions or hypothesis, yet the mentioned patterns stood out greatly and this can be a very fertile land for further research.

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b. Ethnic (non)belonging

One of the most apparent attributes in the process of subject formation in relation to ethnic return migration policies is ethnicity. Ethnicity is important as it is one of the key aspects which is being manipulated when it comes to the ethnic return labor migration. In previous chapters, I demonstrated the ways the Korean government utilize the discourse of common ethnic ancestry, and its importance for the biopolitical regime. However, the construction of ethnicity is the outcome of both the technologies of power and the technologies of the self, that is of structure and agency. During my interviews, I had a very specific question related to being of Korean ethnicity/nationality: *"What does it mean for you to be ethnically Korean?"* If an interviewee seemed completely lost I proceeded with adding: *"I have some ideas for brainstorming: maybe it ethnic belonging and/or blood; ancestors are from the Korean peninsula; culture and language; none of the above; something else…"*

All interviewees as one said that they had never thought about it before, majority of them were quite taken aback. Yet, their responses revealed a very diverse and complex process of constant renegotiating.

> "Well, I .. what to say ….I don't even… To be honest, for me nationality/ethnicity never meant something important. The main thing is that what the person is, I never paid attention to it and no one asked me about it. Well, they can you know sometimes ask are you Korean, well it is because people are confused about me very often – Chinese think that I am Chinese, Uzbeks that I am Uzbek, only Hanguks (South Koreans) never think that I am one of them.
> Me: So when people do ask you, as you said, and you reply that you are Korean what do you think is meant by saying I am Korean?
> Artyom: Well, to be honest, nothing. Just so that people know that I am not Uzbek that I am Korean. Well, that they are wrong. They asked I answered and that is it, and nothing more. Even if I were Uzbek I would say yes I am Uzbek and that is it. I would not argue and insist how could you confuse me, it of course amazes me *(smiling almost laughing*) that they confuse me, I mean I'm like I'm a slant-eyed *(laughing)*. So it does not matter."
>
> Artyom

Oksana said the following, and during her responses, she used Russian and some broken Korean interchangeably, I transliterated the Korean part and provided translation in brackets.

> "Oh such a question, I have never thought about it.
> Well, I always thought that even if we come here to Koreans we will be considered strangers. well, it is sort of programmed in us that this is

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> something we will hear here, right? So we come here with the idea in our heads that we are not related in any way with them. Well, despite that I worked at the PCB factory with our Chinese, our Korean Chinese, very good women, older than me. You know what!... they till the very end thought that I am Uzbek *(shouting with discontent)*
> Me laughing out loud
> I said unnie wae (sister why) I said my surname is Lee I was telling them (still shouting). They told me we saw some people with Korean surnames but having some Uzbek father you know
> Me: ssangkeopuri (double eye lid) are yours (natural)?
> Oksana: (Almost whispering) Yes, they are mine (natural)
> Me: maybe that is why they thought you are Uzbek?
> Oksana, I don't know... I was shocked (shouting with discontent). I said na pijyeosseo (I am offended/upset) and they told me why? are you offended/upset? I was saying wae na Uzbek saram (Why am I Uzbek?), na Koryoin (I am Koryion). Can you imagine that all that time they thought that I am... After that, I showed them photos of my parents that they are Koreans.
> ....
>
> Earlier we didn't have this you are Uzbek, I am Korean, all were living friendly and everything was good. Yes, Muslim saram (person) doesn't eat pork, and we were ok with that. I don't like nationalism, for me everyone is equal, you know we have a saying there is no bad nationality there are bad people."

It is fascinating that despite the will to disregard ethnic boundaries they, at the same time, claim their ethnic identity. Because of the complex (colonial) socialist past where the discourse of ethnic belonging was suppressed, even though some of the interviewees were born after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rhetoric of non-ethnicity might prevail in Koryo Saram. However, once they are positioned against a specific audience, such as being confused with Uzbek by Chinese Koreans, the ethnic boundary creation takes quite an expressive form. This is resulted from the fact that the ethnic construction process is, as contemporary theories on ethnicity suggest, fluid, situational and changeable (Nagel, 1994). Ethnicity here is the result of labelling process engaged in by oneself and others, and so, "as the individual (or group) moves through daily life, ethnicity can change according to variations in the situations and audiences encountered" (Nagel, 1994, p. 154).

Due to the technologies of the self, the fluidity of ethnicity, and as a response to hierarchization and racialization, Koryo Saram choose how to recreate boundaries against South Koreans. Yulya pointed to the following:

> "We are not Muslims, not Christians, but we follow certain customs and traditions. And so we are… where are these traditions and customs are

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> coming from? They are… well, our traditions are not like any other in Uzbekistan or Russia, so all of that came from Korea back in the days.
> Me: Do you consider South Korea you historic homeland?
> Yulya: Yes. Historic ethnic homeland. Well, coz all of that here is familiar to me – traditions and customs and… mentality is of course not really, but traditions yes. Mentality and culture are different from ours, it's because of the time, they change with time."

Timofei said this:

> "My homeland is Uzbekistan. Being of Korean ethnicity for me is just blood and ancestors, you know we … ethnicity/nationality is not important, we are Soviet people, we are more open than (South) Koreans"

Despite that Yulya also thinks that we are still Soviet, even though she was born after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to her rather positive experience in Korea she is quite open to embracing South Korean Koreanness. Timofei, on the other hand, who is 17 years older than Yulya and, who does not speak Korean and had certain hardships in adaptation, stick to the Soviet one. It shows how Kareitsy's subjectivity is contingent upon gendered, cultural, and ethnic intersections as well as age and to some extent luck. Kareitsy did not really think about the questions of ethnicity/ethnic belonging prior to coming to South Korea, however, it is not just because they arrived to South Korea they suddenly started thinking about it, but, rather, it is also because of the biopolitical racism that Kareitsy redefine their gendered and ethnic boundaries. They disassociate with certain aspects which will not greatly affect their economicus mode, such as disassociation with gendered and cultural attributes.

c. The Self as eternal migrant

Due to a rather complex history, including forced deportation, which was illustrated in Chapter II, post-Soviet Koreans do not fully conform or are integrated in neither Uzbekistan, nor Russia (except post-Soviet nostalgia) nor South Korea. One Facebook post in 82 Avenue stated the following:

> "When there are internal contradictions in a person, I really want to take care of the pride of our children. What to hide, our fate of eternal migrants affects our mood. We never became *one of them* in the USSR, then in the CIS countries. Although the general attitude was good, we were *one of them among strangers* (свой среди чужих). ***And now here (in South Korea) is another period when you are a stranger among your own (чужой среди своих).*** The attitude is good, they are trying to raise us and take a closer look)))) They are sorry that in such a large country we did not find ourselves. Something like this. I love Korea with all my heart"

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(italics and bold are mine)

Lyusya stated a very important point:

> "The fact that we Koryoins grew up on the land that doesn't belong to us changed our character/consciousness. If you look at ours, in any surrounding/environment they try to stick with/to the strong."

Lena's remark is worth paying attention to:

> "When I arrived to South Korea, because I saw only Koreans everywhere I realized that I am in a foreign country".

This discourse of eternal migrants was a significant finding of my research as it plays a crucial role in the way a certain type of subjectivity of Kareitsy as *an eternal stranger among your own* is being formed and emphasized. I would like to look at this specific subjectivity as a constant process of reassessing of the own means and positionality. Within Foucauldian thought, all this is taking place with the help of "technologies of the self operat[ing] through interaction with the technologies of power of modern-day governmentality to provide a platform for a subject to be active within the strategies adopted for managing others" (Skinner, 2013, p. 908). One Facebook post in *82 Avenue* group had a question: "Are there people here who found their home in Korea and decided to stay forever?" And one of the comments to the post is simply outstanding. The first sentence of the post reads as a rhyme in Russian language.

> "Мы корейцы красноармейцы как война прыг в тайга как бомбежка прыг в окошко)) вообщем не было бы работы в Корее никто сюда не приехал бы, и те слова что это наша типа родина предков, лишнее...завтра в Японию визу всем дадут с з.п 5000$ все будем суши хавать на заводе))"

> "We Koreans are Red Army soldiers, when there is a war we go to Taiga, when there is a bomb we jump into the window)) in general, if there was no any work in Korea no one would come here, and those words of sort of like this is our ancestors' homeland - superfluous ... tomorrow if Japan gives everyone a visa with a salary of $ 5,000 we will all be eating sushi at their factories))"

This eternal migrant and (non)ethnicity discourses are great leverages of Kareitsy. Because of the relatively new opportunity of being associated with the developed South Korea, and despite all the negative aspects outlined previously, majority of Koryo Saram decide to distance themselves from Uzbekistan, and even Russia depending on the situation they are in. Out of ten interviewees, seven had had experience of working as a migrant in either Kazakhstan or Russia prior to coming to South Korea. Eventually, all decided to come to South Korea. A process of

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"adoption or presentation of a particular ethnic identity, can be seen as part of a strategy to gain personal or collective political or economic advantage" (Nagel, 1994, p. 159). One thing is clear, despite of the majority of interviewees' claims that ethnicity is not important, Kareitsy do use it to receive H-2 visa. As was mentioned, as a part of the application process for H-2, a person had to prove Korean ethnic belonging. Here, ethnic aspect is interwoven with becoming *homo-ecconomicus,* as it is the ethnic relatedness that allows them to migrate and it is migration and labor that opens the opportunity to *become homo economicus*. Once tensions between the homo economicus mode and racialized laboring bodies contingent upon nationality, gendered and cultural markers take place, the Self as eternal ethnic*less* migrant appear. All this happens to Kareitsy who try to navigate their Selves within South Korean biopolitical regime which deems them as lesser Koreans.

I would like to end with an anecdote, which demonstrates the creativity and complexity of categories of identity of Kareitsy, which now can go beyond the borders of South Korea. Kareitsy - Koreans who had to 'prove' their Korean ethnicity in order to come to the so called 'homeland', had to become the racialized laboring bodies, and through the economic, ethnic, cultural and gendered intersections constantly renegotiate their perception of who they are. And it is the particularity of the regime Kareitsy are situated in that they experienced and interpreted their experiences the way they did.

One day, in the evening of summer 2019, I met Lena for a chat to catch up and ask her about her recent 2-day travel to Vietnam. She was very excited that she had finally travelled somewhere else except South Korea. So, she was telling me how they (there were three of them, all women) arrived in Vietnam, what they did and how by the end of the day they had some sort of emergency situation with accommodation because of a booking system failure. When they arrived at a, what they thought 'booked', hotel late in the evening, they were told that something happened to their booking and it was not confirmed. Lena said that the three of them could hardly understand the receptionist who was speaking in English with a 'strong accent'. None of the three can speak English well either. Lena said that they were very frustrated at that moment, plus they were exhausted as they had been sightseeing the whole day, and as it was quite late, to look for another accommodation was not an option. Up to this point, I was listening very attentively and was empathizing and then I asked "So what happened, did you get a room?", Lena replied, "Wait for it, the 'best' part is yet to come". I got worried as I did not know what she meant by the 'best part'. Lena continued "I forgot to tell you that we, of course, said that we are from South Korea, and technically we were right?". I became very suspicious and Lena saw my facial expression and she continued: "I mean we did come to

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Vietnam from Seoul, right?". Just to note, two of the three young women are from Uzbekistan and one is from Kazakhstan. I said: "Just go on". What happened was that after the problems of being 'lost in translation' in English between the Vietnamese receptionist and the three of them, the receptionist went somewhere and told them to wait a bit. When the receptionist came back, she was not alone but with another hotel guest – a South Korean man. Just to note, neither Lena nor the two other women speak Korean fluently, their English, according to them, is a bit better than their Korean. Since the three of them said that they are form South Korea and they 'looked' Korean, the receptionist thought it would be better if she calls someone to help. As soon as Lena and her two friends saw the man, they instantly got what the receptionist wanted to do, but most importantly, according to Lena, they just froze and did not know what to say. As she said that, I was already dying laughing. And so, according to Lena, they just froze and neither of them knew what to do, so they just continued their performative acts. The South Korean man started explaining something in Korean and the three of them were just nodding and saying "네" and "예". Lena said that after some time, the South Korean man got somewhat suspicious that they had not really said a word, and after about 20 minutes, he finally asked if they are Koreans. Lena tried to her best to explain everything to the man using both her limited English and Korean. The man, as Lena said, understood everything really quickly and said "아 고려인이구나 (ah so you are Koryoins)". The Vietnamese receptionist was just staring and not grasping anything. Lena said that the three of them were quite embarrassed. Luckily, in the end, they got their room at the hotel and had a very nice experience.

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Chapter V. Conclusions

In this thesis, I focused on South Korean low-skilled ethnic return migration policies, in particular H-2 visa, and Kareisky migrants. Existing academic literature, albeit not extensive, on low-skilled ethnic return migration to South Korea predominantly use a top-down approach in analyzing the issue and center on economic interests. Moreover, the literature and researches do not give any voice to Koryo Saram and present them as passive victims of the low-skilled migration policies. My overall aim in this work was to demonstrate that Kareitsy are not passive victims of economic interests and H-2 visa and to demonstrate their very particular subject formation as low-skilled migrants.

First, by applying Foucauldian biopolitics, I contended that rendering low-skilled ethnic return migration policies as mere means to an economic end is rather limiting. Through the biopolitical approach, I demonstrated how fertility rate and women, shortage of low-skilled labor force, common ancestry and international norms, constitute parts of discursive mechanisms, which directly influence the developing process of labor policies' formations. I argued that low-skilled ethnic return migration is a biopolitical tool of the biopolitical regime of the country, where society is coping with demographic changes of population. Most importantly, the biopolitical approach showed the importance and value of Kareitsy, in particular, the value of their ethnically related laboring bodies. I, further, complicated an already existing in the academic literature hierarchization phenomenon within the Korean nationhood, which is based on the nationality of migrants, where post-Soviet Koreans are put at the bottom of the hierarchy. I complemented the existing literature on hierarchization by analyzing it through the lens of biopolitical racism. My findings showed that the hierarchization takes place not only based on nationality, but it also takes place within one migrant community based on the complex post-socialist (colonial) past, i.e. there are certain tensions within the post-Soviet Korean community based on which former country they are coming from Russia or Central Asian states. In addition, there is vivid racialization based on labor, where Koryo Saram perform hardest and dirtiest jobs. Thus, I demonstrated that biopolitical racism operates within one ethnicity through multiple intersections, such as nationality and labor, and creates racialization and the sense of otherness/difference in post-Soviet Koreans.

Based on the interviews with Kareitsy, participant observation, Facebook groups' dynamic and personal experience, I found out that Kareitsy are very well aware of the racialization and hierarchization processes. Moreover, they are actively renegotiating their Selves through responding to external structures, such as visa regimes, racialization, work,

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community building, representations of culture and gendered norms. Approaching subject formation via Foucauldian terms allowed me to explore how a capacity for desires and actions is created under certain subjectivation and subordination modes such as racialization within the biopolitical regime. Within neoliberal economic mode under the biopolitical regime, low-skilled migrants Koryo Saram embraced a certain mode of subjectivity which allowed them to become entrepreneurs of their own satisfaction. That is, H-2 visa, that is represented as a utilizing, and even oppressive, tool, is viewed as an opportunity for a better life by Kareitsy in terms of a better income, being able to afford something they could not prior to becoming migrants, sense of security and comfort, and association with the civilization while living in South Korea. I found out that within the process of hierarchization, through the lived norms contingent on gendered, cultural and ethnic aspects, Kareitsy actively and creatively decide what identity to stick to when it comes to belonging and identification. Depending on the audiences encountered, Kareitsy navigate through such identifications as Soviet, Koryo Saram, and even South Korean. Such active adaptability partly stems from historical hardships of immigration and deportation of Kareitsy, which are very often unknown and neglected in public and academic discourses. Overall, it was revealed that the experiences of Kareitsy are historically and culturally specific and are astonishingly diverse, complex and with active human agency.

My research made a contribution to the existing literature on low-skilled migration to South Korea by providing biopolitical and intersectional analyses. Moreover, it highlighted the active engagement and subjectivity of Kareitsy as low-skilled ethnic labor migrants, something which is virtually absent in academic literature today. This, research has also expanded on Foucauldian theory of biopolitics by applying it to a very specific South Korean context and a context of ethnic migration. In addition, my research overcame the tendency of mainstream academia to exclude the 'Second World', such as South Korea and Central Asia, from the analysis of migration and diaspora formations. However, I regard my thesis as an introductory attempt to research a quite new phenomenon since the active migration of Kareitsy started only in the 2010s, hence the very limited exiting academic literature. As South Korean ethnic return migration policies are constantly developing, my thesis does not include an extensive analysis of aspects which stood out during my research, such as the introduction of Korean language certificate into the application process for Kareitsy in the Fall of 2019 and its implications; gendered and family dynamic, such as family migration, multiethnic marriages (such as Uzbek husband and Koryo wife), and their implication in work and society adaptation in South Korea; religion, church and missionaries' engagement in Koryo Saram adaptation in South Korea;

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Koryo youngsters and children adaptation and life in South Korea, etc. All this can be fertile land for further research.

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