THE COMPETITION BETWEEN MAKING CHINESE CITIZEN BY STATE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY OF KOREAN-CHINESE FOCUSING ON THE CASE STUDY OF KOREAN-CHINESE SCHOOL IN DA LIAN

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The main idea of this article has been obtained from the Anthropological approach to the case study of Korean-Chinese school of Da-lian city (Da lian shi chao xian zu xue xiao). Korean-Chinese (Chao xian zu) is one of 56 ethnic groups in China, and has occupied unique position both in Korea and China. In the past, most Korean-Chinese live in the autonomous area. However, they have been migrating to the developed cities such as Shang-hai, Qing-dao and Da-lian with the process of the open-economy policy. By this change, their life style and their ethnic identity also have been affected.

Chinese government has been concerned about the uniformity of desperate ethnicities, and this goal has been carried out through various ethnic policies including education system. Ethnicity issue is closely related to the structure of Chinese society and culture. I discuss this subject through the Korean-Chinese school of Da-lian city as the arena of the Competition between being Chinese citizen and being 'Korean-Chinese'. I try to interpret the meaning of being Chinese citizens and being minority ethnic through the Korean-Chinese’s own eyes under the circumstances of living in the developed city by state. This Anthropological approach is focused on not just state policy but on the individuals in terms of the members of Korean-Chinese. Korean-Chinese School and its members as actors can show the way of Standardization and the emphasis of uniformity by State and how the individual negotiates with it through their own strategies.

Key words: State, Ethnic Identity, Korean-Chinese, minority ethnics in China (shao shu min zu), minority school

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The main idea of this work has been obtained from the case study of Korean-Chinese school of Da lian city (大连市朝鲜族学校 Da lian shi chao xian zu xue xiao) with the Anthropological approach.

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1. Brief History of Korean-Chinese

Chinese government has been concerned about the uniformity of disparate ethnicities, and this attitude has been carried out through ethnic policies including cultural & educational dimensions as well. Ethnicity issue is closely related to the structure of Chinese society and culture. I discuss this subject through the Korean-Chinese school of Dalian city as the arena of the Competition between being Chinese citizen and being ‘Korean-Chinese’ ethnic. I try to interpret the meaning of being Chinese citizens and being minority ethnic through the Korean-Chinese’s own eyes under the circumstances of living in the developed multi-cultural city. At the same time, Korean-Chinese School and its members as actors can show the way of Standardization by State and how the individual negotiates with it. I also expect that this theme can embrace the issue of ethnicity and Identity\(^2\) related to multiculturalism in China as well.

This essay examines contemporary Chinese society and culture through the minority Ethnic group “Korean-Chinese (Chao xian zul)”, and the sources of this work partly from the ethnographical field work which has been conducted for last 3 and half months. I have interviewed current teachers and ex-teachers of Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city including principals, and I also have met current students from the age 7 to 18 and many Dalian citizens who have graduated from Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city or the ones who ever have studied in Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city. In addition, I also participated and observed classes at least once in a day during my field work period. Meanwhile, I have participated in several social and cultural events and activities which have been related the members of Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city. Through this process, I realized that Korean-Chinese community in Dalian is closely related to Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city in various ways. So I also could find that although my study has been focused on the school and its members, it’s not only about the school itself but also about the Korean-Chinese society in Dalian.

\(^2\) Identity has been a controversial and critical issue through the history of Anthropology. In this work, I will focus more with the social and cultural context of Identity rather than Identity itself. However, here I’d like introduce a brief concept of Identity which I have brought main idea of my work from. Bauman (1996) said Identity is “a product of Modernity”, and it emphasized the ‘subject’. In Hall(1992)’s case, he claims that there are 3 classification of 3 subjects of Identity. The 1st one is Inner-core character, and it is not changeable. The 2nd one is Social subject, and it is formed by interactions. The last one is Postmodern subject, and based on this concept there is no fixed Identity. Therefore, the quest for Identity should be from the question of “Who we become” instead of “who we are” according to Hall.
Korean-Chinese (朝鲜族 Chao xian zu) is one of 56 ethnic groups in China, and has occupied unique positions both in Korea and China. They are originally from Korean peninsula. As we can guess based on close distance between Korea and China, there have been immigrants from Korea to China since 17th century, but it was not visible size until 19th century. At the beginning Korean immigrants had moved because of the pressure by feudal landlords. Imperialism has defeated Korea and China when 19th century has started. Especially Korea has been colonized by Japan at the beginning of 20th century. While this period, many Koreans have moved from Korean peninsula to Northern part of China to avoid exploitation of Japanese and also for devotions to secret and armed independence movements.

In 1945, Korea became an independent country and had been set free from the Japanese colonialism. However, not a few of Koreans in China decided to remain because of the unstable circumstances of Korea, and the Korean War broke out in 1950. Ideologies divided Korean peninsula into 2 pieces, after the situations, Koreans who remained in China have been considered as a minority ethnic group. The People’s Republic of China founded in 1949, and Korean-Chinese have been announced as a minority ethnic group with other 54 ethnics officially with the policy of Chinese government, and PRC embraced Korean-Chinese as the member of Revolutionary comrades. Korean-Chinese have been lived the north eastern part of China, and the population has been concentrated in Yan bian. The People’s Republic of China designated Ya bian as the autonomous area of Korean-Chinese in 1952.

So with this condition, most Korean-Chinese lived in the autonomous areas. Since 1978 China has chosen open-economy policy and achieved sustainable progress in economic and industrial aspects. The autonomous area consists of relatively small towns, and the industry is mainly focused on Agriculture. Korean-Chinese have been migrating to the developed cities such as Shanghai, Qingdao and Dalian with the process of the open-economy policy. Furthermore, Korea and China conclude a treaty of amity in 1992, and Korean-Chinese also have moved to Korea which is more developed and more capitalistic to have more opportunities to earn more money. With this change, their life styles and their ethnic identity also have been affected.


Dalian has been under the influences of Russia and Japan since the beginning of the 20th century. So its old towns still have the some of traces of old foreign atmosphere. Sometimes Dalian is called the Hong-Kong of Da lu (Main land).
Dalian has a short history but has modern and clean images. Its industries are focused on ship-constructions and trades. Therefore, along with Shanghai and Qingdao, Dalian is well-known for high standard of economic development in China.

Now the population of Dalian city is approximately 6.7 millions, and about 6 thousands (the total population is over 2millions) Korean-Chinese are living in this city officially. However no one is sure about the exact number of the population. Compare to the other regions in Dong bei san cheng (3 counties of North-Eastern part of China. Many of Korean-Chinese have been living here and Nei mong gu area as well.), Dalian has never been a major habitat of Korean-Chinese, however the increasing rate of the population in recent decades (since 1982) has been more than 135% which is a lot higher than ones in Beijing(97%) and Shanghai(91%) With this increasing numbers, Korean-Chinese school has been passing through the changes as well. The start (in 1946) of the school was not that glorious. At first, the number of the students was about 10 and only has a primary school. In 1953 the junior high has been founded, yet in 1957 it had to move to the other town which has bigger Korean-Chinese population. Now the number of the students is still small compare to the non-ethnic schools. Nevertheless it is expanding its efficiency and influencing power over Korean-Chinese in Dalian, and has founded junior high (in 1998) & high school (in 2001).

Through this process (see the table 1) we can ponder the influences of policies\(^3\) of Chinese government over Korean-Chinese. At first, the name and the definition of Korean-Chinese was simply ‘Korean’ or ‘Chao xian’ (the name of the last dynasty of Korea)’people. It literally shows its meaning of being Korean in China. However, when the social and political changes have been accomplished, Chinese government embraced Koreans in China as a member of China, and Chinese government named Koreans in China as Korean-Chinese. This

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\(^3\) Brief view for Ethnic Minority policy of china: In the 1st period (1922-1949), China is not stable in terms of political hegemony, and the confrontation structure was “Communist party vs. 國民黨”. With this circumstance, Self determination right for Ethnic Minorities was general policy, and both of Peasants and Ethnic Minority were highlighted as the class under the oppression. In the 2nd period (1949-1957), China as a ‘Unified Nation-State’ was emphasized, and the Constitution has been founded in1954 focusing on the equality of ethnic groups. In this era, Classification of Ethnic Unities has been accomplished, and Autonomous Areas of Ethnic minorities were designated. The 3rd period (1958-1978) is the era of The Cultural Revolution. In this period, Class Strife has been strongly emphasized, and integration has been carried out as a symbol of Class Strife. In the 4th period (1978-), Deng xiao ping has been rehabilitated. More rights were given to Ethnic Minorities especially in Autonomous Areas by the new constitution.
transformation refers that Koreans in China no longer consider as Koreans “in” China, but as Koreans “of” China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Year</th>
<th>The Changes of Korean-Chinese School in Dalian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946 (Apr.)</td>
<td>Korean (Primary) School of Dalian</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949 (Sep.)</td>
<td>Chao Xian People (primary) school of Luda(旅大)</td>
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<td>1953 (Sep.)</td>
<td>Korean-Chinese School of Dalian&lt;br&gt;Junior high school has been founded</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Junior high school has been moved to Anshan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985 (Sep.)</td>
<td>Korean-Chinese School of Dalian city</td>
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<td>1986 (Sep.)</td>
<td>An attached preschool has been established</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998 (Sep.)</td>
<td>Junior high school has been founded</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 (Sep.)</td>
<td>High School has been founded</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[Table 1: History of Korean-Chinese School in Dalian]


“Our music teacher taught us <Bei jing huan ying nin (Bei-jing welcomes you)> last summer, and I liked the song so much. I think

4 This is a typical Korean way to announce “my”. Koreans tend to speak “Our” instead of “My” in the discourses. For example, “Our school”, “Our State”, “Our Nation” and even “Our family”.

Number 1 (2010) 173
the song shows the strength of our State(China). Our Olympic was so great, wasn’t it?............ Once the music teacher also taught a song of ‘Chae-Yoen’, and it was cool as well. I think our ethnic definitely can sing.”

- From the interview with ‘Cui (Female, 3rd year of Junior high)’ in Korean language -

Oct 19th 2008

“...Our Chinese broad casting system is optimistic for everything done by government. However, the News programs from Korean broad casting system are always negative to Chinese policy. Maybe it’s because of our ethnicity. You know, we, Korean ethnic are more criticizing to everything. Chinese can not understand it, I guess Chinese will be upset if they watch Korean news programs......”

- From the interview with ‘K (Female, in her 50s, a retired teacher)’ in Korean language -

Nov 2nd 2008

As you can see from the interviews, Korean-Chinese address themselves as Chinese and Korean-Chinese ethnic at the same time regardless of generations. This way of talking has been found through numerous discourses, and at least with the characteristic of Korean language, the use of “we” is also applied for both term. Therefore, “We, Chinese” and “We, Korean ethnic” don’t seem contradictable to Korean-Chinese. They are giving themselves multi-faceted identities, and this action is not counted as a contradictory concept. When they mention at the level of State, they use “we, Chinese”, but when they want to mention about ethnic level Chinese means simply ‘han zu’ the ethnic majority.

This concept is getting more complicated when it comes with ‘distinction’ through the daily stratum. In their daily lives, they often use term of ethnicity, and it has one or more that one meaning at a time.

G: “Have you been to a town of Yi ethnic minority?”

5 it is was the song of 2008 Bei-jing Olympic, and was a fashion through the national television in China in 2008.
6 She is one of the popular singers from South-Korea. Since late 1990s South-Korean stars have been so popular in Japan, China, and Southeast Asia, and this stream is lasting in Dalian as well.
The Competition between Making Chinese Citizen by State and Ethnic Identity...

Researcher: “Not, yet.”

G: “As you might know, they are not civilized, so when I took a trip to there, I only could see some humble houses, because they still live in their old houses!

In addition, women were working all the time, and men were just taking a nap.”

- From the interview with ‘G (Female, in her 50s, a retired teacher)’ in Korean language-

Oct 3rd 2008

G: “Man ethnic is loosing their ethnicity. They even can not speak their own language. How sad it is! They are just assimilated into Han ethnic. I've met some Man ethnic people, and all of them were impressed by us, Korean-Chinese ethnic. We still eat Kim-chi 7, and we can speak our ethnic language so well. Our language and traditions are so well preserved.”

- From another interview with ‘G (Female, in her 50s, a retired teacher)’ in Korean language-

Oct 23rd 2008

Many of Korean-Chinese use double standards when they compare themselves to other ethnic minority groups. This is a process to strengthen ethnicity of self, and the pride for being Korean-Chinese. As they make a comparison between themselves and rather small ethnic groups with less development economy system, they use the word “civilization (wen ming)” frequently. This term shows that scope of evolutionary development of Korean-Chinese, and it basically came from dominant discourse of Chinese government 8. At the same time, when they talk about the ethnic minority who is more in the center of dominant groups, Korean-Chinese emphasized the ‘originality’ of ethnic minority. It seems they use completely double standard to each case. However, it refers the strategies of achievement of pride through measuring other ethnic groups. They make distinctions using both of dominant discourse (civilization) and originality of being ethnic minority. In this case, again, both values are not

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8 We can easily find the catch phrase of CPR all over the Dalian, and many of them contain the term “wen ming she hui” (the civilized society) as their ultimate goal.
contradictions, and it fulfills the superiority of being ethnic minority in China. With both comparisons, Korean-Chinese can be civilized (closer to the main stream, and better citizens on the evolutionary schema) and can be more original (can achieve stronger self-esteem) as an ethnic minority. These double standards show the commonly believed ethnic character by Korean-Chinese, and form the ethnic pride among Korean-Chinese. At the same time, we can see the flexible identity between Korean-Chinese and Chinese citizens, and it shows the concept of Korean-Chinese which composes the state and ethnic discourses.

3.2. Embodiment of the values of Chinese Society and Ethnic identity education

Korean-Chinese school of Da lian city (大连市朝鲜族学校 Da lian shi chao xian zu xue xiao) is an arena of the competition between "Making Chinese Citizen by State and Ethnic Identity of Korean-Chinese.

*Teacher: “2nd year comrades! If you want to be a great Shao nian xian feng dui yuan", you have to listen to the teacher. I will draw a national flag for the student who follows my words well!”(in Korean language)

*Teacher: “I can stand up!”(in Korean language)

Student A: “what does ‘can stand up’mean?”(in Chinese language)

*Teacher: “Write in Korean language, and if you can write the letter well, I will give you a pretty sticker of the star from the flag.”

- From the classes of 2nd year of elementary school -

The teacher uses the symbol of nation and communist party as the highest grade of praise, and this symbol is mainly related to the patriotism, and reminds students of being citizens of China. However, it also has been attached to the further moral virtues such as “hard working” and “being humble but at the same time being enthusiastic”. Sometimes, the teacher gives candies and draws flowers for students as a reward, but most of the time the given reward is either National Flag or stars from the communist party symbol. This pattern can be found in the other classes as well, but here, it is more interesting because of the subject of this class. The class was “Korean language” class, and it is basically taught in Korean language. This class is for 2nd year children from elementary school, and unlike autonomous regions, students in Dalian are more likely to use Chinese language

9 Member of the students group of China. Chinese government put Children into this group, and it refers the basic unity of Children from elementary school. It is originally from the composition of Communist party and military system.
outside of the school. Thus, Korean language is not so natural to the students, and some of them barely can speak Korean language. The teacher encourages students to use Korean language, but she never bans them to speak in Chinese. She uses Chinese language for explanation, if it's necessary. The teacher sometimes emphasizes the importance of Korean language as a tool of practical reasons, but rewards for good work is mostly related to the symbol of State and its symbol, none of them were related to ethnic identity.

For junior high or high school students, “si xiang pin de”\(^{10}\) subject is the core of the ideology education in the school are focusing on the text books, and they usually read the contents of the text book.

Z: “The teacher just repeats the contents of the text book, and he sometimes says the glory of the communist party. It is all from text book, and I memorize all of it, because it will be on the exam. However, in the real life, I can watch critical Korean television program as well. I can understand Korean language, and I can read it. Thus, I know that communist party is not always right. I mean... I do love communist party, but not that absolute as text book says, I can see the both side of the fact, and I know that it’s good to be neutral on that issues.”

from the interview with Z(female, 3rd year of high school) on Nov. 10th 2008

in Chinese language -

At a glance, we might think that students are just accepting what they have been taught, but students have their own strategies, and try to make a harmony with exam preparation, the life at the class room and the life of outside of the school.

On the level of domestic culture, the parents or relatives of students are also actors who form the identity of Korean-Chinese.

Q: “my uncle is always emphasizing that we are Korean-Chinese, he said our root is from Korea. I know, and I do understand what he’s saying. However, I was so proud of being a Chinese during this Bei-jing Olympic season! I supported Chinese team even at the match against Korean team.”

- from the interview with Q(female, 3rd year of junior high school) on Nov. 2nd 2008 in Chinese language -

\(^{10}\) ‘ideas and personalities’. It is focused on moral virtues and political rights.
J: “My father never says that kinds of phrase, you know….“as a Korean-Chinese” so on…. One of my grand fathers does, but….we barely can see each other.

My dream is not so big. I just want to enter a good university, and be independent financially after the graduation. I think being successful is not so difficult. It’s just a thing that you can take care of yourself.”

- from the interview with J(male, 2nd year of high school, a son of vice-principal) on Nov. 7th 2008 in Chinese language -

Z: “My parents have been working in South Korea since 1999, and it affected me a lot. Since they have experienced its culture, they don’t like Korea that much. Many people in Korea look upon on them, and it hurts them. However, my parents want me to work in South Korean company after the university graduation in the future, because the salary is much higher than Chinese one. I like that idea, and it is really good that I’m a bilingual, and I want to learn more foreign language for my future.”

from the interview with Z(female, 3rd year of high school) on Nov. 10th 2008
in Chinese language

As you can see, both of students mention the comments from relatives or parents, and it seems it was not so powerful suggestion on them. However, it also shows the existence of the generation gaps and the competitions between ‘being Chinese citizens’ and ‘being Korean-Chinese ethnic minority’.

I argue that this is not only on the level of the generation, but also on the level of individual. Individuals also negotiate with meanings and make strategies with the circumstances. Sometimes, Korean language is used as a symbol of ethnic identity, but on the other perspective it is changed the strongest tool of practical achievements.

4. Conclusion

Korean-Chinese have been experienced process of changes, and their identity also has been faced the change. It dramatically has shown by the discourses of the people from Korean-Chinese School in Dalian. There are competitions between ‘being Chinese citizens’ and ‘being Korean-Chinese ethnic minority’, and in the arena of these competitions, Korean-Chinese make discourses for self-esteem and distinctions, and these competitions are not only between each actors but also on the level of individual themselves.
Identity of Korean-Chinese is not a zero-sum game of ‘being Chinese’ and ‘being Korean-Chinese ethnic’. It’s about the strategies and competitions, and those have placed Korean-Chinese as an actor into the process. Identity of Korean-Chinese is not simply a mixture of components but the competitions and interactions of many actors.

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Number 1 (2010) 179


