

# **Lost Paradise: The phenomenon of ‘Soviet Korean Advanced Kolkhozes’ in Central Asia (Part 2)**

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*Abstract.* In the history of Soviet kolkhoz (collective-farm) research, the ‘advanced kolkhoz (millionaire) phenomenon’ remains almost unexplored, although it was a notable social-economic phenomenon. Members of the Korean advanced kolkhozes in Central Asia, which operated since the late 1930s to the 1980s, at first adapted to the kolkhoz system through hard work, but later became very active in creating social-cultural institutions within the kolkhoz system for common benefit (not only ethnic Koreans but also natives). Regionally, the overwhelming majority of Korean advanced kolkhozes, including the legendary ‘Polar Star’ and ‘Politotdel’, were active in Uzbekistan, followed by Kazakhstan. Perhaps, Korean advanced kolkhozes in Central Asia reached the peak of the Soviet-style socialist agricultural civilization in the 1960s — 1970s. These well-to-do Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia developed a strong social infrastructure in their community as a basis for the contemporary living culture. Local common assets were formed from their own abundant undivided funds, consumption and cultural funds. However, what is more important is that Korean kolkhozes-millionaires not only built an excellent material and technical foundation in the villages based on their high economic performance, but also created harmonious multiethnic communities while enjoying various social benefits similar to city life.

*Key words:* Soviet Korean advanced kolkhoz, Central Asia, community-wealth building, competent dedicated leader, efficient labor organization, kolkhoz garden city, multiethnic community

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## **Building community wealth: funding and social-cultural infrastructure**

Unlike the sovkhov, the kolkhoz was not a business directly managed by the state, so it had to form and expand its assets except for land under permanent lease. The indicator of the kolkhoz assets expansion was indivisible capital (funds) accumulated at the end of fiscal year. Indivisible funds were neither paid to kolkhoz members as their salary nor distributed upon leaving the kolkhoz. According to Article 12 of the 1935 Kolkhoz Code, the kolkhoz was to allocate 15% of its an-

nual income as indivisible capital; however, underdeveloped kolkhozes allocated less than 10%<sup>1</sup>.

In the early days of the kolkhoz system, indivisible funds were formed from the socialized property of kolkhoz members and from property received from the state; later such funds consisted mainly of property accumulated through kolkhoz operations. For instance, in 1953 in Kazakhstan, the former accounted for 7.1% and the latter for 89.4%<sup>2</sup>. Indivisible funds were used for production and construction, purchase and improvement of social-cultural infrastructure, in particular, construction of buildings and roads for agriculture and animal husbandry, houses for kolkhoz members and power plants, cultural and welfare facilities (schools, hospitals, resorts); major repairs; purchase of agricultural machinery and transportation (tractors and combines); irrigation; purchase of breeding livestock and other production inputs<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, indivisible funds are an economic basis of the kolkhoz system and a financial source for its expansion and reproduction. These funds were mainly replenished by cash income from the sales of the kolkhoz's produce. Thus, as cash income grew, indivisible funds also increased. Due to the agricultural policy innovations of the Soviet state, from 1949 to 1957 the kolkhoz average cash income increased by 11.2 times (Tomlin, 2021: 233). Considering the Korean kolkhoz "Polar Star" in the Tashkent Region, while the labor force increased about threefold from the early 1940s to the mid-1960s, the cash income of kolkhoz members (according to the number of working days) increased by more than 60 times — from 20,230 rubles in 1940 to 1,3 million rubles in 1966 (Inoyatov, Nurullin, 1970: 49). Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the trend and scale of the increase in the indivisible funds of the kolkhozes "Polar Star", "Sverdlov" and "Politotzel".

Table 1

An increase in indivisible funds of the "Polar Star" in thousand rubles (Kim, 1954: 42)

Year	Indivisible Funds
1940	64.3
1952	1,076.62
1953	1,607.80
Total	3,685.80

1. For instance, in 1949, the financial income of the "Kokzub" kolkhoz in the Karmakchi district of Kazakhstan was 59,700 rubles, but only 4,168 rubles were allocated as indivisible capital. See: Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 13.09.1950.
2. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 09.12.1958.
3. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 26.12.1954.

Table 2

An increase in indivisible funds of the “Sverdlov”  
in thousand rubles (Nurmatov, 1954: 16; Artykov, 1957: 38–39)

Year	Indivisible Fund
1949	2,752.13
1953	7,255.78
1955	17,000
1956	19,000

Accordingly, the share of unspent and accumulated indivisible funds in the “Sverdlov” was 19.5% in 1949, 28.4% in 1950, 37.6% in 1951, 39.5% in 1952, and over 50% in 1953 (Nurmatov, 1954: 16–17).

Table 3

An increase in indivisible funds of the “Politotdel” in thousand rubles (Hwang, 1961: 27)

Year	Indivisible Fund	Share of money income (%)
1953	29	15.4
1958	627.7	20
1960	1,347.4	25

The total amount of debt on the 1955 indivisible funds of the kolkhoz “Path to Communism” in the South of Kazakhstan was 7.532 million rubles (Hwang, 1956: 12). In the early 1960s, advanced kolkhozes like the “Communism” in the Chili district of Kazakhstan’s Kyzyl-Orda Region and the “3rd International” in the Karmakchi district of the same region were deducting up to 25%–46% of total cash income as indivisible funds monthly, while other kolkhozes like the “Victory” in the Jambul Region were deducting only up to 10%–18%<sup>4</sup>. In the mid-1960s, many advanced kolkhozes were earning more than 1 million rubles a year, deducting hundreds of thousand rubles to their indivisible funds<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, the wealth and cultured life of the kolkhoz members depended on consumption and cultural funds formed separately from indivisible funds. Consumption funds were mainly used to cover living, leisure, education and cultural expenses of villagers. If the kolkhoz wanted to pay additional pensions (in addition to those paid by the state) and take extra care of the retired kolkhoz work-

4. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.12.1963; 18.01.1969.

5. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 29.01.1967.

ers, a separate social security fund<sup>6</sup> was formed. Since the 1950s, advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia had formed not only indivisible but also consumption and cultural funds. The cultural fund of the “Sverdlov” kolkhoz in the Tashkent Region was 162,000 rubles in 1955 and 210,000 rubles in 1956 (Artykov, 1957: 38–39). The “Uzbekistan” kolkhoz in the Upper-Chirchik district of the Tashkent Region was a large kolkhoz with 2,000 hectares of craft crops such as kenaf and cotton: its income in 1968 was 4.784 million rubles, and in 1969 it allocated more than 100,000 rubles to the cultural fund<sup>7</sup>.

The “Leningrad” kolkhoz in the Syrdarya district of Uzbekistan was organized by 27 peasants in a wasteland in the late 1930s, and in the first year had a small harvest of cotton and grain, watermelons and melons from 80 hectares. In 1970, its cultivated area increased to 2,536 hectares, and in 1975, its income was 1.555 million rubles. The kolkhoz invested more than 8 million rubles in production and welfare facilities over 10 years. As a result, cultural houses comparable to the urban ones were built in the central village of the kolkhoz and its two branches and other facilities such as shops, restaurants, schools, hospitals, kindergartens, daycare centers, clubs and cinemas. There was a motorcycle for every two households, a car for every six households, and every house was equipped with a radio, television, washing machine, refrigerator, and new furniture<sup>8</sup>.

Due to the record-breaking harvests and high productivity the advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia were able to have such abundant indivisible, consumption, social security, and cultural funds. The two main sources of income were crop farming and animal husbandry, while vegetables and grapes were grown for additional profits. Koreans who had lived in temperate regions of East Asia traditionally ate rice, barley and wheat as their staple food, and corn, beans, sweet potatoes and vegetables as side dishes. Additionally, due to the geographical conditions of the Korean Peninsula and Primorsky Region located close to the sea, fish made up a larger part of their diet than meat. Therefore, the first crop cultivated by Koreans in Central Asia was rice.

Kazakhstan with a large desert and dry area had been inviting Koreans from the Far East to learn rice farming techniques since the 1920s. In 1929, 220 Koreans (117 households) moved to Kazakhstan from the Far East and formed the Korean agricultural cooperative “Kazris” around the Chili and Turkestan railway stations in the Kyzyl-Orda Region (Novik, Shcherbakov, 1939: 9). Over time the distri-

6. According to the decision of the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers on September 4, 1964, kolkhozes were to deduct 2.5% of total income in 1964 and 4% in 1965 to the social security fund. Pensioners working in agricultural enterprises were to receive the full pension regardless of their salary.

7. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 28.06.1969.

8. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 05.03.1976.

bution of main crops in the advanced Korean kolkhozes changed. For instance, in the Kyzyl-Orda Region, the area under rice had increased until the 1970s, but the kolkhoz near Almaty preferred to grow onions as more profitable. The situation was different in Uzbekistan with the largest number of Korean kolkhozes: according to the national economic policy and by the kolkhoz's decision, the share of rice gradually decreased, while the share of cotton<sup>9</sup> and kenaf<sup>10</sup> as more profitable craft crops significantly increased. Many Korean kolkhozes grew rapidly in the 1950s–1960s due to record harvests of rice in Kazakhstan and of cotton (“white gold”) with kenaf (“blue gold”)<sup>11</sup> in Uzbekistan. The livestock sector that had experienced a decline at first became profitable in the 1960s: cows, horses, sheep and pigs were mainly raised in kolkhozes' barns, while goats, ducks, geese, chickens and quails — on kolkhoz members' farms, which determined the ‘Central Asian Korean advanced kolkhozes’ phenomenon.

In the late 1960s — early 1970s, the average monthly income of many kolkhoz workers was close to that of sovkhos workers<sup>12</sup>. On the “Polar Star” kolkhoz in the Tashkent Region, the per capita cash income increased more than 50 times from 1938 to 1968 (Inoyatov, Nurullin, 1970: 48). In the “Politotdel” kolkhoz, the total amount of cash distributions in 1953, when it was an undeveloped farm, was only 200,000 rubles, while in 1960, when it had developed into an advanced farm, — 6 million rubles (in new money). Thus, the income of the kolkhoz member per working day was 3.5 rubles in cash and 1 kg of grain (Khakimov, 1961: 54). The main sources of income for the “Sverdlov” kolkhoz were cotton and livestock: the total cash income was 11,350,200 rubles in 1955 and 13,003,500 rubles in 1956 (Artykov, 1957: 36–37). Therefore, the cash income of its members increased 17 times from 1949 to 1953 (Table 4).

Table 4

Cash income per working day in the kolkhoz “Sverdlov”  
(Nurmatov, 1954: 17; Artykov, 1957: 36–37)

Year	1949	1950	1952	1953
Amount	1,24 rubles	12,5	15, 27	20,8

9. By the late 1970s, Uzbekistan's cotton production accounted for 70% of the total Soviet production, and in 1978 its harvest reached 55.5 million tons. Newspaper “Lenin's Banner”, 26.04.1979.
10. Kenaf was originally a subtropical crop that Russia imported from India, Iran and other countries, and its cultivation began in Uzbekistan in 1925.
11. Central Asian farmers called cotton “platinum”, kenaf — “blue gold”, rice — “pearls”, vegetables and fruits — “fruits of the sun”. Newspaper “Lenin's Banner”, 30.03.1971.
12. Newspaper “Lenin's Banner”, 10.11.1970.

In the comparative perspective, in 1950, out of 35,430 kolkhozes in the Soviet Union only 10,695 (30%) had cash income of more than 1 ruble per working day, while out of 25,594 kolkhozes in Russia, only 2,039 (7%) (Tomilin, 2021: 61). The standard of living of rural workers was gradually approaching that of factory workers. However, the comparison of urban and kolkhoz workers' income in cash would create a false impression due to the following: (1) since the 1950s, peasants had basically produced their food; (2) in addition to their regular salaries and bonuses, they also receive profits from the sales of surplus agricultural products of the kolkhoz; (3) another source of profits was the sales of agricultural products from their gardens.

The Soviet rural policy after the post-war restoration can be summarized as “eliminating the difference between urban and rural areas” in terms of living standards<sup>13</sup>. Advanced Korean kolkhozes created an oasis of agricultural civilization in the arid lands of Central Asia already in the late 1940s — early 1950s, and at the latest in the late 1950s — 1960s. From the late 1940s to the mid-1980s, outsiders described the advanced Korean kolkhozes' villages with modern social and cultural facilities, orderly and beautiful scenery as “socialist small towns”, “communist rural areas”, “modern small towns”, “gorgeous kolkhoz villages that turned into small towns”, “true agricultural cities”, “small sanctuaries” and “paradise on earth”. Some further examples show that advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia reached the peak of the Soviet-style agricultural socialist civilization in the 1960s.

*High agricultural culture and high productivity of animal husbandry, cultural development and material security of peasants significantly eliminated differences between urban and rural areas. It was difficult to find a difference between the lives of kolkhoz members and city dwellers, since the kolkhoz village became a small town, and the material life of kolkhoz members was connected with their spiritual life<sup>14</sup>.*

*Excellent clubs, hospitals and schools, kindergartens and nurseries (daycare centers), shops and restaurants, stadiums and dance halls, green asphalt streets and cultural houses lined up on both sides, gas and electricity, radio and television — that was the rural landscape of the advanced Korean kolkhozes<sup>15</sup>.*

*One enters the central village of the “Polar Star” kolkhoz with as-*

13. In the “Polar Star” kolkhoz village, “boundaries between the city and the countryside were gradually disappearing”. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.06.1960.

14. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 06.09.1967.

15. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 23.10.1970.

*phalt roads and tall poplar trees that seem to pierce the sky. This village looks like a small town. Amidst the lush greenery, there are white poplar trees and numerous buildings (schools, clubs, management committees, stores, kindergartens, daycare centers (nurseries), inns (hotels), clinics, pharmacies, etc.) surrounded by spacious houses built in rows along the street<sup>16</sup>.*

*Small houses with all conveniences, beautiful cultural centers, clean hospitals, welfare services including tailor shops and barber-shops, asphalt streets, two-three schools and various shops — the central village reminded of any small town. In addition, the “Politotdel” kolkhoz had inns and stadiums that were just as good as those in cities, and there was even the “Happiness Hall” in which people could get married in a grand atmosphere, celebrate an anniversary, and so on<sup>17</sup>.*

*The “Politotdel” was a complete copy of a modern small town; its stadium could accommodate 12,000 people, which is rare in many cities<sup>18</sup>. The streets of the central village were hidden by lush greenery, almost all houses were new; kolkhoz members’ houses had four–six rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, water supply, sewerage, gas, and a vegetable garden with flower beds and an orchard.*

*The streets were almost completely paved, and the village did not differ much from any city: many restaurants, confectionery shops and other facilities, in which one could order groceries by the phone to have them delivered to one’s home. Kolkhoz built a new stadium, and its football team participated in the national A-level championship. Kolkhoz’s athletic department consisted of hundreds of first- and second-level athletes (track-and-field, wrestling and tennis enthusiasts)<sup>19</sup>.*

The “Pravda” kolkhoz village looked like a small town. Watching movies was the most popular aspect of its cultural life: movies (soviet and foreign art films, documentaries and science films) were shown in clubs in winter and at outdoor theaters in summer. Since livestock farms could not have special cinema facilities due to the nature of their work, mobile projection units were sometimes set up to show films. The cultural recreation park was open every year from May 1 to late fall and played a significant role in the villagers’ cultural life. This park was densely planted with various ornamental trees, through which even sunlight could not penetrate. In the evening, elec-

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16. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.06.1960.

17. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 29.01.1967.

18. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 23.08.1968.

19. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 30.06.1970.

tric lights were as bright as day and the air was cool, making the park a great place for rest for those tired of daytime work<sup>20</sup>.

### **Kolkhoz garden city as a common asset**

#### *Social welfare and community activities*

Community-wealth building with abundant indivisible, consumption and cultural funds formed by advanced Korean kolkhozes by their own labor can be divided into (a) production facilities such as irrigation canals, power plants, livestock farms, warehouses, machinery and automobile repair shops; (b) social infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, pharmacies, youth campsites, resorts and health centers; (c) daily amenities such as restaurants, barbershops, tailor shops, hotels and department stores; and (d) cultural and sport facilities such as palaces of culture, clubs, outdoor movie theaters, parks, stadiums, etc. Among these, (a) is related to the direct economic activities of the kolkhoz, and the rest is a common asset related to the daily and cultural life of kolkhoz members. In particular, (d) was a common space for villagers to strengthen their mutual ties through free activities that made these assets truly common. Village residents' participation can be divided into two types: passive — beneficiaries of programs provided by the facilities (like various commemorative events including concerts, movies and lectures in the palace of culture), and active — organizers of activities (amateur arts troupe consisting of music, dance, theater, and formative/craft genres, various sports activities such as football, volleyball, tennis, and wrestling).

#### *Social welfare and healthcare*

From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, the standard of living and social security in advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia was very high compared to the general Soviet level and significantly exceeded the level of most countries in East Asia, including Korea, being close to the level of rural areas in Western Europe. However, what is even more valuable is that kolkhoz members lived in an equal and peaceful multi-ethnic community with mutual trust (beyond abundant material welfare).

The management committee of the advanced Korean kolkhoz paid special attention to providing various services for the daily production activities of its members. One of the specific facilities was the hut — a rest area mainly used by kolkhoz members working in the field in summer: the kolkhoz leadership knew that pleasant rest was

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20. Newspaper "Lenin's Banner", 23.07.1969.



an effective way to ensure high productivity. Such huts were often built by work teams, because kolkhoz farms were so large that work sites were quite far from villages. Such huts were usually located in places with beautiful scenery — many trees and water channels, they had yards with flower beds, refrigerators, radios and everything else needed for comfortable rest after hard work. Here, kolkhoz members got hot meals for free, read newspapers and magazines, listened to music, played chess, and enjoyed hobbies. For work units with a large share of young women, temporary kindergartens were opened as a part of the hut auxiliary facilities (Pak, 1963: 18).

In general, the high level of welfare enjoyed by the Korean advanced kolkhoz members is evident in cultural, health care and leisure life. Already in the 1960s, the “Politotdel” kolkhoz in the Tashkent Region had a library with three branches and over 10,000 books in Russian, Uzbek and Korean, and 250 active readers frequently visited it. The library of this kolkhoz was subscribed to 1,200 copies of Soviet and Uzbek newspapers and magazines, 200 copies of the Tashkent Region newspaper, 350 copies of the Korean newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 300 copies of the Upper-Chirchik district newspaper, and 30 copies of North Korean newspapers and magazines (Kozlov, Son, 1961: 22–23). The ordering office for delivery of goods, which had been in operation since the fall of 1960, was not only a very convenient system for villagers’ daily life but also an innovative idea that was almost half a century ahead of its time worldwide. Before this system was implemented, kolkhoz members had to go to the accounting department to order clothes and wait for their delivery from the warehouse, but now they just needed to call the ordering office and necessary goods were delivered to their houses. The ordering office had three delivery men who immediately delivered meat, milk, vegetables and other food products ordered by phone or through deliverymen (products were supplied by the kolkhoz). At first, the ordering office delivered more than 150 kg of meat, 300 kg of milk, and 400–500 kg of other food products, but this was not enough to meet the increasing demand; thereby, the initially assigned motorcycle was replaced by a car exclusively for delivery (Kozlov, Son, 1961: 22).

The “Polar Star” hospital built in 1961 consisted of two buildings not far away from the central village, had three doctors and 35 nurses, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, medical center, dental room, and X-ray room. The front garden of the hospital was full of fruit trees and ornamental plants, and various vegetables were grown in the one-hectare garden to provide supplies for nutritious and delicious meals to the patient cafeteria. Hwang Nina, a doctor born in the Primorsky Region in 1936, was studying at this hospital to apply oriental acupuncture in the future<sup>21</sup>. In 1970, ten years after opening, the “Polar Star” hospital had 30 beds (20 for general patients, 5 for

21. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 01.05.1964.

children, and 5 for obstetrics and gynecology), 2 doctors, 14 associate doctors, 14 medical technicians, and 4 nurses. At the clinics of its five branches, villagers could be examined and receive treatment on a regular basis since 1969, and in 1970, the number of patients reached 7,836. In 1966, the kolkhoz donated an ambulance “Volga” to the hospital, and the number of beds was to increase to 35 in the future<sup>22</sup>.

The “Dimitrov” kolkhoz hospital which opened in the early 1960s also received positive feedback from villagers. This hospital consisting of surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, dentistry and acupuncture had the latest medical equipment just as clinics in large cities. The specialized doctors and medical technicians took good care of 35 to 40 patients a day, thereby the number of people coming from the neighboring kolkhoz village for treatment was gradually increasing. To strengthen its sanitation project, the “Dimitrov” kolkhoz organized a sanitation committee of 15 members to take responsibility for cleanliness in rural areas<sup>23</sup>.

In the mid-1960s, the “Politotdel” kolkhoz had a hospital with 100 beds, a pharmacy, a clinic, 6 medical centers, a birth center, 4 bath-houses (for 350–400 people a day), and a resort (25 people rested each shift). There were two main areas supported by the kolkhoz cultural fund: every year 250–300 members were on holidays at resorts, and 60–100 members were treated at the central sanatorium<sup>24</sup>. Three kolkhozes — “Politotdel”, “Pravda” and “Sverdlov” — joined forces to build a tuberculosis sanatorium (Hwang, 1977: 111).

*Community activities: palaces of culture, clubs, amateur art troupes, sports*

A very interesting part of the daily life of kolkhoz members were lively clubs in the evening. Here, movies were shown every day, even during the busy agricultural season; young members of the kolkhoz filled the evening dance hall with and were enthusiastic about various amateur art troupe activities (Iskhakov, Kim, 1972: 22–23). The “Polar Star” club had shown new films every evening since the 1950s and also showed children’s films twice a week (200–300 visitors a day)<sup>25</sup>. In addition to movies, libraries were another valuable cultural project of the advanced Korean kolkhoz: the “Politotdel” library had four sections on the second floor of the palace of culture, a collection of 13,000 books and about 800 readers. There was no other rural library of this size in any district or in the entire Tashkent Region (became a district library in 1987)<sup>26</sup>.

22. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 11.05.1972.

23. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 13.12.1964.

24. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 06.09.1967.

25. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.06.1960.

26. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 06.07.1988.

Activities of the amateur art troupe during the Soviet period had special significance in that art was not limited to the domain of “privileged artists” but was integrated into daily lives of ordinary people. As William Morris, Lev Tolstoy, Pyotr Kropotkin, and John Berger emphasized, songs, dances, paintings, plays, architecture in the lives of the working people could be both practical and beautiful works of art. Such folk art lack unreality, pretense of gentility, and peculiar intricacies typical for professional artists. Activities of the amateur art troupe could be considered as a form of organic connection between people’s productive labor and living art.

After the 1950s, under the post-war restoration, the Soviet Union provided support for amateur art troupes, including the patronage of urban cultural institutions in rural areas: writers, artists, composers and film makers actively participated in improving the level of rural culture<sup>27</sup>. Already in the early 1950s, there were about 5 million amateur artists in the Soviet Union — these people had jobs but developed their artistic talents in their free time or for special events. In 1953, they gave 200,000 performances that attracted 175 million spectators. In 1969, there were 113,800 cultural centers and clubs in rural areas, accounting for 9/10 of all clubs in the Soviet Union. There were 131,300 cinema facilities in rural areas (8/10 of their total number), and 88,000 public libraries (124,800 in the Soviet Union)<sup>28</sup>.

In the mid-1970s, there were 74,000 participants in the Uzbekistan amateur art troupes, 76 of which became people’s art troupes, and the number of troupes participating in the National Amateur Art Troupes Festival was 4,600: they gave performances about 50,000 times a year for about 5.5 million people in rural clubs, palaces of culture, farm huts, and livestock complexes<sup>29</sup>. There were more than 50 Korean amateur art troupes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan<sup>30</sup>: they consisted of leaders with expertise and dedication to cultural and enlightenment activities in rural areas and people of various occupation and age (kolkhoz workers, tractor and combine drivers, agricultural engineers, milkers, mechanics, housewives, teachers and students). The cultural and artistic activities of the Korean people in Central Asia were represented by the “Korean (Joseon) Theater”<sup>31</sup> based in Kazakhstan and led by a group of professional artists, and by amateur art troupes of the advanced kolkhozes in the Tashkent Region of Uzbekistan, whose activities were not limited to palaces of culture or

27. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 28.02.1979.

28. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 11.12.1969.

29. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 17.06.1975., 05.03.1977.

30. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 16.06.1954, 11.03.1960, 17.04.1960. On the other hand, there were “Avant-guard” and “Giant” that were economically advanced but ignored cultural projects.

31. There are many articles about it in the newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”. See also: Hong, 2019.

clubs of their kolkhozes. During the busy agricultural season they performed at the farm hut and toured nearby Korean kolkhozes to strengthen mutual ties through artistic exchange<sup>32</sup>.

In 1954, about 60 young men and women participated in the “Polar Star” entertainment department (9 musicians, 12 actors, and vocalists)<sup>33</sup>. People’s theater in this kolkhoz had worked successfully under the leadership of Choi Gil Jun, a famous artist of the Republic of Uzbekistan, since the 1960s<sup>34</sup>. The “Polar Star” club yard was filled with people in the evening even during harvest time. Alleys were filled with young people coming to the dance hall, adults coming to the cinema, and other people coming to the reading room<sup>35</sup>.

The “Northern Lighthouse” amateur art troupe had worked since 1965, supported by the kolkhoz management committee which appointed Jin Woo as its leader for his artistic talent and creative writing. The art troupe consisted of 30 men and women practicing every evening except for the busy farming season. The art troupe toured not only within its district but also to nearby kolkhozes and participated in the Amateur Art Troupe Competition of the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>36</sup>.

The “Youth Song and Dance Troupe (Concert Troupe)” of the “Politotdel” kolkhoz was organized in 1955, and in 1970 it was renamed the “People’s Song and Dance Troupe (Concert Troupe)” for its high level. The troupe consisted of the composer Hwang Timofei, its music instructor, 9 musicians (performers), 4 singers, and 7 dancers; their average age was 22 years. Singers — mechanic Vladimir Kang and telephone operator Evgeny Hwang included in their repertoire not only Korean and Japanese songs but also Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian and Spanish, and even Uzbek dances. In 1976, in addition to the palace of culture, outdoor cinema and club, the kolkhoz village had eight schools, a branch of a music school, five libraries, and a dance institute headed by an actor from the National Navoi Grand Theater in Tashkent. At every performance of the troupe, the 1,200-seat hall was packed. The troupe almost reached the level of professional art troupe and received the Lenin Communist Youth League (Komsomol) Award in 1976 for its significant contribution to the cultural life of the rural working youth (Hwang, 1981: 30–31).

In the late 1970s, for the first time in the district, the “Politotdel” created the position of vice-chairman in charge of cultural projects in five areas — propaganda, cultural education, music school and stadium, martial arts center, and three concert groups including the

32. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 20.30.1962.

33. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 02.12.1954.

34. Once the theater was recognized as “people’s”, the director and artistic instructors received salaries from the government.

35. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 04.10.1963.

36. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 20.06.1967.

troupe. The first vice-chairman was Moisei Hwang<sup>37</sup>. Cultural workers had the same rights as agricultural experts; for example, all members of the troupe were provided with comfortable housing<sup>38</sup>.

In the early 1970s, all cultural institutions in the “Pravda” kolkhoz in the Tashkent Region were beautifully decorated. The palace of culture in the central village had various clubs, including dance, choir, solo singing, art, music, and the amateur art troupe. Its musical performances rich in content and artistically well-organized took first place at the Uzbekistan Amateur Arts Festival. The park of culture and recreation in the central village had a dance hall, propaganda room, billiards room, restaurant and teahouse. Even during the busy agricultural season, kolkhoz members gathered at the park every evening and had a pleasant rest. The outdoor movie theater was packed every evening. At the kolkhoz cultural centers, question and answer soirees (evening gatherings), reports on the international situation and on the interpretation of party and government decisions, lectures on literature and art, and talks about agricultural science were systematically held according to the plan. There were 25 such meetings were held annually. In 1971, residents of the “Pravda” central village subscribed to newspapers and magazines for 7,200 rubles, which meant that each household subscribed to 3–4 types of newspapers and magazines. The kolkhoz radio regularly reported national and local news, stories, poems, and interesting articles published in the “Lenin’s Banner” newspaper.<sup>39</sup> In 1974, 115 young men and women regularly participated in the activities of the “Pravda” palace of culture<sup>40</sup>.

In addition to cultural and educational projects, most Korean advanced kolkhozes’ leaders considered the development of sports to be closely linked to economic issues<sup>41</sup>, thereby supporting football, volleyball, basketball, tennis, cycling, and chess. This was determined by the belief that amateur art troupes and sports activities were not a waste of the kolkhoz’s budget and energy but strengthened residents’ belonging to the kolkhoz through fun and healthy rest, thus improving productivity<sup>42</sup>. The “Politotdel” that became advanced in the late 1950s was the most enthusiastic about sports activities among Korean kolkhozes. Already in the early 1960s, the size of its sports stadium was comparable to that of the “Pakhtakor” in Tashkent, the capital of the republic, and it had a Class B (in the Soviet league) football team of 30 players. In addition to football, which they were most passionate about, kolkhoz members enjoyed almost all sports, including

37. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 21.12.1979.

38. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 10.07.1982.

39. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 13.06.1971.

40. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 24.09.1974.

41. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 25.05.1955.

42. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 21.12.1979.

basketball, volleyball, table tennis, tennis, bicycle racing, gymnastics, boxing, track and field, wrestling, sambo, weightlifting, and chess (Hwang, 1961: 36). Football was so popular that there were four football teams — not only in the central village but also in each branch. Most of the 60 football matches in 1961 were held at the kolkhoz stadium, and the number of spectators sometimes exceeded 10,000 (some even came from Tashkent). On match days, kolkhoz members worked short hours but were encouraged to complete all required work. The “Politotdel” promoted sports activities to the public, which resulted in 350 young men and women participating in various sports in the early 1970s. They had a well-appointed stadium with 20,000 seats, dormitories, restaurants and automobiles<sup>43</sup>. Such enthusiastic sports activities were based on social principles, namely sports councils (Hwang, 1962: 132). Furthermore, the “Politotzel” founded the first rural hockey team and organized a single sports complex at the level of the entire kolkhoz: 600 people from 11 sectors were engaged in sports activities. In the early 1980s, there were 26 masters of sports, 23 candidates for master of sports, and about 70 first-class athletes<sup>44</sup>.

#### **Conclusive remarks: community-wealth building and the garden city multi-ethnic friendly community**

Despite its institutional and economic problems, the kolkhoz system can be said to have been a Soviet path to agricultural and rural modernization. The kolkhoz was not just a frontline organization for implementing the agricultural policy of the Soviet state. It was a collective agricultural production unit maintained by the collective labor of the peasant class in the 1930s–1980s, and at the same time it played a leading social and cultural role as a core institution of the rural community. Unlike the Western world in the 20th century, this unique kolkhoz system was not accompanied by the small-scale or large-scale farming systems. Therefore, the Soviet kolkhoz cannot be sufficiently explained by a narrow approach to agricultural economic history, it requires a combination of various perspectives, including political, social and cultural history.

On the other hand, the advanced kolkhoz phenomenon that has been overlooked by kolkhoz researchers allows to understand the positive potential of the Soviet kolkhoz system which functioned as a social production unit and a central rural community organization. Most researchers strive to show problems and failures of the Soviet kolkhoz system rather than to shed light on the proactive adaptation and participation of the Soviet peasant class through the kolkhoz system and its economic, social and cultural achievements. It was the kolkhoz system which helped the Soviet countryside to maintain its communal charac-

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43. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 18.01.1973.

44. Newspaper “Lenin’s Banner”, 10.07.1982.

ter of mutual assistance while undergoing modernization until the late 1980s. The fact that the Soviet society did not experience the radical exodus (outflow from the countryside) that was common in the West and the Third World since the mid-20th century (despite the gradual outflow due to urbanization in the 1960s) can be explained by the effect of the kolkhoz system which controlled the rural outflow. In Russia and other former Soviet bloc countries, de-agrarianization and de-modernization of rural areas were widespread phenomena in the 1990s, under the collapse of the Soviet Union and the kolkhoz system.

It is not true that the advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia developed smoothly in a friendly environment over half a century (record-breaking yields of agricultural and livestock products, construction of social and cultural infrastructure, rich and beautiful garden cities). As forced immigrants during the Stalin era, from the very beginning they faced harsh natural environments, poor administrative systems, unilateral top-down national planning, uncooperative attitude and irresponsibility of the state-run local agricultural institutions and construction organizations. In addition, through a fierce struggle to escape the political stigma of “subversive immigrants”, Koreans showed remarkable achievements in improving productivity and exceeding national plans almost every year. This phenomenon, which was mainly observed in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, is a valuable example that shows the limits of the stereotype that villagers lived much worse than urban residents during the Soviet era.

When considering the experience of the advanced Korean kolkhozes in Central Asia through the connection between economic production and social-cultural life, we discover a virtuous cycle: capable and dedicated leaders → labor discipline and efficient labor organization → increase in yield and productivity → high income → increase in indivisible and consumption funds → construction of social-cultural infrastructure → construction of comfortable and beautiful villages → rich spiritual and cultural life → retention of the youth (in the kolkhoz) or return (from the city) → preservation of labor force. Another interesting fact is the isomorphism of the economic orientation of the advanced Korean kolkhozes (increasing production of agricultural and livestock products) through socialist competition to the development of social and cultural infrastructure construction through mutual imitation and catch-up in relation to the leading kolkhoz. Thus, Korean kolkhozes were constantly improving through cooperation and friendly competition.

On the one hand, Korean kolkhozes-millionaires used two Soviet-style market mechanisms’ — national purchasing system and kolkhoz market; on the other hand, they created common assets through the joint labor and cooperation of kolkhoz members and rural intellectuals. Instead of relying solely on government’s support, Korean advanced kolkhozes formed indivisible, consumption and cultural funds by their own efforts. It can be said that the record-breaking production of the advanced

Korean kolkhozes, their construction of social and cultural infrastructure and various community activities based on those achievements were a part of the Soviet-style commons under the state socialist system. They contributed greatly to the formation and maintenance of multi-ethnic friendly community/society by creating a new social system that shared opportunities and benefits among its members. Advanced Korean kolkhozes can be called innovators who created “Soviet-style commons led by the community sector from below” in rural society. Unfortunately, kolkhoz small towns constructed as commons did not receive as much attention as failed kolkhoz agriculture and rural reality.

In addition, members of the advanced Korean kolkhozes and villagers secured the “kolkhoz-style autonomous local democracy” by active participation in various common activities (palaces of culture, clubs, amateur art troupes, sports teams). Therefore, it is incorrect to judge the “kolkhoz democracy” only by formal indicators (such as the number of regular general meetings or of kolkhoz members attending general meetings, and so on), although in the huge state socialist system called the Soviet Union, there were institutional constraints and practical limitations to ensure that all formal requirements for the “kolkhoz democracy” would be met, while hastily pushing modernization from the top down.

The last thing to note is Soviet internationalism: from the settlement of Koreans who had migrated to Central Asia in the late 1930s to the successful operation of kolkhozes, cooperation and mutually beneficial relationship between Koreans and the locals were contributing to the success of the advanced Korean kolkhozes. In the 1950s, after the large-scale expansion of kolkhozes, a relatively smooth transition of the earlier homogenous Korean kolkhozes to the multi-ethnic friendly kolkhozes was determined by the socialist ideology and education, which emphasized ethnic equality, in addition to the traditional friendliness of the locals and the openness of the Korean people.

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## **Потерянный рай: феномен «советско-корейских передовых колхозов» в Средней Азии (Часть 2)**

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**Аннотация.** В истории советских колхозных исследований «феномен передового колхоза (колхоза-миллионера)» остается почти неисследованным, хотя это был заметный социально-экономический феноменом. Члены корейских передовых колхозов Средней Азии, существовавших с конца 1930-х по 1980-е годы, сначала адаптировались к колхозной системе посредством самоотверженного труда, а затем активно создавали социально-культурные институты внутри колхозной системы для общего блага не только этнических корейцев, но и коренного населения. В региональном масштабе подавляющее большинство «корейских передовых колхозов», в том числе легендарные «Полярная звезда» и «Политотель», действовали в Узбекистане, реже в Казахстане. Видимо, корейские передовые колхозы Средней Азии достигли пика сельскохозяйственного социалистического развития советского типа в 1960-е — 1970-е годы. Эти богатые корейские колхозы создали сильную социальную инфраструктуру и заложили основу современной живой культуры. Местные общие ресурсы были созданы ими за счет своих богатых неделимых фондов, потребительских и культурных фондов. Корейские колхозы-

миллионеры не только обеспечили деревне прекрасную материально-техническую базу типа города-сад, основанную на высоких экономических показателях, но и жили в гармоничной многонациональной общине, пользуясь различными социальными благами городского типа.

*Ключевые слова:* советско-корейские передовые колхозы в Средней Азии, компетентный и самоотверженный руководитель, эффективная организация труда, колхозный город-сад, многонациональная дружественная община