

THE POLITICS OF TRANSNATIONAL WELFARE CITIZENSHIP:
KIN, STATE, AND PERSONHOOD AMONG OLDER SAKHALIN KOREANS

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the return migration and the reconfiguration of personhood among older Sakhalin Koreans. Based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2010 to 2011 on Sakhalin Island, Russia and in South Korea, I explore how transnational return mobility shapes discourses, practices, and imaginaries of kinship and citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans. This study situates the return program as an imperial formation, and a contemporary ethno-nation-building project of Japan and South Korea. I contend that this particular program has provoked complex emotional and political discourses around family separation and reunion, as well as raised questions of inclusion and exclusion among older Sakhalin Koreans reflecting on their relationship to the three nation-states, Japan, South Korea, and Russia. This study highlights how older Sakhalin Koreans reconstitute personhood through practices of kinship and citizenship in a transnational milieu where post-colonial, post-Cold War, and post-socialist transformations intersect.

Adding the prism of everyday moral experiences to the analytical lenses of kinship, transnational citizenship, and humanitarianism, I analyze the unexpected consequences of return mobility among both mobile and immobile subjects. I examine how older Sakhalin Koreans imagine and make sense of separation from and reunion with offspring, friends, and companions, as well as living and diseased kin across multiple spaces and times. I also explore experiences of citizenship. These include aspirations for living, transnational strategies for drawing welfare entitlements in Russia and South Korea, and claim-making practices. I argue that these processes entail problematizing, criticizing, and reflecting on the self, all part of how older Sakhalin Koreans constitute personhood.

My study suggests that kinship, citizenship, and the politics of care are crucial components for understanding transnational mobility. Moreover, my research underscores the confluence of age, gender, and life course as crucial factors in the experience of mobility, an approach rarely taken in the study of transnational mobility. Finally, this study critically analyzes how ongoing large-scale social transformations intersect with everyday lives, and thereby provides a much needed perspective on transnational mobility. This dissertation offers a grounded understanding of how post-colonial, post-Cold War, and post-socialist transformations have shaped personhood in Northeast Asia and more broadly Eurasia.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Sungsook Lim. The fieldwork reported in this dissertation was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H09-01708.

Figure 1 is of Public Domain. Source: The Perry-Castañeda Library at the University of Texas.

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For my father and mother

Introduction

Sakhalin:

“How can they live without children? How can they have a good life alone in South Korea?”

“I heard that when women live together, they often fight with each other.”

“I decided to go to South Korea because I can receive a pension here and there.”

South Korea:

“It’s better to live separately from your children.”

“I came to South Korea because of my father.”

“We can’t have this house.” “This house will revert to the state.”

Sakhalin:

“They’re like pigs! Just eating and doing nothing. Taking whatever the state gives them.”

“I don’t understand why I’m not allowed to return. I am the son of a forced laborer.”

“Why is it elders go back and forth between here and there? They should stay in one place.”

* * *

This dissertation addresses the consequences of return migration among older Sakhalin Koreans.¹ I begin with various representative comments that are articulated and circulated among older Sakhalin Koreans in a transnational setting. These are presented to clarify the point of departure and central focus of my study. Return is a pivotal topic of older Sakhalin Koreans’ everyday conversations, concerns, and curiosity. During the period of my research (2010-2011), a number of Sakhalin Koreans I came to know migrated to South Korea, and many of those who had migrated earlier also travelled back and forth between Russia and South Korea. As the commentaries above show, older Sakhalin Koreans express their thoughts about return migration in terms of family connection and disconnection and public welfare entitlements. These processes also entail complex emotions, feelings, and

¹ The term “Sakhalin Koreans” is neither an official name nor a name used among older Sakhalin Koreans. What older Sakhalin Koreans call themselves is not static but differs depending on from whom they aim to distinguish themselves. For example, in everyday contexts when they differentiate themselves from Russians, they frequently say “*Chosŏnsaram*” (“Korean people” in Korean), in which “*Chosŏn*” indicates “Korea” before the North-South division. “*Sakhalinskii*” (adjective form of Sakhalin in Russian) and “*Sahalin [Chosŏn] saram*” (“Sakhalin [Korean] people” in Korean) are used in cases where older Sakhalin Koreans wish to express difference between themselves and Soviet Koreans from Central Asia. In addition, among young people, I heard that the words, *nash, ne nash* (“our, not ours” in Russian) were used in situations where they aimed to differentiate Sakhalin Koreans from South Koreans. In this manner, the ways Sakhalin Koreans refer to themselves are fluid. During my research among older Sakhalin Koreans, “*Chosŏnsaram*” was most frequently heard. However, it would be confusing if I referred to them as “Korean people” (“*Chosŏnsaram*” in English) in this dissertation. In order to avoid such confusion, I have selected the term “Sakhalin Koreans.”

sensibilities. Older Sakhalin Koreans are grappling with a situation that compels them to renegotiate understanding of kinship and citizenship whereby they re-discover, reflect on, and transform themselves. In situating Sakhalin Koreans' moral and political experiences shaped by the return policy, and forged within post-colonial and post-Cold War contexts, as well as within a history of socialist transformations, this ethnographic study examines how older Sakhalin Koreans' personhood is reconstituted in a transnational setting.

The end of vicissitudes?

Since 1990, when the Soviet Union and South Korea established diplomatic ties, over 4,000 Koreans on Sakhalin Island (in the Russian Far East) have migrated to South Korea. The return of older Sakhalin Koreans is often framed as diasporic migration to their ethnic homeland within a global and post-Cold War era. However, this return is distinctive because it has been sponsored not only by the South Korean government but also by another key institutional actor – the Japanese government. Throughout the post-war period, the Japanese government officially denied its involvement in the migration of Koreans to Sakhalin during the Japanese colonial era, as well as in the Koreans' evacuation from Sakhalin after the war. Also, throughout the Cold War era, despite demands for family reunification of Sakhalin Koreans and their kin in South Korea, the South Korean government did not take action. However, with a shifting political climate of the late 1980s, both governments strategically embraced humanitarian policies whereby Sakhalin Koreans were recognized as exceptional subjects to be aided. In 1995 together the two governments agreed to arrange return migration for eligible Sakhalin Koreans. Consequently, the return has been regarded as a “resolution” of the vicissitudes faced by Sakhalin Koreans because of 20th-century geopolitics in Northeast Asia. This predominant understanding of Sakhalin Koreans' return indicates “the end” of two political upheavals: colonialism and the Cold War.

However, a question remains: how has this “end” been experienced by Sakhalin Koreans? The state-centred perspective leaves little room to look at the social dimension of “the end” (cf. Kwon 2010) and the socio-political implications of “the end.”² In 2004 when I

² Pointing out that discourses concerning “after 1989” in international studies and political science homogenize (the end of) the Cold War, Kwon suggests that the end of the Cold War was not monolithic and calls for examining how certain people and local communities experienced it in particular ways. He offers critical questions as a response to the comment that “the Cold War is over,” by asking “Whose Cold War, and which aspects of the Cold War is that person talking about?”(2010:36).

learned about the return migration of older Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea, a question occurred to me: how has the end of the Cold War arrived for Sakhalin Korean people? I was also concerned with how the “end” really shapes their everyday lives. My encounters with older Sakhalin Koreans deepened these questions and inspired me to examine their ongoing lives in the context of return. It is my hope that this study will help to broaden our understanding of subjectivities and personhood in the historical junctures of post-colonial, post-Cold War, and socialist transformations. In the following section, I continue to clarify my key argument, discussing why and how return migration causes contested moral experiences through which older Sakhalin Koreans configure kinship and citizenship, thereby transforming themselves.

Why do kinship and citizenship matter in a transnational space?

In hearing older Sakhalin Koreans’ emotional accounts of return mobility during the time I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, I found that kinship and citizenship were central in their moral discourses on connection and disconnection, and inclusion and exclusion. This situation is largely derived from the return policy which limits migration entitlement based on birth year, and sponsors welfare assistance to returnees in South Korea. While the details of the policy will be examined in the following chapters, here I briefly explain why kinship and citizenship are imperative to the everyday lives of older Sakhalin Koreans in the moment of return migration.

Both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, older Sakhalin Koreans associate crossing a state border and living in South Korea with separation from and union with various kin members. Although the return operation is conducted under the aegis of an ethical idiom of humanitarianism, which in theory includes all subjects (Fassin 2010:239), not all Sakhalin Koreans are entitled to migrate to South Korea. The return project has produced ineligible subjects, including many middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans, as well as adult-children and grandchildren. It causes older Sakhalin Koreans to produce moral discourses around the parent–child dis/connection. In addition, welfare provision—distributing housing to each unit of two people in South Korea—engenders the social imaginaries of new and unexpected companionships in domestic spaces. Moreover, some people link return to a tie between the self and deceased kin. These consequences suggest that Sakhalin Koreans imagine and make

themselves into subjects who are both included in, and excluded from, certain kinship relations.

Along with kinship, citizenship is key to the process in which older Sakhalin Koreans are made into moral and political subjects. On one hand, various forms of state-sponsored material support and services in South Korea allow Sakhalin Korean returnees to feel fortunate. Returnees also become transnational agents between Russia and South Korea. On the other hand, stayees on Sakhalin feel a sense of unfairness and struggle to become legitimate returnees. In this context, stayees negotiate a sense of victimhood through which past experiences of citizenship are employed and reinterpreted. Return migration provokes aspirations for mobile living through resources provided by the nation-states of Japan and South Korea, something that appears an antidote to the lack of Russian state protection for Sakhalin Koreans.

This study is grounded in the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans situate themselves through practices, discourses, and imaginaries of kinship and citizenship in a transnational condition. I consider these experiences as the intersubjective processes of modes of being. This dissertation, which demonstrates how the return policy shapes particular transnational lives of older Sakhalin Koreans, analyzes the personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans through the lenses of kinship, citizenship, and transnationalism. The first section of this introduction explores key literatures framing my study. Second, to provide a nuanced examination of Sakhalin Koreans' social lives, I trace discussions of late socialist and post-socialist transformations. In the final section, I turn to an account of the fieldwork process.

Return as an everyday moral experience

Examining the way that transnational lives of older Sakhalin Koreans are shaped by structural conditions is one of the goals of this study, with my ethnography primarily focusing on the diverse perspectives of older Sakhalin Koreans. The actual experiences of older Sakhalin Koreans are not played out like coherent narratives and stories as if a culturally bound group of people react in unison to every single major social change. In order to analyze the return mobility and its consequences for older Sakhalin Koreans, I found that contemporary scholarship of everyday morality and ethics is a useful tool (Das 2012;

Laidlaw 2013; Lambek 2010; Zigon 2007, 2008). In recent years, anthropological studies of moral and ethical dimensions of social lives have increased, challenging predominant understandings of morality.³ The past focus rested on Kantian and Durkheimian notions of morality, which primarily look at moral forms based on the idea that people are obligated to follow rules and principles for social order. This view was also supported by the static view of a culturally bound society and community, which assumes that one culture has one morality.

The new scholarship of everyday morality has offered a different analytical lens, informed by (neo-)Aristotelian virtue theory and Foucault's ideas of ethics. In particular, the Foucauldian notion of ethics, which informs the relation to the self and the cultivation of the self, allows us to examine a mode of becoming certain kinds of moral and ethical subjects. Through employing phenomenological, ontological, and first-person perspectives, this literature approaches morality as being-in-the-world, in which the central focus is given to a modality of moral experiences (Zigon and Throops 2014:2).

Within this literature, I find the analytical tool of moral subjectivity to be useful in my discussion of older Sakhalin Koreans' experiences of return. Laidlaw argues ethical subjects are made not only through the ways in which subjects act on the self in power relations, but also through the "active processes of reflective self-formation" (Laidlaw 2013:101). This rests on Foucault's discussion of how one becomes an ethical being through the reflexive enactment of stepping back: one detaches from oneself, establishes the self as an object, and reflects on the self (cited in Laidlaw 2013:102–103). This reflexive act is played out within a situation where subjects choose to act given limited possibilities. Through such acts, subjects become and are recognized as moral beings (Faubion 2001; Zigon 2008). Moreover, as scholars in this field maintain, the processes of self-fashioning always involve others (persons and objects). Hence, the analysis of subject-formation attempts to highlight the "modality of being-together-with" and "relational-being" (Zigon and Throops: 2014). This perspective echoes the anthropological understanding of subjectivities that considers the intersubjective and relational nature of subjectivity (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007). Based on these discussions, I consider return migration as an

³ One of the controversial debates in the anthropological study of morality and ethics is that the definitions of these two concepts are varied and unsettling. Even though a distinction is mentioned, scholars often use these two words interchangeably. I use the word "moral" in the following discussions of everyday moral experiences.

everyday moral experience, and examine how older Sakhalin Koreans' personhood is transformed through return migration.

My point is clarified by considering the works of two scholars—Jarrett Zigon (2007, 2008) and Cheryl Mattingly (2014). Zigon points out that morality is not simply about “right,” “wrong,” “good,” and “bad,” on which the classic sense of morality focused. He calls for careful analysis of what is moral to certain people, taking an example of moral talk among people in Moscow, in which they use descriptive words such as “fair and unfair,” “dishonest,” “cruel,” “steal,” and “lie” (Zigon 2008:16). It is suggested that morals are approached as “the acquired attitudes, emotions, and bodily dispositions of a person throughout their life” and that a moral person is “both morally self-critical, as well as critical of her social world” (2008:16). Referring to the concept of a “moral breakdown,” Zigon discusses how in moments when everyday unreflexive practices become problematic, people work on the self through an “ethical” response to the problematic issues. His analytical framework suggests that the processes of becoming subjects include not only the ways in which subjects encounter moral dilemmas but also their subsequent acts, which indicate the ways they keep going.

This perspective contributes to my examination of how specific moral terms, emotions, and attitudes are articulated among older Sakhalin Koreans as they criticize themselves and others living in their social world. However, Zigon's separation of unreflexive practice (moral) and reflexive enactment (ethical) has limits regarding the understanding of everyday morality (Das 2012; Laidlaw 2013). This differentiation is derived from the understanding of everyday routine actions as habits. However, habits are part of everyday life, which is a site of moral striving (Das 2012).⁴ This point is further discussed by Mattingly (2014). Demonstrating the ways in which Afro-American mothers become moral beings as they struggle regarding the life possibilities of disabled children, she argues that transformations take place not in the domain of crisis but in the everyday. Mattingly proposes “moral laboratories,” arguing that “the everyday moral” involves

⁴ Discussing how the focus on intentionality and agency tends to reduce mundane actions to habits, Veena Das (2012) proposes that everyday habits are also ethical work, into which reflective moments are blended. For example, the practice of giving gift entails the danger of undermining others through humiliation, as well as possibilities of providing help according to others' needs. Das suggests that a mode of performance of giving gift employs “a register of normativity other than simply fulfilling a social obligation” (2012:141).

experimental aspects and new experiences through which the subjects engage in reflection, critique, and transformations.

Drawing on these analytical tools, I explore the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans encounter unexpected situations and engage in their ongoing lives, which are experimental and new. I also examine how, in this process, they engage in acts such as reflections on and critiques of themselves, others, and the society (and state) they relate to. My study offers an analysis and understanding of how subjectivity is formed and moral experiences are forged in the domains of kinship and citizenship, to which I turn in the next section.

Subject-making through kinship

This study considers the kinship of older Sakhalin Koreans; however, investigating the forms and rules of kinship between Russia and Korea or between socialist and Confucianist family ideologies is not my main focus. Such a static perspective is criticized by Yan, who studied changing kin relations in northeast China for three decades. Yan contends that the predominant analytical frameworks of lineage theory and Confucianism have prevented researchers from focusing on social change and the individual emotional aspects of sociality (Yan 2001, 2003). The focus on emotionality and ambiguity (Peletz 2001), as part of the recent kinship framework of relatedness (Carsten 2002, 2004), encourages researchers to demonstrate the processes entailed in individuals' social relations.⁵ My study contributes to work on relatedness while employing the analytical tools of everyday moral experience to examine how family separation and union are played out among older Sakhalin Koreans.

Bringing moral subject-formations into the kinship domain helps us look at individual sensibility and acts rather than at fixed forms of kinship. Taking the example of childrearing, Zigon suggests that it is not only the practice of child socialization but also a mutual process of becoming a certain kind of person and a moral being (Zigon 2008:104).

⁵ An overview of anthropological scholarship of kinship has been discussed by Carsten (2004), Franklin and Mackinnon (2001), Peletz (1995), and Yanagisako and Collier (1987). Carsten proposes the concept of "relatedness" for a broader analysis of the processes of sociality rather than studying static rules and forms. For example, this concept allows us to study how kinship is created as it involves emotions, as well as power and difference. In addition, the concept of relatedness helps us to examine how local senses of what is considered "given" (nature) and what is considered "made" (culture) are produced (Carsten 2004).

This point rests on Faubion's argument that kinship is considered as a system within which one "qualifies the self as a subject through its relation to others" and specifies the self "in the particularity of its relations to particular others" (2001:11–12). Faubion also discusses how because this ethical system gives space for reflection, kinship both limits and produces possibilities for the self and one's relations to others.

This perspective is paramount in the literature on adoption. In particular, Signe Howell's framework of kinning, which draws in part on Faubion's argument, analyzes the ways in which Norwegian adoptive parents incorporate "foreign" children (others) into kin as they also make themselves into parents (2006:64). This analysis helps me to consider older Sakhalin Koreans' acts around separation and union as part of kinning in transnational settings. However, the Sakhalin Koreans' case is slightly different from that of adoptive parents; rather than incorporating *others* into kin, they include *themselves* in and exclude *themselves* from kin. Interestingly, I found that these acts are similar to adoptees' performative and imaginary acts of negotiating with whom they dis/connect.

Carsten's (2007) discussion of adoptees' process of searching for their birth kin is useful for my analysis. Carsten argues that although information and knowledge about family members make adoptees feel a sense of connectedness, the ways in which such knowledge is activated vary. Some move on trying to find birth kin immediately based on new information, while others limit themselves by stopping and postponing the next steps of searching for family (Carsten 2007:418–422). I consider that adoptees' acts of allowing and limiting themselves to search for family members reflect how negotiation of connection and disconnection entails management and care of the self and subjects' own acts.

Based on these discussions, I analyze what kinds of specific sources and acts are employed by older Sakhalin Koreans in the processes of making themselves into subjects of separation and union in transnational contexts. Moreover, by showing that such processes involve diverse kin and non-kin (fictive kin), as well as the living and deceased, I highlight how older Sakhalin Koreans' fluid personhood is negotiated and reconfigured.

Subject-making through transnational citizenship

The return migration of Sakhalin Koreans has been promoted by the Japanese and South Korean governments. Rather than religious organizations, transnational institutions, or non-governmental organizations, the two governments are the major actors that sponsor welfare assistance. In addition, public welfare in Russia serves as a significant element that shapes mobility of older Sakhalin Koreans. Considering this specific condition, I examine the role of states in return. My approach to the state refers to people's everyday experiences of the state, authority, and power (Das and Poole 2001). Based on this perspective, I draw on the literature of citizenship to explore the subject-formation of Sakhalin Koreans through various experiences of citizenship in a transnational space.

Considering the effect of shifting technologies on the notion and experiences of citizenship, anthropologists approach citizenship through a lens of claim-making practices and subject-formation in domestic and transnational contexts (Das 2011; Holston 2009; Ong 2003; Phillips 2011). As Adriana Petryna discusses, scholars examine how subjects' desires, claims, and needs are negotiated within the context of shifting criteria of citizenship (Petryna 2003:254). Offering the idea of "biological citizenship," Petryna (2003) studies the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine, where those exposed to radiation have struggled (and failed) to become legitimate bodies of state protection by using wounded bodies, expressing suffering, and employing medical knowledge and documents. Petryna's study also shows how those subjects' claim-making practices are shaped within the domains of a shifting market economy, a bureaucratic system, and scientific knowledge.

Drawing on these discussions, I propose the concept of "transnational welfare citizenship." I use this concept to examine how older Sakhalin Koreans become transnational agents by utilizing their citizenship (and welfare entitlement) in Russia and South Korea. I also explore how immobile subjects are produced and how they struggle to be legitimate returnees. In addition, I draw on two approaches to analyze emotional and affective experiences of citizenship, and the socio-political implications of this process. The first is Navaro-Yashin's examination of affect (2009) among Turkish-Cypriots in Northern Cyprus. In the post-conflict context, Turkish-Cypriots migrate to and live in the space former Greeks residents left leaving behind their possessions. Navaro-Yashin demonstrates how the actual practices of Turkish-Cypriots, including moral discourse and reflexive evaluations of the

objects of ruin that constitute subjects, produce feelings and an affect of melancholy. She also examines how these processes shape subject-formation. The second is Susana Narotzky's argument (2012) about the modes of provision that inform how people configure historically embedded political relations with states and other institutions. By adding the literature of citizenship into these discussions, I am concerned with two points. How are specific affects and emotions involved in the process of return? How are negotiation and reconfiguration of citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans shaped by structural power?

My discussion of transnational welfare citizenship engages with the scholarship on citizenship, but also differs from the previous studies. While the new literature on citizenship suggests that nation and ethnicity are no longer the source for claim-making or legal and ethical criteria of citizenship, I nevertheless show that ethnic and national dimensions of political subjectivity serve as a source for claim-making among older Sakhalin Koreans. Drawing on the discussion of social citizenship (Yalçın-Heckmann 2011), which considers how diverse subjects struggle for social rights (such as labor, housing, health care, and education) in post-colonial, post-socialist, as well as transnational contexts, I analyze older Sakhalin Koreans' subjectivity within these social formations. This analysis contributes to the ongoing debate about the relationship between social and political citizenship in transnational contexts.

My analysis of the personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans forged through kinship and citizenship practices shows the processes of becoming subjects of connection and disconnection, inclusion and exclusion, and the subjects' sense of belonging across diverse times and spaces. Through the prism of everyday moral experiences, I show the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate the kinds of persons they are and should be. This process also involves a reflection on what kinds of persons they might have been (Mattingly 2014). Ultimately, this study attempts to link these ongoing and contested processes of negotiating personhood to larger social transformations.

Unsettling return

Along with the study of kinship and citizenship, I situate my study within studies of transnational return migration. My study especially draws on qualitative studies of return mobility, and comparative studies of return programs in post-Cold War contexts. With these

frameworks, my dissertation offers an analysis of the return policy of Sakhalin Koreans and of transnational social lives of older Sakhalin Koreans.

The return migration of Sakhalin Koreans is part of the global-scale return mobility seen in many places (King and Christou 2011). Considering the growing and diverse forms of return mobility, King and Christou (2011) offer six types of return mobility: (1) short-term visits, (2) trial staying, (3) the return mobility of children, (4) second-generation (adult) return, (5) return in adulthood (e.g. post-retirement migration), and (6) return to ancestral homes. In the literature on return (and diaspora), scholars demonstrate the ambiguities and ambivalence of return rather than the classic sense of nostalgia for home. For example, on one hand, transnational subjects utilize the social capital of “ethnic” substances; on the other hand, new differentiation is produced. In addition, ethnographic studies have demonstrated how “home” is constructed by actual peoples’ practices (e.g., Brah 1996; Schein 1999; Winland 2002; Svasek 2002). Anthropologists’ attention to actual practices of return have shown that homecoming is a challenging and unsettling process (Markowitz and Stefansson 2004).

While my ethnographic materials highlight the contested practices and meanings around return among older Sakhalin Koreans, my discussion differs from prior works. In the literature of return migration, attention is paid to transnational agents, and their practices are understood either as adjustment to the culture of “home” or as acts to maintain the culture of “the other home” where they grew up. As King and Christou precisely point out, the focus on “immigration” is derived from an assimilation framework (2011:455) in which ethnicity and nation are central to the analysis. I do not dismiss the dimension of ethnicity, but my task is to reveal in what situations ethnicity becomes (less) imperative, (de-) emphasized, and utilized among older Sakhalin Koreans. I link these practices to experiences of citizenship among mobile and immobile subjects beyond the dichotomy of “home” and “homeland.”

I reveal the particularity of the return program of Sakhalin Koreans as drawing on comparative analysis of return programs in the post-Cold War era. Compared to other diasporic Koreans’ return migration to South Korea since 1990, the case of Sakhalin Koreans is distinctive. While the South Korean government offers diasporic Koreans such as Korean Chinese and Soviet Koreans, special visas and statuses to access employment as a

means to satisfy the nation's economic interests (Skrentny, Chan, Fox, and Kim 2009:49–51), Sakhalin Korean returnees are granted citizenship and welfare entitlements. The return program of Sakhalin Koreans may be more similar to the cases of Germany, Israel, and Greece, in which institutional return migration programs are managed and the rights of citizenship and welfare support are granted to co-ethnic migrants from the former Soviet Union (Skrentny, Chan, Fox, and Kim 2009: Voutira 2011). However, Germany requires the subjects to take language exams (von Koppenfels 2009), while Greece judges “returnees” *after* subjects enter Greece and undergo interviews to assess if subjects have “national consciousness” (Voutira 2011:259).⁶ Such “cultural” affinities are not expected to be performed by Sakhalin Korean returnees to South Korea. Each country has different policies in different times, but I suggest that the institutional recognition of co-ethnic returnees and the automatic citizenship granted to return migrants shape specific return policies.

In addition, the identification of returnees with citizenship rights are mediated by histories and geopolitics, as Joppke and Rosenhek suggest (2009:95). For instance, Germany recognizes “returnees” who were from former communist countries but not those from Denmark, Italy, and France (Joppke and Rosenhek 2009:83). Germany's return program a product of Cold War politics, was designed to “rehabilitate” co-ethnic subjects who had been expelled as a result of World War II.⁷ Israel's return policy includes Jews regardless of geographic place, a fact defined by the idea of Zionism and also by political interests to protect the state from conflict with Arabs of Palestine (2009:79). I build on such studies of return in my analysis of the particular politics and histories that make the return program of Sakhalin Koreans distinctive (chapter 1).

By analyzing politico-historical structures of return programs, my ethnographic study aims to reveal specific transnational and global contexts of the Sakhalin Korean's return program. I also examine how the specific policy unsettles the transnational processes of older Sakhalin Koreans.

⁷ In addition, in the case of Germany, the subjects from the former Soviet Union are especially expected to perform their past experiences of ‘suffering’ in the Soviet Union while many of those subjects are not able to speak German (Mandel 2008:210–217).

Bringing aging into transnational mobility

My study offers a broader perspective on transnational mobility, especially by bringing the aging dimension into the analysis of transnationalism. In qualitative studies of transnational migration, in which the primary subjects are working-age adults, the dimension of aging has been little considered. Warnes and Williams (2006) suggest looking at specific processes of aging subjects' transnational migration and of being aged in a particular space, a subject they examine in the post-retirement migration among middle-class older people from Northern and Western Europe to Southern Europe. Otherwise, elderly people are often depicted as remaining in rural regions and at home, where grandmothers take care of grandchildren as a result of the absence of working-age parents.⁸ Such realities are indeed seen in many regions. Many older people experience transnationalism through their adult children who work overseas. However, these depictions prevent a deeper and broader understanding of the lives of elderly people in different transnational contexts.

Just a few studies demonstrate older people's transnational migration. Here I consider Sarah Lamb's extensive ethnographic study of the migration of Indian elders to the United States (2002, 2009). Lamb shows that elderly Indian people negotiate intergenerational care relations with adult children and new life in the U.S. through their moral discourses on "modern" and "traditional," as well as "American" and "Indian." While the elderly Indian people express that independent life in the U.S. represents personal freedom, they face hardship as they feel that they lose intimacy (love) and continue to play the role of a caregiver, taking care of grandchildren to make them "Indian." By demonstrating elderly people's sense of self, Lamb offers an understanding of aging subjects' moral lives in a transnational space.

Like Lamb's work, my study also considers elderly subjects as transnational agents. In contrast, however, my focus is more on negotiations around kinship and citizenship practices negotiated between multiple nation-states. Qualitative studies on the relationship between aging and transnational migration have tended to assume that elderly people have a fixed idea about ideal forms of care or have been engaged in certain modes of exchange with adult children before they migrate. Empirical and ethnographic attention to diverse forms of

⁸ King and Vullnetari's work (2006) is one of the few in-depth analysis of the impacts of young people's emigration on older people's lives in a rural region of Albania.

transnational migration and transnational processes *in mid and later life* is imperative to broaden a perspective of personhood among elderly people in transnational and global contexts. My study shows how the institutional entitlement to return affects complex kinship and citizenship practices between returnees and stayees, and I consider if only relationships with adult children are imperative to elderly people when they migrate to a different country. Moreover, I try to answer how particular practices, imaginaries, and understandings of transnational migration are generated when nation-states offer welfare services in the destination countries. Finally, I highlight how aging and life course affect elderly people's agency and subjectivities in transnational contexts. My ethnographic study based on these questions will contribute to broadening the understanding of the experiences of transnationalism among aging subjects.

Altogether, I explore how the specific return project shapes a particular return policy and subsequent experience of negotiating kinship and citizenship among Sakhalin Koreans. This study also underscores how age and life course affect the experience of mobility.

Notes on Sakhalin Koreans: Making and unmaking transitions

This dissertation draws on research conducted in 2010. Because my analysis is based on key moral and political aspects of older Sakhalin Koreans' lives I came to know in 2010. I do not show a whole picture of their lives. However, this does not mean that the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans articulate moral discourses and negotiate various meanings are not historically shaped. Considering my ethnographic material through the lens of late socialism and post-socialism, the following sections provide a nuanced examination and understanding of how older Sakhalin Koreans' social lives are influenced by their particular historical experiences. By doing so, I contend that older Sakhalin Koreans' contemporary moral experiences in the moment of return are not understood by a perspective that assumes their lives to be a product of the mix of two homogenous cultures and spaces, such as "the Soviet" and "Korean" cultures. For decades, they have inhabited a social world that has been filled with moral pluralism.

Late socialism: Governing *byt*

Ethnographic studies on post-socialist societies in Eurasia have widely explored subjectivities in a time of uncertainty after 1989. In order to analyze the diverse experiences of transitions, this literature often traces how local societies were “Sovietized” in the 1920s to 1930s, emphasizing the way decades of socialism shaped diverse communities. Although this perspective reveals the larger social contexts of transition around 1989 and the fall of the USSR, it has limits when it comes to understanding older Sakhalin Koreans’ life trajectories. I will clarify this through a brief explanation of the different political histories of Sakhalin Koreans and Soviet Koreans.⁹ People often confuse Sakhalin Koreans with Soviet Koreans, who were deported from the Primorskii Krai (the Maritime Provinces) to Central Asia in 1937 as part of Stalin’s purges and ethnic cleansings.¹⁰ Simply put, considering the international history of the territory of Southern Sakhalin (*Karafuto* in Japanese), which was Japan’s territory from 1905 to 1945, for several decades until after World War II Koreans on South Sakhalin were not subjects of Soviet sovereign power, but instead subjects under Japan’s colonial regime.

⁹ The term “Soviet Koreans” is not their official name. They call themselves “*Koresarūimi*” (*Koryō saram* in standard Korean); the history of *Koryō saram* has been studied by King and Kim (2001) and Chang and Kim (2003).

¹⁰ The ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans view Soviet Koreans are diverse and situational. Based on my interviews with and observations of older Sakhalin Koreans’ daily conversations, I found that for older Sakhalin Koreans, Soviet Koreans were seen as having a higher social status, and this view has been historically and politically shaped. After the southern part of Sakhalin was returned to the Soviet Union, the Soviet officials sent Soviet Koreans to Sakhalin. Most of them served as local communist party members, school teachers (in the Korean schools on Sakhalin), and in general joined the local intelligentsia. Thus, it can be assumed that the government expected these Soviet Koreans to play a role as social engineers in helping Sakhalin Koreans adjust to Soviet society by utilizing ethnic ties. (The majority of them returned to Central Asia after local Korean schools in Sakhalin were closed in 1964.) From Sakhalin Koreans’ perspectives, those Soviet Koreans (who spoke fluent Russian) were viewed as more “Sovietized” than themselves. Their distinctive political subjectivities have been partly produced in this political domain. In chapter 5, I will describe the different relations of Soviet Koreans and Sakhalin Koreans with North Korea in the late socialist period.

My Sakhalin Korean informants expressed “difference” in diverse ways. For example, on one hand, one middle-aged man perceived the different political positions of Soviet and Sakhalin Koreans during the Soviet period in his account of Sakhalin Koreans being surveillance carried out by one Soviet Korean woman, who was sent by the central government. On the other hand, in response to my question about any differences he feels between the two, he answered: “we are all Koreans just the same.” Another example is that when recollecting how she had met Soviet Koreans, one elderly woman said: “those people are very like Soviet people. They are confident.” Moreover, in everyday conversation, differences in food consumption are most frequently discussed: Soviet Koreans eat much more meat, milk (and dairy products), and bread, while Sakhalin Koreans eat more fish, seafood, rice, and spicier food. What is more, older Sakhalin Koreans differentiate Soviet Koreans by the language that they use; they consider the Korean that Soviet Koreans speak to be ‘poorer’ and ‘stranger’ than the Korean they speak.

Moreover, narratives tracing how seventy years of socialism shaped local subjectivities do not fit into the life trajectories of older Sakhalin Koreans. On the southern part of Sakhalin, there was an elastic transition after the war (in 1945). Even though south Sakhalin reverted to Soviet territory, the administrative systems were not all transformed overnight. Even the evacuation of Japanese people from South Sakhalin was an ongoing process carried out until 1949 (chapter 1). Furthermore, among the older Sakhalin Koreans' life histories that I collected, memories of the Stalin era were rarely recounted. The era recurrently invoked in recollecting their youth was "the Khrushchev era." I do not claim that the Stalin era and its social contexts were irrelevant. Rather, I suggest that in contrast to elderly Soviet citizens, including Soviet Koreans and those living in Provincial Russia (e.g., Paxson 2005; Rogers 2009; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003), older Sakhalin Koreans' social lives are punctuated by different historical and social events. The post-Stalin (post-1953) and late socialist period play a key and distinctive role.

The dominant Western political science scholarship on the post-war social conditions in the eras of Nikita Khrushchev (1953–1964) and Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) featured "thaw" and "stagnation." However, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have shed light on the late socialist period from the 1960s to the 1980s as a significant subject of analysis for understanding social change in the Soviet Union.¹¹ Reviewing studies of late socialism, Dobson (2011) summarizes that while the Stalin period is characterized as the moment when coercive power was exercised in the domains of politics and economy, in the post-Stalin period, *byt* —meaning "everyday life" in Russian—became a site of governance. Scholars have demonstrated how various changes occurred in everyday life. These include the growing consumption of music, art, and goods from the West (Yurchack 2005) and tourism in other countries (Gorsuch and Koenker 2006). Scholars also shed light on shifting family life, gender roles, and domestic life, focusing on the effects of a spatial and architectural change from communal living to separate apartments (Reid 2010; Attwood 2004). In spite of the official promotion of family unity in the late socialist era, contested spheres of private, moral lives, such as growing divorce rates and family conflicts are also

¹¹ The new literature also considers the continuities from the Stalin period. The study of social change in the late Stalin period (e.g. Fürst ed. 2006) helps to provide a deeper understanding of late socialism.

examined (Field 2007).¹² Moreover, scholars have documented how welfare was enhanced in this period, as material incentives were offered to the needy, such as women and children. Dobson (2011) states that the central point in these studies is to show how the notion of individual and relative freedoms emerged. Rather than emphasizing at retreat of the state power, scholars have explored how different technologies of governance were utilized to shape the new Soviet person; at the same time, these studies have revealed that the official plans to govern everyday life were inconsistent and in practice brought about unexpected consequences.

These works have helped me contextualize older Sakhalin Koreans' lives on Sakhalin. However, the majority of the research subjects in these works had social backgrounds similar to those of the intelligentsia, Komsomol (the communist youth league) and party organs, and those living in Moscow and St. Petersburg.¹³ How such social backgrounds, which "we might call it class" (Dobson 2011:912), shaped people's experiences of change in the late socialist period is little examined. For example, studying the working-class young people in a "closed" city of Ukraine, the site of the biggest missile factory in the USSR, Zhuk (2010) maintains that working-class youth desired and consumed culture from the West in a different way than those of the Komsomol youth in Russian urban centers. Desiring and consuming culture had a counteractive aspect as a response to political discourses such as nationalism, Russification, and anti-Semitism. Moreover, as Dobson (2011) suggests, consideration of other political and social subjects (such as Gulags and kolkhoz farmers) points to different trajectories of social change and forms of governing and subjectivities. For example, Round's study (2006) shows how Gulag survivors in Magadan were constantly deprived of various social entitlements and support from their families throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In the study of indigenous Nivkh people in Northern Sakhalin, Grant also highlights the impacts of the local economic restructuring

¹² I have selected scholars, who mostly conduct research in Russian contexts, but Dobson's article (2011) discusses the large body of literature on late socialism.

¹³ Based on archival research in Moscow, Hanya (2004) found that in 1957 the local communist party committee on Sakhalin suggested that the central committee allow young Sakhalin Koreans who did not have Soviet citizenship be permitted to become members of the Komsomol; however, this was rejected. Hanya mentions that it was not clear whether the membership criteria changed during the 1960s, but citizenship was an important factor for membership in the Komsomol. In my interviews with older Sakhalin Koreans, I did not hear any comments about the Komsomol and did not meet any Sakhalin Koreans who identified themselves as members. When I casually asked what the Komsomol was, one middle-aged man simply mentioned: "those people get better jobs."

through forced resettlements from the 1960s to the 1970s. In small towns, kolkhozes were shut down and a range of social services decreased (Grant 1995:124–133). These studies offer a broader understanding of late socialist change among individual subjects and communities on the political, economic, and geographic peripheries.

Although my study explores contemporary daily lives among older Sakhalin Koreans, as with the ethnographic studies of *byt*, I discuss how older Sakhalin Koreans' social lives in the late socialist era were shaped in particular ways. This analysis is situated in the ongoing comparative study of late socialism and post-socialism. In addition, this is presented to provide a more nuanced understanding of Sakhalin Koreans' moral and political experiences in an era of return. In the next section, I show that everyday life was a site where older Sakhalin Koreans lived through moral plurality.

Living through moral plurality

Here I briefly touch upon older Sakhalin Koreans' everyday lives on late socialist Sakhalin by focusing on three key domains: (1) housing; (2) household economies and labor; and (3) family and gender.¹⁴ However, as Dobson suggests, oral histories of late socialism are not free from subjects' specific experiences of, and reflections on the post-socialist transition (2011:921); my discussion (which draws on interviews with older Sakhalin Koreans) also contains the subjects' interpretations and reflections. Thus, in a strict sense, this section does not analyze a form of governing. Instead, I detail the social context of older Sakhalin Koreans' everyday moral lives.

First, studies of housing during late socialism have often demonstrated the shift from communal apartments to separate apartments during the Khrushchev era, and examined how the new domestic spaces affected people's sense of freedom, individualism, and consumption (Attwood 2004; Reid 2010). However, Sakhalin Koreans' experiences have

¹⁴ While many studies on post-socialism have considered religion as one of the crucial domains where power and subjectivity are played out, the influence of religion on older Sakhalin Koreans' everyday lives on late Soviet Sakhalin was negligible. In none of the houses I visited did I see a *krasnyi ugol* ("red corner" in Russian) or religious icons (cf. Paxson 2005). Among the older Sakhalin Koreans whom I met, two people regularly went to a church on Sakhalin, while there were several returnees in South Korea who identified themselves as Christians or Buddhists. However, all of them had started to practise religion after 1990 under the influence of South Korean missionaries on Sakhalin and/or after migration. For older Sakhalin Koreans, family, gender, household economy, labor, and citizenship were central sites of the everydayness in which they experienced various changes during the late socialist time.

been different (see chapter 4). They did not live in communal apartments.¹⁵ In the post-war southern part of Sakhalin, many continued to live in Japanese-style houses made of wood. They gradually rebuilt (and newly built) those houses with new materials, such as cement. Older Sakhalin Koreans say that they made houses “the Soviet way,” which was more substantial than that of poorly heated Japanese houses. Many Koreans lived in the “personal houses.” In the 1970s and 1980s, when additional separate apartments were constructed and young Sakhalin Koreans (now middle-aged) were integrated into industrial sectors, these Sakhalin Koreans were allocated flats. For both generations of Sakhalin Koreans, having a personal house with a garden symbolized wealth. At the same time, they conceived of the shift to living in a separate apartment as being “civilized.”

Second, another domain of everyday life that is little considered in the literature on late socialism is the household economy and labor (see chapters 2, 4, and 5). In the post-war context of Sakhalin, working-age Sakhalin Korean men continued to work in coal mines, which had operated since the Japanese period, as well as in logging. Some women were employed in the public sector, such as in cleaning and textile work. However, Koreans also engaged in entrepreneurial activities, including setting up photo studios, barbershops, and retail.¹⁶ Many women who were not hired in factories and offices worked in farming by using gardens near their houses not only for maintaining their family’s subsistence, but also for small-scale business. Even the men and women working in the public sectors gained additional income through commercial farming.¹⁷ For both men and women, these economic activities were a crucial source of household income.

¹⁵ I did not encounter any communal apartments in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and did not hear any information about communal apartments from older Sakhalin Koreans.

¹⁶ Considering the official discourses during the late socialist period, in particular under Brezhnev (1964–1982), Zhuk (2010:9–11) states that the attention of the Soviet leadership shifted away from heavy industries to the production of consumer goods, based on Brezhnev’s proposed idea of “socialist consumption,” which attempted to construct a better and more productive society than capitalism could. At the ideological level, the Soviet leadership planned to invest in consumer sectors such as foods and textiles, as they considered the period to be “the last stage before the final phase of Communist social formation” (2010:10). But in reality, socialist consumption did not go as planned.

¹⁷ Paku (1990), a Sakhalin Korean man, mentions in his memoir that the management of farming became common among Korean women, particularly after Khrushchev’s promotion of “personal farming” (Paku 1990:28–29). However, I assume that this public decision was not the only factor that encouraged women to work in farming. For example, one middle-aged man told me that right after the Soviet army had landed on Sakhalin, his parents started to sell vegetables to the Soviet army. Moreover, in response to my question as to why they engaged in farming, the elderly people simply explained: “We did what we used to do” and “What else could we do?” These statements indicate that women engaged in farming partly because it was the only

These entrepreneurial activities, which contributed to manage their livelihoods, served as a source of moral values of framing their household economies, and also for their everyday existence. Older Sakhalin Koreans understood that their economic activities for daily consumption were different from the majority of Soviet people on Sakhalin, who migrated to Sakhalin after the war and worked in the more varied public and production sectors. While seeing personal farming and entrepreneurial work as occupying a lower position in the occupational hierarchy, many Koreans (both elders and middle-aged people) are proud of how their economic activities generated cash and wealth and contributed to the local economy.

Finally, family and gender roles are domains of everyday life in which Sakhalin Koreans experienced social change in the late socialist context (see chapters 2 and 3). In particular, older Sakhalin Koreans use the Soviet moral trope of *kul'turnyi* ("cultured") in their evaluative descriptions of their generational experiences of gender roles and family lives. According to Volkov (1999), the concept of *kul'turnost'* ("cultured-ness") became a robust ideological term for the Soviet Union's modernizing project during the Stalin period, especially in the late 1930s. It invoked the idea of so-called "high" culture, and civilized manners and behaviors which were associated with modern urban forms of life. The concept of *kul'turnost'* encompasses a range of everyday activities including hygiene, clean appearance, a level of literacy (in Russian), being educated, and speech acts. Following industrialization in the 1930s, the authorities were concerned that an influx of peasants into urban cities would bring about "disorder" and "anomie." In this context, the concept of *kul'turnost'* was strategically deployed to make peasants and the subjects of "backwardness" (often signifying indigenous people) into modern urban subjects who would be invested in the new ideals of socialist society. In addition, the state reassessed how it dealt with the desire for personal possessions and social status, both of which had been disparaged as bourgeois values and practices in the early years of the Soviet Union. The new ideology of *kul'turnost'* created space for individual consumption. Volkov argues that the ideology of *kul'turnost'* was employed for pragmatic and ideological goals: namely, by transforming

thing that they knew how to do. More details about Sakhalin Korean women's experiences of labor are discussed in chapter 2.

individuals into civilized subjects through managing everyday lives, the authorities and state aimed to fashion public order (Volkov:1999).

Older Sakhalin Koreans express this moral trope when they talk about their family lives and gender relations. For example, compared to the elderly generation, middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans explain that having fewer children and living separately from one's parents represents a more civilized way of life. In addition, many older Sakhalin Korean men and women told me that Russia is a country where people "respect women," which is a "civilized" thing to do. Women's employment in the public sector and political domains is seen as one of the examples of a civilized way of life. Men offering help to women, connoting the protection of the physically "weak," is considered civilized. Elderly Korean women invoke the idea of "civilized" from their perspective of times when such practices were absent from their own lives. However, the way that middle-aged people (both women and men) perceive and use this moral trope is slightly different. They invoke the moral idiom of being "civilized" as they compare themselves not only to their parents' generation, but also to South Koreans whom they encountered after 1990. For example, many asked me why South Koreans do not consider "women to be human beings."

Having considered key domains of everyday life among older Sakhalin Koreans in the late socialist period, this section suggests that Sakhalin Koreans have lived through moral pluralism within various everyday domains. In this process, older Sakhalin Koreans were conscious of "what Soviet people do," as they stated when referring to local Sakhaliners, many of whom moved to the southern part of Sakhalin from the mainland of the Soviet Union after the war.¹⁸ From a structural perspective, this shows the way in which Sakhalin Koreans adapted themselves to the new environment and became modern Soviet subjects. But if I consider Sakhalin Koreans' perspectives, I can also conclude that they negotiated and understood moral values in their everyday lives "by placing themselves in a specific relation to an exemplar" (Laidlaw 2013:83). This point is helpful in considering how older Sakhalin Koreans managed their lives on Sakhalin; they were shaped by subtle and everyday historical experiences involving relations to social bodies of Soviet people. Their particular encounters with change are also seen in their assessment of the transition in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, which will be discussed next.

¹⁸ In contrast, they tend to view the indigenous people on Sakhalin as "poor" and "uncivilized" people.

The door was opened: The (in)articulation of transition

In the early stages of my research, I was interested in how older Sakhalin Koreans lived and how they would talk about their lives from the late 1980s to the early 1990s in comparison to the findings of ethnographic studies of the early years of post-socialism. However, these moments were already one of the various pasts for older Sakhalin Koreans by the time of my stay in 2010. In fact, it was seldom discussed in daily conversations and interviews.

This in-articulation, however, does not mean that Sakhalin Koreans do not reflect on the transition. They assessed it in particular ways. I found elderly Sakhalin Korean women's reactions unique. For example, when talking about their life histories, many women did not mention the late 1980s and the last years of the Soviet Union as punctuating their lives. This made me more curious about how they refer to this period. However, "perestroika" or "collapse of the Soviet Union" were the only words that I knew. Thus, I experimentally asked: "How was life during perestroika?" and "How was the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union?" Many elderly women did not recognize the words as signifying a particular time in recent history. Instead, the elderly women (and the majority of older Sakhalin Koreans) referenced a shift in their ties to South Korea that came about in the late 1980s. They preferred their accounts of their first visits to South Korea by saying, "When the door [to South Korea] was opened." After this, I used this phrase and every interviewee immediately understood to which historical period I was referring. In addition, it is important to note that the phrase "when the door was opened" implicitly entails praise for Mikhail Gorbachev. Almost all of the older Sakhalin Koreans (both elders and middle-aged people) whom I met told me: "Gorbachev did a good job!" and "Thanks to Gorbachev, the door was opened." Some elderly women raised their thumbs in approval.

While I heard such positive expressions, I was still interested in how older Sakhalin Koreans experienced and talked about changing economic and material lives. As to my question about whether they had faced a shortage of goods during the time of the transition, many elderly women clearly said: "No. Nothing special happened. It was not difficult at

all.”¹⁹ One middle-aged man jokingly told me: “People would say ‘there is nothing.’ But my refrigerator and pantry were full of food.” He laughed.

While dramatic change was not strongly felt in everyday economic life, several elderly women perceived that a large social change had taken place. This was expressed by a non-verbal act. They turned over their palms and said, “*Sesang* (“the world” in Korean) became like this.” This indicates a large-scale transition that is uncontrollable. Elderly women would say: “Since the world became like this, the climate of Sakhalin has been getting hotter and South Korea has been getting colder.” In this way, they perceived the transition as associated with other large-scale changes. The middle-aged people frequently said: “communism (or socialism) became capitalism” in a conversational context, where they talked about how the politics, society, and economy of Russia are moving “forward” or “backward.”

In these conversations about the transition, I did not encounter nostalgia for the socialist past. Considering the lack of nostalgia, I often asked what they would think if Russia reembraced socialism. Furrowing their brows and shaking their heads, they said: “No!” Rather than providing an explanation for the reason behind saying “no,” many turned to evaluative talk. For example, they reflected: “Russia would not develop and become like South Korea and Japan.” While I often heard them reminisce about the “good” days in their youth, the “good” was not the socialist system itself (see chapter 1). While older Sakhalin Koreans sense large-scale social change in diverse ways, overall the radical changes signalled with the transition onset of “glasnost” and “perestroika,” including the opening of borders, were a welcome change. The transition is remembered as a time of hope and optimism, as articulated in the phrase, “the door to South Korea was opened.”

Getting into the field

This dissertation is based on ethnographic research I conducted on Sakhalin and in South Korea from 2010 to 2011. I would like to note that the older Sakhalin Koreans in this study do not represent all Sakhalin Koreans. Moreover, this study on transnational return migration is limited for two reasons: the return process extends beyond just the Sakhalin to

¹⁹ Material difficulties were felt among middle-aged people after 1995, when local factories and mines were closed, a subject I discuss in chapter 3.

South Korea route and it involves other subjects besides “Koreans.”²⁰ In addition, younger Sakhalin Koreans are not the primary subjects of this research. Thus, I do not invoke the idea of a “Sakhalin Korean community.” However, these subjects were not completely absent in the lives of the older Sakhalin Koreans that I met; I take into account how their thoughts, talk, and everyday acts are partly affected by those other subjects’ social conditions and attitudes, as well as by their interactions with them.²¹ Return migration affects and is affected by diverse subjects in wider transnational space, but in this dissertation I focus on older Sakhalin Koreans who live on Sakhalin and in South Korea. This focus shaped my fieldwork.

I spent the first seven months of my research in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, an administrative city of Sakhalin Oblast, which has a population of approximately 170,000. I contacted older Sakhalin Koreans in three key public spaces. One of the public spaces was the Senior Centre, where elderly women had by-weekly gatherings. At these meetings, ten to twenty women regularly sang and danced to karaoke music and had lunch. On these occasions, I observed the women’s everyday conversations and gradually contacted some people for interviews. I also found the local Korean newspaper to be a key source for research. The newspaper enabled me to acquaint myself with the local political and economic situation, as well as to find out about local public events such as festivals, concerts, and ceremonies. In addition, I found the senior staff members of the Korean newspaper company to be key subjects for my research. They welcomed my inquiries about issues covered in the newspaper, as well as issues raised in my interviews with older Sakhalin Koreans. The discussions with the staff members helped me to figure out the nuanced meanings of words and sensibilities within the research context, where there were

²⁰ Japan is also a place to which Sakhalin Koreans move under the Japanese government’s repatriation program. People who have parent who is/was Japanese, or people who have Japanese spouses that are eligible to go to Japan, can migrate to Japan. In addition, it is not only ethnic “Koreans” who migrate to South Korea. The eligible subjects’ spouses are entitled to migrate to South Korea regardless of citizenship and ethnicity (see chapter 2).

²¹ For example, I visited the office of a non profit organization, located in Hokkaido, which offered social services for returnees from Sakhalin. A worker of the organization told me that the Sakhalin returnees in Japan had circulated the rumor that the returnees in South Korea receive many more benefits and much more material assistance than those in Japan. I heard exactly the same rumor from the older Sakhalin Koreans: those living in Japan are given more support and their lives are “better” than theirs’ in South Korea. What is more, Koreans from Kazakhstan, but born on Sakhalin are included in this return entitlement. This shows that social imaginaries, rumors, and discourses of return are circulated not only within Russia and South Korea but in a broader transnational space.

few material sources about Sakhalin Koreans' everyday lives (especially about women and elderly people). Moreover, I was able to observe how the newspaper company, a former state institution, struggled to manage the difficult economic situation (see, for example, Bloch and Kendall 2004). On Sakhalin, I also visited the Family Union Association, which primarily provided assistance for the procedure of return migration. At the Association I learned about the return process and heard various some stories around return.

In January 2011, I moved to South Korea where I conducted research in three venues: (1) Homeland Village, (2) Incheon Welfare Center for Sakhalin Koreans, and (3) other public apartment complexes. Fortunately, I was able to follow some of the Sakhalin Koreans whom I had met on Sakhalin. This enabled me to track their lives in South Korea. Moreover, some people with whom I had conducted interviews on Sakhalin introduced me to their elderly mothers and siblings living in South Korea. I contacted those subjects, but I also followed discourses that were circulated in South Korea regarding Sakhalin. Considering how returnees feel and make sense of their lives in the new material, spatial, and social environment, I looked at how key moral discourses are produced and appreciated differently in South Korea than on Sakhalin.

In May 2011, in the final stage of my research, I revisited Sakhalin. My follow-up research was conducted among the older Sakhalin Koreans whom I had met on a regular basis in 2010. Through casual and open-ended conversations, I tried to see how their daily lives and their thoughts had changed. In these interactions, many expressed curiosities about the lives of their friends, siblings, mothers, and fathers in South Korea, asking me: "How were their lives in South Korea?" "Do you think they [the returnees] live well?" As some of them had already heard via phone that I had visited to their kin in South Korea, they enjoyed hearing what I had eaten and what I had talked about in their kin's houses. I was part of the older Sakhalin Koreans' transnational social world.

During my stay on Sakhalin and in South Korea, I had casual and structured interviews with a total of sixty people. In daily interactions and interviews, understanding older Sakhalin Koreans' complex linguistic practices was a challenging task for me. Among the elderly generation, most of them hesitated to speak, or did not speak Russian since the majority of them did not have formal education in Russian; they were already adults when the war ended. For example, one elderly woman told me how her Russian sounded odd: "My

granddaughter always makes fun of me when I talk to her in Russian.” However, elderly people did use Russian words which were related to labor, technology, and daily necessities. In addition, some spoke Japanese. Especially when some women heard that I had come from Japan, they talked with me in Japanese. These elderly people attended Japanese schools during colonial times. The dialects of northeast Japan were also reflected in their speech. I also found that the elderly women were proud of their Japanese language ability, which sometimes caused tensions with other elderly women who did not go to school. Moreover, most elderly people spoke varieties of Korean from the southern regions of Korea.

Middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans’ linguistic practices are more complicated. Their linguistic practices varied depending on family members’ language abilities and other factors, such as education, jobs, regions they had lived in, and experiences working in South Korea and Japan after perestroika. Outside the home, they generally spoke Russian. There was a tendency for them to speak Korean when talking with the same generation of friends and siblings, but to speak to offspring in Russian. The dialects of the northern regions of Korea and the language used by the Soviet Koreans from Central Asia also emerged at times, reflecting contact with media, material objects, and people from those regions. Middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans also used some Japanese words.

Certainly older Sakhalin Koreans are multilingual. However, for them, these abilities proved a powerful sense of “neitherness.” Older Sakhalin Koreans often reflected how they do not speak even one language properly. But they also made fun of themselves through quotidian jokes about their “mistakes” and miscommunications with others (especially South Koreans). As I will show in this dissertation, language is not just a tool to express their ideas and thoughts but part of everyday moral experience (Ochs 2012).

Women and stayees²²

While I interviewed men and women who were returnees and stayees, the key subjects in this study were women and stayees. In the initial stage of my research, I did not plan to select women and stayees as specific subjects of my study. Unexpectedly, I encountered the reality that women and stayees played a significant role in shaping moral

²² The phrase, “stayee,” is grammatically incorrect, but I use this expression to show the differentiation between “returnees” and those who stay on Sakhalin among Sakhalin Koreans.

experiences of return. For example, in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, it was difficult to find elderly Korean men. Elderly Korean men were considered rare social bodies among Sakhalin Koreans not only because the majority of men had moved to South Korea, but also because so many men had passed away. This was partly due to a gendered aging phenomenon on Sakhalin. According to the local newspaper, the average life span of men was 59 years in 2011, while that of women was 72 years (*Sae Koryō Sinmun* 2011a). Within this social context, the few elderly Korean men living on Sakhalin had already been the principle research subjects of scholars and journalists from Japan and South Korea. Their life stories had been widely published. It is not an exaggeration to say that researchers coming to Sakhalin compete to find elderly male interviewees. In the Welfare Centre in South Korea that I first accessed, I found that the facility predominantly housed female residents: there were 83 women but just 13 men in the facility.²³ Despite the shortage of elderly men, I contacted several elderly men. As I was concerned with their contemporary ongoing lives rather than with the past, which other historians have studied, I posed questions to encourage them to talk about return migration.

In addition to the demographic aspect, women are the main subjects of this study because I found that in contrast to men, women widely produced and circulated discourses around return both on Sakhalin and in South Korea. Parent (mother)–child dis/connection, everyday domestic life, and welfare were women’s concerns. New and unexpected experiences of themselves and others were sources of women’s everyday conversations on the phone, in gatherings with friends and family, and in rituals and ceremonies.

In order to study transnational return, I drew upon multi-sited methods and I followed key people, objects, and discourse. This was useful but, at the same time, I found that staying in one place was also very effective in examining the way in which people shape their transnational social world. I realized this when I stayed on Sakhalin. I remembered a tip I had heard from a visual anthropologist when I had studied in South Korea in 2003. I was told that a camera lens should be held in one position to record people who are moving. If the camera follows objects’ movements, it cannot catch mobility. I did not intend to use this technique but settled on it by chance. Living with and spending a long time with the stayees

²³ This number includes critically ill patients who have difficulty communicating verbally. These patients lived on the first floor, while relatively healthy people stayed on the second floor. I had interviews with the latter people, among whom there were seven men.

on Sakhalin, I was able to witness the movements of the returnees and also see their movements from the stayees' perspectives.

I will add one point about the subjects of my study. I focus on the personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans at time of return. However, this study also offers many ethnographic descriptions of the return processes that I observed. These include, for example, the complicated feelings among would-be migrants before leaving, the affective and emotional moment of crossing borders at the airports in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and Incheon (South Korea), and reactions right after return among new returnees. Through this ethnography of border crossing, I introduce a broader perspective on return that involves moral sensitivity and rationality. By this, I show how subjects who are related to international borders negotiate complex social relationships and memberships through connection and differentiation (Heymen and Symons 2012).

Doing something together

I gathered information about the returns and past social lives of Sakhalin Koreans through accessing the public venues on Sakhalin that I mentioned above. However, most of the ethnographic materials were collected during the extensive time I spent meeting and talking with individual older Sakhalin Koreans. Many people kindly let me join in, not only with kin rituals and family dinners, but also with daily activities. I tried to follow what they did: going for a picnic at the park, seaside, and rivers; gathering seaweed and clams; cooking; going to the hair salon; gardening; singing; and eating together. I also spent considerable time socializing in their houses because, except for one case, the interviews were conducted in their houses.²⁴ Every time I visited, older Sakhalin Koreans waited for me to arrive before cooking. When I said "I'm full," they would reply, "You are young, so eat." I was always stuffed from all the food I felt obliged to eat during my research. Some people also told me: "People in Moscow never treat guests like this; they just give a cup of coffee." Older Sakhalin Koreans believed that Sakhaliners (not necessarily Koreans in this context) treat guests with warmer hospitality than people living in larger urban centers do.

²⁴ This exceptional case happened when one middle-aged man suggested meeting in a cafeteria. He mentioned that it is hard to invite a guest to his house. When I met him in the cafeteria, he said: "This is the South Korean way, isn't it?"

Among the many daily activities, the card game played among women, called “*hat’o*” in Sakhalin Korean, especially embodies how personhood is negotiated.²⁵ It was one of the most significant and symbolic activities that helped me to learn the rhythm of women’s everyday lives. Moreover, it enabled me to look at how discourses, meanings, and imaginaries of return were produced and circulated. I first watched the women playing games because I did not know the rules. However, I became exhausted just watching them play all the time. Then I learned how to play. Since then, I participated in the card game numerous times. Usually the women gathered two to three times per week and spent six to seven hours playing the games. When I stayed on Sakhalin, I joined in their games as much as I could. During one game, one woman jokingly said to everyone: “Sonia [indicating me] will be scolded by her mama; you came to Sakhalin to study, but became *norŭmjaengi* (a “gambler” in Korean).” Another woman said: “What can we do? We turned Sonia into a *norŭmjaengi*.” They all laughed.

Some of the reasons why “go-stop” attracts people in South Korea are also applicable to Sakhalin Koreans in regard to *hat’o*. It has a dynamic plot and partly depends on luck. As one game finishes in (shorter than) ten minutes, people can play numerous games in a sitting. Also, a card in the field is not known until it is turned over, meaning that the game is unpredictable. These two elements make the game dynamic (Han 1999:215). The unpredictable and dynamic flow of *hat’o* is similar to the games of mah-jong that were played among the Chinese people in a rural village studied by Chu (2010). The Chinese villagers considered that wins and losses were not only determined by their skill but also by luck. As they kept playing, the villagers would win and lose. Chu argues that the dynamism

²⁵ In standard Korean, it is called *hwat’u*. It is also called “go-stop” in contemporary South Korean society. However, in this dissertation, I use the term *hat’o*, which the older Sakhalin Koreans use. In origin the term is Sino-Korean meaning literally “battle of flowers”: because of the floral patterns on the cards. This card game came from Japan (called *hanafuda*) to Korea at the end of the 19th century. In turn, *hanafuda* was inspired by cards brought from Portugal to Japan in the 16th century. The games of “go-stop” in South Korea and *hanafuda* in Japan have varied depending on period and region. The rules of the game that older Sakhalin Koreans play were different from “go-stop” in South Korea. However, it is difficult to identify the origin of this game. Middle-aged Sakhalin Korean people told me that older people used to play it when they were children.

Hat’o consists of a total of 48 cards, which have no numbers but have symbols of nature and animals that signify the four seasons. The basic rule is that several cards are put on the table, and a player places one card from the cards they have. If the player’s card matches one of the cards in the field, the player takes the two cards. If a player’s card does not match a card in the field, the player’s card is placed in the field. Each set of cards has a different amount of points. The person who accumulates the most points wins. Those who lose pay the points that the winner gets with their cards. However, if the points that they pay are not sufficient, they pay them with cash. Sakhalin Korean people use coins, not paper money.

of the mah-jong game symbolizes the flow of luck and fortune in the unpredictable change of temporality. In a similar vein, Sakhalin Korean women perceive and enjoy the unpredictability of *hat'o*. For example, when someone's card matches one of the cards in the field and she captures the two cards, Sakhalin Korean women usually say: "[the cards] have come to you" rather than "you got them." While they understand their skill affects the flow of the game, this indexical expression shows that winning and losing is partly determined by the card they pick up—i.e., by luck.

Moreover, *hat'o* among Sakhalin Koreans has other implications. Just as Chu suggests that mah-jong is not a space of exchanging tiles and money but a moment for other transactions and distributive practices (2010:266–267), Sakhalin Koreans exchange a wide range of conversations, rumors, and gossip about what is happening to them and others and also about what happened in the past and what will happen in the future. However, *hat'o* among Sakhalin Koreans is different from mah-jong among villagers in China. More women engage with *hat'o* than men. In South Korea, I saw Sakhalin Korean men gathered in public spaces in apartment complexes where they played chess and mah-jong. In addition, unlike chess and mah-jong, *hat'o* is played by many people at once. When I participated in the games, an average of four to eight people joined in. Also, while there were always core members, other members could come in and out of the game. The Sakhalin Korean women welcomed new members. They said that the more people join, the more interesting the game is. This indicates the women's expectation that the game would become more fun and dynamic as more people joined in. However, I argue that it also implies that, for the women, the card game serves as a space and moment in which they actively cultivate themselves through exchanging moral and emotional feelings (empathy, critique, and reflection) with many different others, and these feelings are often conflicted and contested. In such a way, by "doing together," their relational mode of being (personhood) is configured in the everyday.

Chapter outline

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief genealogy of Sakhalin Koreans' return within the context of the geopolitical transformations in 20th-century Northeast Asia. I show how the social bodies of Sakhalin Koreans could traverse borders within the contexts of the emerging humanitarian regime in Japan after 1990 and the post-Cold War transition between South Korea and Russia. I also analyze what kinds of politics are involved in the return of Sakhalin Koreans.

Chapter 2 focuses on key discourses around parent–child separation and union, including connection between mothers and adult children, with deceased parents, and with living kin in South Korea. I consider how these discourses around separation and union exist and intermingle, as well as how the contemporary discourse of return is different from the past discourse of home during the Cold War period.

Chapter 3 turns to demonstrating how older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate the processes of separation and union with other key forms of relatedness, including companionship and friendship. Utilizing the concept of a symbolic union (and the concepts of imagining, finding a companion, and facing ironic dis/connection with friends), I illuminate the ways in which Sakhalin Korean women renegotiate changing everyday intimate relations on one hand, and gender norms and power in an intimate domain, on the other.

Chapter 4 discusses the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans become “flexible” welfare subjects as they employ their citizenship within the two nation-states. I demonstrate that senses of security and fortune are discharged through returnees' practices such as talk, the production of meanings and values, sensory experiences, and the consumption of a range of humanitarian aid, including new apartments, domestic objects, pensions, partial living expenses, and exemption from medical fees in South Korea. In addition, I explore returnees' transnational practices and strategies to examine how they become mobile subjects.

Chapter 5 illuminates the contested aspects and paradoxes of becoming transnational subjects. First, I consider the two moral discourses of dependency and nothingness and examine how meanings and values are attributed to social bodies, which in turn produce new differences. Second, I explore stayees' struggles to be legitimated bodies. Third, I highlight returnees' feelings of being privileged welfare subjects in South Korea due to moral and material indebtedness to two nation-states, including Japan and South Korea.

The consequences of the return of Sakhalin Koreans are profoundly shaped by the return policy that is a product of the transnational politico-ethical humanitarian project supported by the Japanese and South Korean governments. But Sakhalin Koreans' everyday moral and political experiences are also played out on post-socialist Sakhalin. This ethnographic study aims to examine, in this transnational space where post-colonial, post-Cold War, and post-socialist changes intersect in complex ways, how kinship and citizenship shape the im/possibilities through which older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate personhood.

Chapter 1: Pathways to Return

Although the Japanese and South Korean governments facilitated the Sakhalin Koreans' return project, this does not mean that this project was proposed and determined by the two states alone. Various actors were involved in the negotiation of the process of return. In particular, civil society advocates in Japan and Sakhalin Koreans themselves played an important role in this process in which they made efforts to raise the return and family reunification of Sakhalin Koreans as a public issue to be "resolved" both during and after the Cold War period. Because of my focus, neither the modern international history surrounding Sakhalin Island, nor the "origin" of Sakhalin Koreans will be discussed.²⁶ I instead trace how the family reunification of Sakhalin Koreans and their movement across state borders have been negotiated by various actors. This chapter thus considers the social, historical, and political contexts of return to reveal the transformation of the return of Sakhalin Koreans into a *transnational* state-sponsored project.

My goal is to offer an understanding of how the return and family reunification of Sakhalin Koreans has emerged as a socio-political issue to be "resolved" in Northeast Asia within the post-Second World War and the Cold War contexts. I especially present (1) some of the political and historical conditions under which the recognition of Sakhalin Koreans became important but contested and (im)possible; (2) civil actors who engaged in a "resolution"; and (3) legal discourses that various state and civil actors employed. In considering the legal and ethical discourses and various responses among Sakhalin Koreans and other civil actors, I also examine how Sakhalin Koreans have been recognized and made into particular beings.

This chapter highlights the multifaceted contexts of return. First, I present a brief description of the repatriation of the Sakhalin Korean population from the southern part of Sakhalin after World War II. Second, I highlight the civil and grassroots actions behind the return of Sakhalin Koreans and the reunion of their kin from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

²⁶ Miki (2013) suggests that the study of Sakhalin Koreans should take a broader perspective beyond 'national' boundaries by employing considerations of trans-regional and ethnic contexts. For example, this view calls for analysis of Sakhalin Koreans' economic activities, employment, and migration during the 1930s in the southern part of Sakhalin and comparing these to those of other imperial subjects such as Chinese and Japanese. Another type of comparative study that is suggested in order to shed light on Sakhalin's social, political, and economic situation is to consider the conditions in geopolitically-related regions occupied by Imperial Japan such as Manchuria, the Maritime Provinces in the Russian Far East, and Hokkaido.

Third, I show how the border-crossing of Sakhalin Koreans was made possible by political shifts from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, eventually resulting in their becoming subjects of humanitarian projects. In addition, drawing on the discussion of humanitarianism, I explore the kinds of politics that are juxtaposed with this return project. Finally, I describe the socio-economic conditions of post-Soviet Sakhalin as another significant context of return mobility. This chapter shows that the return project involved long-term negotiations and compromise. However, I also suggest that the return project is a product of Japan's and South Korea's strategic re-engagement with Sakhalin Koreans at the intersection of the post-colonial and post-Cold War changes in Northeast Asia.

* * *

On Sakhalin in 2010, I was present when one elderly Sakhalin Korean man was interviewed by two Japanese researchers about his and his family's lives during the Japanese colonial era. One researcher pointedly asked: "Not all Korean people were forced to come to Sakhalin as laborers, right?" After the interview, as I walked with the elderly man to a bus stop, he said: "People always ask whether we were forced to come to Sakhalin or not. But to me, the real question is not why we came, but how we remain trapped here." This man's comment about why they were not able to return reveals the contested representations and understandings of who were/are the Sakhalin Koreans within a political situation where much public attention has been devoted to determining whether the Sakhalin Koreans were originally conscripted laborers within the Japanese colonial regime. However, the elderly man's reaction reveals that long years of "being trapped" and relevant feelings of "being left" have also shaped the subjectivities and personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans. Taking his comment as a departure point, this section examines how the social and political bodies of Sakhalin Koreans became "discovered" in civil societies and spaces of debate by state actors since the 1960s and 1970s. Before describing these processes, I discuss the evacuation of Japanese and Koreans from Sakhalin after World War II ended.



Figure 1: Map of East Asia. Source: The Perry-Castañeda Library at the University of Texas. Public Domain

1.1. Liminal time, liminal space: Evacuation from Sakhalin after 1945

Following the Russo-Japanese War (1905), the southern part of Sakhalin (*Karafuto* in Japanese) shifted from Russian to Japanese control. After the end of World War II in Asia in 1945, there were 358,568 “Japanese,” along with 23,498 “Koreans” on in southern Sakhalin (Din 2013:46, Nakayama 2012:104).²⁷ From August 13 to August 23, 1945, about 88,000 “Japanese” left *Karafuto* for Hokkaido (Japan) through various means, including emergency

²⁷ The war on the southern part of Sakhalin ended on August 25, 1945. In 1945 just before evacuation, other than Japanese and Koreans, there were around 2,000 indigenous people (Ainu, Nivkh, and Uilta). There were also 300 people categorized as foreigners in Japanese official documents: Poles, Germans, Chinese, and Russians who had migrated to Sakhalin before the Russo-Japanese War (Nakayama 2012:104). See Sergei Fedorchuk (1992) for a study of the lives of these “foreigners” in the southern part of Sakhalin under Japanese rule.

evacuation and smuggling themselves out of Sakhalin.²⁸ After the Soviet military temporarily halted the evacuation, the US-USSR Agreement on Repatriation, signed in December 19, 1946, resumed it. Based on this agreement, a total of 292,590 people were repatriated from 1946 to 1949. During this period, some Koreans also smuggled themselves out of Sakhalin, for example, by bribing the Soviet military. Lacking specific information about their evacuation, many Koreans believed that they would be sent back to Korea.²⁹ However, repatriation of Koreans was not officially carried out.

Meanwhile, Sakhalin Koreans' family separation was invoked by Korean laborers in the Kyushu area and Ibaraki Province of Japan as they made claims based on family reunification and evacuation of Koreans from Sakhalin. In 1944, the Japanese cabinet decided to transfer those men, who had worked on the southern part of Sakhalin from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, to the coal mines in Kyushu and the Ibaraki area in Japan (Chŏng 2008).³⁰ There were 3,191 Korean miners who were sent to those areas while some of their wives and children were left behind on Sakhalin. Employing a series of strikes, some of these men sought to reunite with their families.³¹ Despite such struggles, however, their demands did not bring about the evacuation of Koreans from Sakhalin.

²⁸ Following a cease-fire agreement between Japan and the USSR, and the disarmament of the Soviet military on August 28, 1945, around 18,000 people on the southern part of Sakhalin were sent to Siberia and the northern part of Sakhalin as part of the labor force (Nakayama 2012:105).

²⁹ Biographies and memoirs of older Sakhalin Koreans refer to this point. In fact, many Koreans gathered in the port town of Ōdomari (Korsakov in Russian), waiting for a chance to depart after the war ended. Some Sakhalin Koreans also shared with me the rumor of Koreans being the first to be evacuated. By simply stating, "We, Koreans had to leave first," these older Sakhalin Koreans seemed to take their return for granted. Such comments suggest that those Sakhalin Koreans did not perceive their political subjectivity around the time of the end of the war in terms of being subjects of the defeated country, Japan, which had fought against the USSR.

³⁰ While this type of mobilization is sometimes called "double conscription"—which refers to the act of being conscripted twice (once from Korea to Sakhalin and once from Sakhalin to Kyushu)—the official and legally recognized terms are "transference" and "transfer" (J. *tenkan haichi*, K. *chŏnhwan paech'i*) (Chŏng 2008). This was part of a large transfer of material and human resources planned and conducted from 1942 based on the decision of the Japanese cabinet. Chŏng (2008) discusses the movement of miners from Sakhalin to the Kyushu area of Japan due to the decrease in output of coal within small mines on southern Sakhalin and the lack of ships to send coal from southern Sakhalin to other regions. To reduce costs, 'surplus' miners were thereby transferred. Through life history interviews, Chŏng also studies the processes of this transfer and the consequences of this transfer for the lives of Korean miners and their families on Sakhalin.

³¹ In South Korea, I met two Sakhalin Korean elderly women whose male kin had been transferred during this period. One woman's husband had been smuggled from Kyushu to Sakhalin while the other woman's older brother and father had simply failed to return. Showing me a note with the location of the mine where they were supposed to have been sent, she said: "Not knowing whether this note would be helpful in finding out the location of my father and brother, I brought it with me from Sakhalin."

Later, in 1956, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the USSR, there were significant moves to change the living conditions of Sakhalin Koreans. One of the central issues within this normalization process was the repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) from the Soviet Union. At this time, Japanese civilians on Sakhalin also had a chance to return to Japan. Although the Soviet government claimed that all “Japanese” civilians had been repatriated in 1949, many remained on Sakhalin for various reasons. For example, the local Soviet civil administration was concerned about the impact of workers’ withdrawal from the industrial sectors, and it required them to stay (Din 2013:49). The civilians also included Japanese women who married Korean men (Nakayama 2013). In 1956, after the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the USSR, these “Japanese” civilians became subject to repatriation to Japan. Their Korean male spouses were also allowed to migrate to Japan, where they would be given a new legal status as foreigners. From 1957 to 1959, a total of 2,345 Japanese civilians left Sakhalin (Nakayama 2014:6).³² In the 1960s, many of these original Korean and Japanese returnees from Sakhalin began to alert the Japanese and South Korean public to the existence of many Koreans still left behind on Sakhalin.

1.2. Struggle for recognition: Grassroots actions among returnees in Japan

Returnees from Sakhalin sent letters and petitions to Japanese ministries and the South Korean delegations in Japan. They wrote that many Koreans remained on Sakhalin and asked for them to be evacuated from Sakhalin.³³ Neither government, however, wished to become embroiled in Sakhalin-Korean issues by acting on the demands of returnees for Koreans to be evacuated and kin to be reunited. In 1958, the returnees also appealed to the Japanese Red Cross to petition the Red Cross in Geneva. The Red Cross responded that it was not the returnees in Japan, but the Sakhalin Koreans and their South Korean family members, who should submit documents demonstrating their desire to reunite with family. In 1959, the returnees made a list of 2,048 Sakhalin Koreans (including their names and addresses) who wished to return to South Korea and reunite with their family members and

³² Of them, there were 749 Japanese civilians and there were 1,541 foreigners (Nakayama 2014:6). The latter refers mostly to Korean husbands and the children of those Japanese civilians.

³³ The Republic of Korea’s delegation was sent to Tokyo in 1949.

sent it to the Red Cross Headquarters in Geneva. The Red Cross in South Korea also received a petition signed by to 1,000 names from South Koreans who had relatives on Sakhalin (Hyon 2012:177–178). In this manner, returnees in Japan initiated many forms of grassroots activities to reunite with their family members on Sakhalin, despite lacking resources and having little support from either the Japanese (Ōnuma 1992; Takagi 1990) or South Korean public.

Despite such difficulties, these returnees continued to facilitate the exchange of letters between Sakhalin Koreans and their South Korean relatives. In fact, during my fieldwork on Sakhalin, many middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans told me stories of their parents' generation reading those letters from South Korea again and again. For example, one middle-aged man told me of a friend's father committing suicide. Later, his friend's family found a letter from his kin in South Korea under his pillow. The ink on that letter was faded by tears. Since letters were not regularly exchanged, Sakhalin Koreans read the same letters over and over.³⁴ Those letters helped them confirm that family members were alive, but they also made them feel the distance and sense of separation. After migrating to Japan, the returnees made efforts to connect with family members across international state borders.

The normalization of treaties between Japan and South Korea in 1965 was another important opportunity for the returnees to demand the reunion of Sakhalin Koreans with families. The returnees petitioned the South Korean government to raise issues with Japan concerning the Sakhalin Koreans. However, no articles regarding them were mentioned in the normalization talks. The South Korean government persisted in its viewpoint that Japan was legally responsible for their repatriation. In fact, the South Korean government's main concern was domestic conditions. It was afraid of an inflow of population from a communist country, including too many refugees (Han 2011:182).

In contrast to the indifferent stance of the South Korean government, in the late 1960s, the local Soviet government on Sakhalin took a more positive view of Sakhalin Koreans' return. The local Department of Visas and Registration³⁵ and the authority of

³⁴ Many older Sakhalin Koreans told me that it became difficult to exchange letters with their South Korean kin during the mid-1970s. During this period, some Sakhalin Korean families who demanded evacuation from Sakhalin were deported to North Korea, a subject I will discuss later.

³⁵ OVIR (*Otdel Viz i Registratsii*), referring to the department for Visas and Registration, was part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (from 1935 to 2005), which dealt with the registration of foreigners in the USSR

Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk responded that they would allow the departure of those Koreans who wanted to leave Sakhalin if Japan would permit their entry (Ōnuma 1992:78).³⁶ However, as I explore below, the Japanese government did not pursue this potential opening.

Compared to the visits and reunion of family arranged between the USSR and non-communist countries, such as West Germany and Israel during the 1960s and 1970s, Sakhalin Koreans struggled to reunite with kin across the border in the same period.³⁷ Even at a time when the Iron Curtain divided many nations in Europe, economic and political relations between the USSR and some of the non-communist countries mentioned above allowed family meetings across the borders. In contrast, while ties between South Korea and the USSR were not altogether lacking, these two countries had little room to negotiate the reunification of separated families after the Korean War.

Family reunification was not officially and systematically arranged until the late 1980s.³⁸ In the post-Asia Pacific War and Cold War periods, both the Japanese and South Korean governments adopted a negative attitude towards Sakhalin Koreans' return for family reunification. This became known as an "abandonment policy" within public discourse. Despite the lack of progress at the state level, Sakhalin Koreans became gradually recognized in Japan and South Korea in the mid-1970s. The following sections show some of these changes with a focus on how political, legal, and ethical discourses made Sakhalin Koreans into "problems" to be solved.

1.3. Sakhalin Koreans become a political and legal "problem"

From the 1970s, Japanese attorneys, scholars, and civil activists became more aware of the returnees' grass-roots activities. Since the 1960s, most of them had engaged in social movements against Japan's post-war relations with the U.S., as well as with other countries in Asia. They called for Japan to take responsibility in the post-war context for "properly"

and subjects of emigration. Those Sakhalin Koreans who lacked USSR citizenship were registered in this department.

³⁶ Due to the lack of diplomatic ties between the USSR and ROK, the local authorities could permit the departure of Sakhalin Koreans on the condition that they would go to Japan.

³⁷ In the post-Stalin era, around 300,000 people renounced their USSR citizenship and emigrated based on family unification schemes. This involved people identifying as German, Spanish, Greek and Armenian (Ginsburgs 1984:129).

³⁸ During the 1970s, there were two exceptional cases of Sakhalin Koreans' migration to Japan and South Korea.

compensating the victims of war originally from Asian countries. As they focused public attention on the plight of Sakhalin returnees, key legal and ethical issues of whether the Japanese government was responsible for the repatriation of Koreans were raised. These issues also became debated among civilians, legal specialists, and Japanese government officials. In the following section, I not only highlight these processes but also consider recent scholarly discussions in an effort to address the question of why Sakhalin Koreans were left behind. I focus on the role of key state institutions such as the central and local governments of the Soviet Union, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), and the South Korean government.

1.3.1. An unsettling discourse: Why and how were Sakhalin Koreans left behind?

Why were Sakhalin Koreans left behind? This question has been long debated among scholars, legal specialists, and civil activists studying Sakhalin Koreans. In general, scholars have relied on the answers provided by John Stephan (1971), the first historian to publish in English on the modern international history of Sakhalin Island. According to Stephan, Koreans remained on Sakhalin after the war due to the Soviet demand for labor, the political instability of the Korean peninsula, and the lack of transportation to Korea (Stephan 1971:161–163). Following this premise, it has also been assumed that the evacuation of Sakhalin Koreans from the southern part of Sakhalin was carried out by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) and the USSR under the U.S.-Soviet Treaty of December 19, 1946. This explanation presumes that neither Japan nor Korea exercised diplomatic authority to transfer these subjects back to their respective homelands from Sakhalin.

Judicial experts and scholars in Japan, however, problematize the subject of repatriation, and “Japanese Nationals,” within this treaty. In legal debate, attention has focused on the ways in which Sakhalin Koreans were included or excluded from the category of “Japanese Nationals”. Regarding the status of Koreans under the Japanese colonial regime, Koreans were considered Japanese “nationals”;³⁹ yet their civil and colonial status remained distinct from that of the Japanese based on their household registry.

³⁹ The process of implementing the registry system in Korea during the colonial period was not unitary but varied over time. Here, I focus on Koreans’ nationality just before the war ended.

Registered to the “outland” (J. *gaichi*) of Korea, the transfer of their registration to the “inland” (J. *naichi*) of Japan was prohibited. Based on this “ethnic” differentiation, Koreans were later excluded from the category of “Japanese” after the war (Kashiwazaki 2000:22–23, Ryang 2005:92). Considering their ambiguous status, advocates in Japan asserted that Koreans should be included in the category of “Japanese nationals” as former “Japanese imperial subjects” and, therefore, subject to evacuation.

While such judicial discourses have dominated public discussion since the 1970s, recent scholarship examines official documents related to the post-war repatriation policy in Northeast Asia—including those concerning Koreans on Sakhalin—to offer a broader understanding of why Sakhalin Koreans were left behind. When archives and government documents on Sakhalin emerged after 2000 in Russia, the United States, and South Korea, scholarly attention turned to Sakhalin Koreans on Sakhalin and in South Korea. This recent scholarship requires scrutiny to highlight the complex processes through which key state institutions within the USSR, SCAP, and South Korea recognized and dealt with ‘Koreans’ on Sakhalin at the transitional moment between 1945 and 1950.

First, based on sources in Moscow, including the memoir of Dmitrii Kriukov, the chief of the civil administration on Sakhalin from 1945 to 1947, Din (2013) contends that the federal authorities of the USSR and the local authorities on Sakhalin disagreed as to the status of the Koreans’ evacuation. In 1947, the Council of Ministers of the USSR proposed a plan to repatriate Koreans on Sakhalin to North Korea. This plan was not implemented, Din argues, due to the local civil authority’s opposition. Without specifically distinguishing the “Japanese” from “Koreans,” Kriukov was concerned about the out-migration of the population from south Sakhalin after the war. Moreover, while the transfer of Soviet citizens from the mainland to Sakhalin was promoted, it occurred more slowly than planned. Thus, Koreans were not specific targets of internment. Rather, with the local administration seeking continued production and economic stability on the southern part of Sakhalin, it prevented Koreans’ evacuation. Meanwhile, other states, including Japan, the “Koreas,” and SCAP, had little authority to intervene in the local authority’s decision-making process (Din 2013:53).

Second, recent scholarship also investigates how SCAP and also the U.S. authority in South Korea acknowledged Koreans on Sakhalin after 1945. Evidence suggests that SCAP

both recognized and considered the repatriation of the Korean population on the southern part of Sakhalin (Chang 2007).⁴⁰ The U.S. occupation authority in South Korea, however, opposed this plan as it was worried about the precarious post-war situation in South Korea (Hyon 2012) where some six to eight million people were returning from Japan, Manchuria, Taiwan, and other Pacific regions. In a situation of social, political, and economic instability after 1945, the U.S. authority refused to actively take up the return of Sakhalin Koreans. Third, scholarship also suggests that the return of Sakhalin Koreans was never seriously considered even though the South Korean government knew about their predicament. This was partly due to the political tension surrounding South Korea, Japan, and Northeast Asia after the Korean War. For example, after the war, the Syng-Man Rhee administration (1948-1960), which was dependent upon U.S. economic aid, cooperated with Japan to build an anti-Communist network. Due to Japan's establishment of diplomatic ties with the USSR just three years after the Korean War, and further economic and civil exchanges with China (PRC) and North Korea, Rhee turned to anti-Japanese ideology to legitimate his government.⁴¹ Instead, a central concern for the South Korean government was the diasporic Korean population's migration to North Korea, which I will discuss below. So long as Rhee's reaction to those Koreans' movements engendered antipathy toward the Japanese government and North Korea (Han 2011; Hyon 2012), no steps were taken toward Sakhalin Koreans' return.

Based on newly discovered archival sources and interpretations, scholars have revealed the multifaceted nature of Sakhalin Koreans' abandonment in the aftermath of Japan's occupation of south Sakhalin and Korea and the emerging Cold War structure. Within the liminal time and space of Northeast Asia from 1945 to the early 1950s, it can be argued that political and historical contingency is what prevented the evacuation of Sakhalin Koreans and their movement across borders. However, it is hard to deny that the social bodies of Sakhalin Koreans were also left behind for the political and economic "stability" of local and state authorities.

⁴⁰ When some civilians in Seoul sent a letter to SCAP in 1946 requesting Koreans' return to South Korea, the South Korean government asked SCAP to survey the number of Koreans remaining on Sakhalin (*Saharin Zanryū Kankoku Chōsenjin Mondai Giin Kondankai* ("The Diet Members' Gathering for Sakhalin Koreans") 1994:311-317).

⁴¹ Son offers an analysis of how both anti-Communist and anti-Japan ideologies emerged and became modified in the post-Korean War context (Son 2011:239-272)

These discussions reveal the ways various state institutions recognized Sakhalin Koreans. In spite of this, the legal and ethical discourse of Japanese government's responsibility has persisted. Judicial experts and civil advocates in Japan claim that the repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans by the USSR and SCAP would have been impossible without the knowledge of the Japanese government or military. Assuming that the Japanese authorities had a firm grasp of the distribution of the population in the occupied territories such as Manchuria, Taiwan, and China, they assert that the USSR and SCAP were highly constrained in evacuating Koreans from Sakhalin. In addition, they point to Japan's involvement in the practical issues of repatriation, such as the arrangement of ships and the costs of transfer. Thus, civil society advocates assert that the Japanese authorities cannot deny their complicity in the exclusion of Koreans from the project of repatriation and their responsibility for the Sakhalin Koreans' return in the post-war period.

In legal discourse, Sakhalin Koreans came to be considered a political problem to be solved. Along with this discourse, the contested interpretation of Sakhalin Koreans' nationality in 1952, when the structure of the Cold War was being configured in Northeast Asia, is another controversial point of legal debate.

1.3.2. An unsettling discourse: Did Sakhalin Koreans lose Japanese nationality, and if so, when?

The Soviet Union and South Korea did not have diplomatic ties until 1990. Since Japan was the only state with official diplomatic relations with both the USSR and South Korea from the 1960s into the 1980s, the returnees from Sakhalin and civil activists in Japan called upon the Japanese government to negotiate for family reunification with the two states. The Japanese government, however, declared that it was not responsible for Sakhalin Koreans since Koreans were not considered 'Japanese' from 1952 on the basis of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. This declaration raised the key question of whether and how Koreans on Sakhalin had lost their "Japanese nationality" in 1952. In order to understand this question, it is necessary to consider the post-World War II international order in the Asia-Pacific, and how it was affected by the San Francisco System.

The concept of the San Francisco System is often proposed by political scientists and historians, as a master framework for understanding the post-war regional and international

configuration of power in the Asia-Pacific (Dower 1971, 1993; Hara 2007, 2015; Iriye 1977).⁴² Signed by 48 nations in 1951, the San Francisco Peace Treaty (hereafter SFPT) dealt primarily with the sovereignty of Japanese-occupied allied territories and the compensation owed by Japan to Allied civilians and POWs in the aftermath of World War II. Through considering this treaty and its effects in the Pacific-Asia, scholars have demonstrated how the Cold War structure was formed in the Asia-Pacific. Instead of reviewing all the debates here, I select the discussions relevant to Sakhalin Koreans' political status to highlight how these historical 'facts' are employed to unsettle legal and ethical discourses of responsibility in the relations between the relevant states and Sakhalin Koreans.

With the initiation of the SFPT in 1952, the Allied occupation of Japan ended. The SPFT effectively indicated Japan's official recovery of its sovereignty while, in theory, renouncing all its rights and claims to territories such as Korea, Taiwan, the Kurile Islands, and South Sakhalin. However, this treaty was not "peacefully" agreed to (cf. Price 2001). The Soviet Union was among the states refusing to sign this treaty.⁴³ Moreover, other nations, including communist and nationalist China, the two Koreas, and the Mongolian People's Republic were not invited to the negotiations.⁴⁴ In this contradictory situation where the political influence of the UK and the U.S. was reflected in the contents of the

⁴² The concept of the San Francisco System is regarded as reflecting the particular processes of "the end" of the war and the onset of the Cold War structure in East Asia and the Pacific. These are constructed distinctively from those of Euro-Atlantic contexts. According to Hara (2007, 2015), in the latter, it is generally appreciated that "the Yalta System" was the context within which key international players, including the Soviet Union, the U.S., and Britain, competed for hegemony among divided nations in Europe. However, the Pacific region formed different pathways. Hara convincingly argues, first, that post-colonial political movements and the following civil wars in the Pacific region were key factors that brought about the "hot" wars. Second, in the Asia-Pacific, not only the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but also China (PRC) was a key competitor. Finally, as seen in the national division of several nations, including Vietnam, China, and Korea, the Cold War conflicts have shaped a more complex Cold War environment in East and Southeast Asia than in Europe (2007:5).

⁴³ A total of 52 nations participated in the treaty but three, including the USSR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, refused to sign it. India, Burma, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were invited but did not attend the signing of the treaty. The return of South Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands to the USSR was promised at the Yalta Conference (1945) as compensation for the Soviet Union's entrance into the war with Japan. But in the SFPT itself, although there is a reference to the definition of the boundaries of the Kurile Islands, there is no mention of the recipient of the territories (Hara 2007:12). This ambiguous statement brought about a dispute between Japan and the USSR (and now Russia) over the northern territories. As this example shows, the USSR refused to sign this treaty since many articles in the SFPT retreated from key points raised at the Yalta Conference.

⁴⁴ Fearing China's influence over Hong Kong and Malaysia, Great Britain opposed China's participation in the SFPT.

treaty, shifting relations of international power brought about cracks in the Pacific region's power structure after World War II. Scholars have proposed the San Francisco System as the means to analyze the U.S.'s growing supremacy in the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁵ This method not only enables us to understand Cold War politics within the context of the post-war and colonial processes, but also to examine the continued influence of this system on unresolved political disputes, especially in East Asia, and particularly in regard to land claims, post-war compensation, and the presence of U.S. military bases.

Although the SFPT deals primarily with the issue of territorial sovereignty, it also serves as the basis for justifying the "foreigner" status of Sakhalin Koreans and the disengagement of the Japanese government from the issue of Sakhalin Koreans. Following this treaty in 1952, Japan's Ministry of Justice declared that the Koreans (and also Taiwanese) had lost their Japanese nationality, thereby asserting that it had no legal or political responsibility for the Sakhalin Koreans.⁴⁶

In response to this claim, advocates for Sakhalin Koreans have problematized their legal and political status at the time the SFPT was signed in 1952. As pointed out above, the Soviet Union's refusal to sign the SFPT indicates, for example, that no peace treaty was established between the USSR and Japan. In the mid-1950s, the local Soviet authority on Sakhalin went so far as to offer the Sakhalin Koreans Soviet nationality by officially considering them to be "former Japanese subjects." As I show in chapter 5, instead of choosing a Soviet nationality, many Sakhalin Koreans "chose" other formal statuses, including North Korean nationality or remaining "stateless." Thus, the political status of Sakhalin Koreans remains unclear. Furthermore, civil advocates contend that the 1952 Japanese Ministry of Justice Notice is effective for Koreans in Japan, but not for Koreans *in* the territory of south Sakhalin.⁴⁷

The advocates identified another legal argument that Sakhalin Koreans had not renounced Japanese nationality. Tanaka, for example, points out that the SFPT did not contain any explicit references to citizenships of the colonized populations (Watts 2010:95–

⁴⁵ U.S. supremacy in the Asia-Pacific was supported by other security treaties signed in 1951 between the United States and other countries such as Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand.

⁴⁶ The four main points of the 1952 Notice by Japan's Ministry of Justice are discussed by Watt (2010:95–96).

⁴⁷ Considering that the PRC (1949) and the two Koreas (1948) were established before 1952, the populations in these countries acquired their citizenship based on their respective country's citizenship law at the time. This Notice was therefore, in fact, pertinent to the status of Koreans and Taiwanese *within* Japan.

96 [Tanaka 1995:64–65]). The advocates argue that renunciation of citizenship was not defined based on the international treaty, but based on subjects' will, and nations' citizenship laws.

Legal experts have offered another counter-argument pointing to the inconsistent ways in which the Japanese government included and excluded its “nationals.” Specifically, these experts follow the cases of Japanese wives with Sakhalin Korean husbands who were repatriated in 1956. Under the colonial regime, Japanese wives with Korean husbands on Sakhalin were, in theory, removed from their household registry in Japan. In 1952 the Ministry of Justice announced the loss of Japanese nationality for those who had already been removed from the registry before the enactment of the treaty. The Ministry also stated that the Japanese wives of Korean and Taiwanese husbands were considered Koreans and Taiwanese. Nevertheless, in 1956, after the normalization of Japan-USSR relations, those living on Sakhalin were allowed to return to Japan and their political status as Japanese citizen was “recovered” on the basis of their former household registry. In critiquing this inconsistent treatment of Japanese wives and their husbands as ethnic discrimination, legal experts and advocates assert that Sakhalin Koreans should have been considered subjects of evacuation.

These legal debates were produced as advocates tried to clarify political relations between Sakhalin Koreans and the Japanese government. Via these legal discourses, the advocates and the Japanese government debated Sakhalin Koreans' official and political status on Sakhalin in the post-war period. However, their interpretations of Sakhalin Koreans' citizenship are contested. In this context, the advocates raised questions about the very basis of Koreans' migration to Sakhalin.

1.3.3. An unsettling discourse: Why did Koreans move to Sakhalin?

In searching for a “resolution,” both the returnees and their advocates have raised the fundamental issue of why Koreans moved to Sakhalin in the first place. Simply put, a central point of this debate is the movement of Koreans to the southern part of Sakhalin as part of

Japan's labor mobilization during the Asia-Pacific War.⁴⁸ This movement is situated within the larger political and economic context of mass labor mobilization planned and implemented by the Japanese colonial government during the Asia-Pacific War in the period 1939 to 1944. The advocates stressed this fundamental problem, and initiated lawsuits in 1975 to ascertain the Japanese government's responsibility for the return of Sakhalin Koreans, who had been mobilized in a forced and compulsory manner. Consequently, the concept of "forced labor" became a central subject of discussion.

Though the forced mobilization of some Korean men is difficult to dispute, recent scholarship suggests that their movement to Sakhalin during the colonial period was more complex. I briefly describe the three phases of this movement. First, in the early period after the annexation of South Sakhalin, the local government attempted the long-term settlement of Japanese as a way of maintaining the labor force. The Japanese government initially planned to develop agricultures, but due to the harsh climate, by 1910, it turned to developing the pulp and paper industry. As part of these developments, the number of Japanese immigrants gradually increased. However, since few Japanese immigrants moved, the Karafuto Office, a local administrative division, turned to settling Koreans and Chinese on Sakhalin (Miki 2012:57–58).

Second, the number of Koreans increased into the 1920s partly because of the convergence of local demand for labor in factories and construction sites with the evacuation of Koreans from the northern part of Sakhalin.⁴⁹ In contrast to the Chinese, who mostly engaged in seasonal and collective labor in coal mines and construction sites, Koreans tended to move to Sakhalin through recruitment and social networks and to engage in a more varied type of employment. Structurally, however, Koreans constituted the bottom layer of

⁴⁸ Though they focused on Koreans, this does not mean that these advocates ignored other populations. The Japanese on Sakhalin were also considered subjects of mobilization during the preparations for war. Additional subjects of dis/placement included the indigenous people (Nivkh, and Uilta) (cf. Tamura 2013).

⁴⁹ From 1920 to 1925, the Japanese military occupied North Sakhalin as "compensation" for the massacre of Japanese soldiers in Nikolayevsk (in the RFE) by the Red Army. Miki argues that in the early 1920s following the Russian Revolution (1918), there were Koreans who moved to Northern Sakhalin from various regions of Northeast Asia, but especially from the Maritime Province. In northern Sakhalin, those Koreans worked as low-skilled laborers within the fishery and agricultural sectors. In 1925 when North Sakhalin was no longer occupied by Japan following the convention between the USSR and the Empire of Japan, these populations evacuated to South Sakhalin. They moved not to the Soviet mainland, but to south Sakhalin because they could not afford to pay the expenses to return to the mainland and because some tried to reclaim their properties in the north (Miki 2012:70–72). These are some of the primary reasons for Koreans' movement from northern to southern Sakhalin.

the labor market on Sakhalin, working as loggers, coal miners, construction workers, innkeepers, drivers, and day laborers (Miki 2012:62).

Finally, during the 1930s, Karafuto became more integrated into the imperial economic system as a supply site for Japan's wartime efforts (Miki 2013:2). As a result of the war, the demand for coal became higher and the mobilization of labor into mines on southern Sakhalin became more systematically implemented. In particular, after the passage of the National Mobilization Law in 1938, the Japanese government directed Koreans to core industrial sectors. From 1939 to 1944, 16,113 Koreans, short of the planned 19,500, moved to Karafuto (Imanishi 2012:38).⁵⁰ In contrast to other labor mobilization efforts often involving the government, the recruitment of Koreans to Sakhalin was carried out by private corporations.⁵¹ In addition, another distinctive aspect of this mobilization was that laborers migrated with family members. In order to ensure local political stability and the long-term settlement of Koreans, the Karafuto Agency Police encouraged laborers to be accompanied by their families (Han 2011:167). Older Sakhalin Koreans often spoke of such migration patterns; for example, elderly women recounted how they followed their husbands to Sakhalin after marrying in Korea. Some middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans told me that they moved to Sakhalin with their mothers after their fathers, older brothers, and other male kin had left Korea. While Koreans' mobility entailed diverse processes, their movement primarily took the form of labor migration, shaped by Japan's imperial political economy during wartime (Imanishi 2012:38).⁵² However, as shown in the beginning of this chapter, this predominant legal discourse of "forced labor" (explaining why Koreans moved to Sakhalin) is powerful and overshadows other explanations for why Sakhalin Koreans were *left* on Sakhalin.

⁵⁰ Imanishi notes how this number is still not clear because the governments' statistics that his study draws upon exclude the numbers of Koreans who moved to Sakhalin throughout the year of 1944 and also in 1945. The fact that the Karafuto Office did not keep records on the demography of Koreans also makes it difficult to arrive at an exact number (2012:38).

⁵¹ Examples of the sovereign power of private companies under colonial rule are also seen in other colonial contexts in Africa and Asia. Drawing on Membe's concept of "private indirect government," Hansen and Stepputat review the study of sovereignty to demonstrate how the actual operations of the slave trade and the control of populations were run by private companies associated with states in Europe (Hansen and Stepputat 2006:303).

⁵² This argument is supported by the demography of Koreans; the number of Korean men on Karafuto was at least double that of women.

The judicial discourses of responsibility for Sakhalin Korean's return emerged during the late 1970s. At this time, returnees and their advocates visited and negotiated the return and reunion of Sakhalin Koreans with their kin with various representatives and state officials in Japan, South Korea, and the Soviet Union. As I show next, their legal claims were partly in reaction to the negative attitudes of these state officials towards Sakhalin Koreans' attempted border-crossing.

1.3.4. Thawing out the Cold War

Why was the border crossing of Sakhalin Koreans impossible during the 1960s and 1970s? The political actions of the returnees and their advocates show how the border crossing of Sakhalin Koreans became a political football within international relations. In examining how states exercised authority over Sakhalin Koreans' movement, this section will illustrate the process through which the return of Sakhalin Koreans became strategically transformed into a humanitarian and moral issue.

The Soviet side took a particularly rigid attitude towards Sakhalin Koreans' departure for reunification of family during the mid-1970s. In 1976, the Soviet officials asserted that the issue of Sakhalin Koreans had to be discussed not with the Japanese government and its civilians, but with North Korea. Although Soviet officials stated that they understood that many Sakhalin Koreans who wished to be reunited with kin were originally from southern Korea, it emphasized that the legitimate partner for the negotiation of their return was North Korea (Takagi 1990:158)

These claims reflected their view of Japanese advocates' actions as anti-Soviet propaganda—a suspicion that was strengthened by the negative depiction within Japanese media of the Soviet oppression of Sakhalin Korean “victims” (Ōnuma 1992:93–94). Also, the Soviet view was affected by the North Korean government's efforts to prevent the repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea. Following the Korean War, after the factional conflicts and purge in North Korea (Lankov 1999, 2004) and the withdrawal of around 300,000 members of the People's Liberation Army (China) from North Korea, North Korea promoted the migration of Koreans to North Korea mostly from Northeast China, the Russian Far East (including Sakhalin), and Japan (Li 2012; Morris-Suzuki 2007). At this time, North Korea encouraged Sakhalin Koreans to emigrate to North Korea by promising

educational and employment opportunities (see chapter 5).⁵³ Because the mobilization of diasporic Koreans was an important means for its socialist-nation building, the North Korean government resisted the migration of diasporic Koreans to South Korea in the Cold War period. These social and political reactions from outside the Soviet Union partly affected the Soviet government's position.

While it was obvious that the South Korean government was expected to play a crucial role in Sakhalin Koreans' border-crossing, its social, political, and economic conditions made it difficult for advocates to negotiate with Soviet officials. Both civil activists and the returnees called upon the South Korean government to permit the entry of Sakhalin Koreans into South Korea. During the Park Chung-Hee administration (1961–1979), the government maintained its claim that Japan was primarily responsible for the Sakhalin Korean issues. This was done, despite strong opposition from the Korean public, in order to normalize South Korea's diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965 (Han 2011) and to receive economic aid from Japan in exchange for waiving the right to claim damages.⁵⁴ The South Korean government's negative stance towards hosting Sakhalin Koreans from the USSR also reflected its broader refusal to support the repatriation of overseas Koreans (Hyon 2012:182). Instead, South Korea adopted a policy of sending its 'surplus' population overseas, whether that meant as labor migrants to South America and West Germany, or as orphans to Euro-American countries.⁵⁵ Finally, Japanese advocates further made it difficult to actively engage the Korean officials since advocates were opposed to the South Korean authoritarian state's violence and oppression of civil liberties (Utsumi, Ōnuma, and Tanaka 2014:149–154).

The South Korean government left little room for any consideration of Sakhalin Koreans, but small changes were seen in South Korea by the 1970s. For example, South Korean media outlets gradually increased their coverage of Sakhalin Koreans which,

⁵³ The cause of this campaign was partly the demand for labor but it can also be explained by other factors, including North Korea's domestic politics, DPRK-USSR relations, and the socio-political conditions of Korean diasporas in China, the Russian Far East, and Japan (see Li 2012; Morris-Suzuki 2007). In chapter 5, I explore this point by linking it to past citizenship of Sakhalin Koreans.

⁵⁴ The normalization treaty between Japan and South Korea was signed after a 14-year negotiation process (from 1951 to 1965). Negotiation over compensation for past harms proceeded with difficulty during the 1950s. But in the 1960s under the Park regime, it was suddenly signed despite protests from both the public and opposition parties.

⁵⁵ During the 1970s alone, there were 46,000 Korean children who were adopted outside South Korea (Kim 2010:20–21).

similarly to Japanese media, harped on the oppressiveness of the Soviet regime. Moreover, South Korean civilians expanded their search for separated families and amplified their demands to be reunited with kin not only on Sakhalin but also in other places in the USSR and in China. With the establishment in 1970 of the Organization Promoting Repatriation of Interned Koreans on Sakhalin, South Korean legal experts also joined this movement.⁵⁶

In Japan, however, things were more complicated. Though some changes were seen, on the whole, the Japanese government's position of disengaging itself from the Sakhalin Korean issue remained unchanged. For example, some assembly members, local government representatives, and members of the Socialist Party actively pushed for the government to discuss Sakhalin Koreans' family reunification with Soviet officials. They advocated for the Sakhalin Korean issue to be included in the 1973 summit negotiation between Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka and General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev.⁵⁷ In this meeting, however, the Japanese government declared that Sakhalin Koreans could only pass through Japan en route to South Korea; all the expenses for their passage should also be paid by the South Korean government. As such, Japan was considered a space of temporary passage.

1.3.5. Moving forward, moving back

Faced with such structural limitations, the returnees and their advocates in Tokyo pursued legal action, for example, initiating in 1975, the so-called "Sakhalin Lawsuit." The main goal of this lawsuit was to verify that Sakhalin Koreans were legally in a position to return, by putting this case against a defendant, the Japanese government (Takagi 1990:77). The fundamental fact of Sakhalin Koreans being forcibly mobilized as laborers was strategically deployed. Yet, because in Japan there were no plaintiffs on whose behalf their lawsuit was filed, they sent letters to Sakhalin Koreans on Sakhalin calling for volunteers; selecting four among those who replied, and filed their lawsuit.

⁵⁶ In Korean, it was called *Hwat'ae ōngnyu kyop'o kwihwan ch'okchinhoe*. In 1980, the organization changed its name to the "Organization of Families Separated [between] China and the Soviet Union" (*chungso isan kajokhoe*); its central goal was to promote the union of kin between South Korea and socialist countries including the PRC and the USSR. However, with 70% of its members living in poverty, it was difficult for this organization to take public action (Ōnuma 1992:98)

⁵⁷ This was the first summit level meeting since 1956 when diplomatic relations between Japan and the USSR became normalized. Prime Minister Tanaka was also well known for establishing Japan's diplomatic ties with the PRC in 1972. During this 1973 visit, while Brezhnev's main agenda was to review Japan's role in the economic development of Siberia, Tanaka's main concern was Japan's territorial sovereignty over the Kurile Islands (Hara 1998).

This legal action succeeded in garnering attention from some Japanese ministers in the Diet. In 1975, the Minister of Justice stated that since the Japanese government had a moral responsibility to deal with Sakhalin Koreans, it would consider the situation as a humanitarian issue. Later, the Minister of Justice even granted 387 Sakhalin Koreans permission to enter Japan in 1978; due to opposition from the Immigration Bureau and other ministries, this action was never realized (Takagi 1990:152).

In contrast to such legal wrangling in Japan, a symbolically significant incident took place on Sakhalin in 1977 when forty Sakhalin Koreans who had demanded entry to Japan were suddenly deported to North Korea. Most of the literature on Sakhalin Koreans refers to this as “the deportation of To Man-Sang families” (To Man-Sang was one of the deported subjects). In 1977, To’s family and other Sakhalin Koreans protested in front of the civil administration office demanding departure from Sakhalin and entry into Japan. To Man-Sang already had permission from the local authorities to depart from Sakhalin and was waiting for the Japanese government’s entry approval when they were suddenly all sent to North Korea; nothing has been heard of them since (Paku 1995; Kuzin 2010).

When I conducted fieldwork on Sakhalin in 2010, the impact of this incident still reverberated among older Sakhalin Koreans. Many continued to wonder where those families had gone and whether they were still alive or dead. They also told me that after this incident, it became difficult for them to contact their kin in South Korea. As one woman put it, “At that time we did not say that we had relatives in South Korea.” Since that time, civic actions of Sakhalin Koreans around the issue of return have visibly declined. I assume that this decline can be attributed to the fear provoked by such an incident that has also shaped their everyday political imagination of state power and authority.

In this section, I have outlined the legal discourses and socio-political contexts within which Sakhalin Koreans came to be considered a political problem. Within the Cold War tension and the post-Asia-Pacific War context, interactions among various actors including state officials, civil advocates, and Sakhalin Koreans played a crucial role in the production and circulation of these legal discourses which made Sakhalin Koreans into political bodies. However, by the late 1980s, when the Cold War tension was significantly transformed, Sakhalin Koreans became more visible as victims and their mobility was allowed, which I discuss next.

1.4. Emerging international politico-ethical project

The Soviet Chief Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, introduced *perestroika* (reconstruction) in 1985 and *glasnost* (openness, public discussion) in 1987.⁵⁸ These policies were launched to “improve the efficiency and productivity of the Soviet government and industry by increasing accountability and the flow of necessary information” (Ries 1995:165). These policies changed the Sakhalin Koreans’ relation to South Korea drastically. This change was further accelerated from the South Korean side through the so-called Northern Policy, initiated under the Roh Tae-Woo administration (1988–1993). Finally, Japan’s humanitarian regime after 1990 provided the ideological, discursive, and material foundation for Sakhalin Koreans’ return migration. This section spells out how these transitions shaped Sakhalin Koreans’ return pathway when, to borrow a Sakhalin Korean expression, “The door was opened.” My analysis of the social and political implications of the return migration that made Sakhalin Koreans into exceptional subjects rests upon the scholarly discussions of humanitarianism. In the following sections, I first clarify the analytical framework upon which my discussion draws. Second, I go on to discuss how actual return was negotiated, planned, long suspended, and finally implemented as a state-sponsored project within the two socio-political contexts of South Korea and Japan. Third, I trace the unexpected consequences of Sakhalin Koreans’ return in the early 1990s. Finally, this section will discuss political implications of the return of Sakhalin Koreans.

1.4.1. The politics of humanitarianism

My analysis of how Sakhalin Koreans’ return was conducted as a politico-ethical project is built on an examination of ethnographic studies of humanitarianism. Scholars demonstrate how vulnerable subjects such as refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced people are “saved” by various institutions and organizations such as NGOs, religious groups, UN organizations, and states. In this context, medical and legal anthropology have studied events, practices, and discourses that are carried out within a moral framework of humanity

⁵⁸ I follow Yurchak’s translation of *glasnost* (2005:4). In addition to “openness,” *glasnost* is also translated in English with words, “publicity.”

and humanitarianism (Fassin 2005, 2010; Feldman 2007; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Malkki 1996; Redfield 2012, 2013).

My analysis answers the call to recognize what kinds of politics and power operate in recognizing, producing, and governing suffering bodies. Malkki's pioneering work on Hutu refugees in Tanzania (1996) demonstrates that the humanitarian project recognizes certain subjects as being worthy of being saved through employing symbolic ethical values of universal humanity, which renders them apolitical and ahistorical beings. Didier Fassin comments on Malkki's work, explaining that the recognition of suffering bodies is "the fulfilment of a political debt toward 'citizens of humanity'" (Fassin 2005:376). Scholars argue that the production of subjects to be saved through claiming humanity separates an ethical domain from the political, and this makes political and historical factors insignificant (Feldman and Ticktin 2010). This view helps me to analyze how key governments and advocates strategically separate the political from the moral and opt for a humanitarian approach to the return and family reunification of Sakhalin Koreans.

Miriam Ticktin's argument and her study of the humanitarian regime in France has been central for developing an analysis and understanding of the complexities of humanitarianism. Ticktin suggests an unintended dimension of humanitarian projects. Since suffering bodies become visible only in urgent situations — such as war and violence—that need immediate redress, long-term solutions are little considered (Ticktin 2011, 2014). In a similar vein, Feldman demonstrates that the practitioners of humanitarian operations also experience unexpected outcomes. Those actors who present themselves as subjects of a "good" deed often confront limitations to their actions. As a result, they are often compelled to compromise (Feldman 2007). These scholars show that humanitarian projects that require urgent solutions entail compromises and cause unexpected effects.

In addition to unexpected aspects, Ticktin also sheds light on the complex outcomes and politics of humanitarianism. Contemporary humanitarian actions overlap with such projects as development, state-building, military intervention, and gendered and racialized subject-making (2014:281–284). In her study of an emerging regime of care that has produced exceptional suffering bodies who are worthy of protection in France, Ticktin (2011) argues that not only medical knowledge and techniques, but also cultural pathologies make subjects visible victims who need immediate help. In this process, biology is used as

an essential, pure, and fixed resource that defines universal humanity beyond the political. However, those visible victims are required to perform cultural Otherness; in Ticktin's work, most of these exceptional refugees are Muslim women and those from former colonial countries. Ticktin reveals that the humanitarian care regime in France is a political strategy that creates the imagined suffering bodies, and at the same time produces non-qualified subjects who are able to work. Ticktin contends that morally legitimate bodies are mediated by economic inequalities and colonial history. This also reproduces racial, gendered, and geopolitical hierarchies.

In the following sections, I draw on the scholarship of humanitarianism, and specifically Ticktin's work. I first situate the return of Sakhalin Koreans, which was officially announced and implemented based on humanitarian concerns when discourses around the post-war political situation and the Cold War shifted in South Korea and Japan. I show how Sakhalin Koreans were recognized and made into visible victims. Second, I trace the unexpected aspects of return. At the end of this section I examine what kinds of political projects are involved in the return of Sakhalin Koreans.

1.4.2. South Korea's Northern Policy

In the 1980s the continuation of the military regime in South Korea under President Roh Tae-Woo adopted a new diplomatic strategy towards socialist countries known as the Northern Policy (*pukpang chǒngch'aek*).⁵⁹ This strategy was largely influenced by and contextualized within the global capital flows to the Eastern Bloc. Given the difficulty of elucidating a direct link between the Northern Policy and the South Korean government's attitude toward Sakhalin Koreans, instead I show a symbolic aspect of this Northern Policy and its political implications for Sakhalin Koreans.

Inspired by West Germany's diplomatic policy of *Ostpolitik*,⁶⁰ in 1998 President Roh employed the Northern Policy (sometimes called Nordpolitik) which paved the way for South Korea's rapprochement with communist regimes on the Eurasian continent. South

⁵⁹ Kim (2011) argues that the Northern Policy is different from the policy toward North Korea. In particular, Kim argues that the latter policy failed because of family reunification between North and South Korea not being practiced during Roh's regime.

⁶⁰ This policy was implemented by Willy Brandt, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1969. The policy sought a reconciliation with the Soviet-bloc countries in Eastern Europe.

Korea began to explore Eastern European markets through trade and investments. Gorbachev's Perestroika policy further increased the economic relations between the two countries (Kim 2011).

In addition to such economic effects, the Northern Policy also held strong symbolic meaning for the South Korean government. With South Korea set to host the Olympic Games in 1988, Roh was eager to invite socialist countries. The previous two Olympics held in Los Angeles (1980) and Moscow (1984) had been both boycotted by the "opponent blocs" during the Cold War.⁶¹ For the Roh administration, the Seoul Olympic games were a significant opportunity to demonstrate South Korea's autonomous diplomacy (Kim 2011:86) as well its political and economic strides toward the international community.

These symbolic successes with Cold War politics, in turn, significantly affected the ways in which the social bodies of Sakhalin Koreans were defined by South Korean state officials. In fact, since 1976 the South Korean government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the South Korean Ambassador to Japan, and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) had discussed Sakhalin Koreans' return to South Korea within unofficial talks (*Yŏnhap Nyusŭ* 2007). They stated that reunification of families between South Korea and the USSR would demonstrate how North Korea's opposition to Sakhalin Koreans' return was a reflection of its "inhumanity" from the perspective of the international community. They also saw this as leading to a split between North Korea and the Soviet Union. In this discourse, the South Korean state institutions strategically used the political idiom of "the same race" (*tongjok*) (*Yŏnhap Nyusŭ* 2007). This discourse made Sakhalin Koreans the subjects of this imagined political category, ethno-national-kin. South Korea thus came into consider it a point of pride to allow the border-crossing of Sakhalin Koreans in contrast to North Korea's inhumane treatment of these subjects. Within a context where Cold War politics was perpetuated, the South Korean state utilized a fictional ethno-national-race boundary. This strategic myth-making transformed Sakhalin Koreans into ethno-national victims.

The South Korean state recognized the political bodies of Sakhalin Koreans based on ethno-national-kinship ideology. According to this myth, belonging to ethno-national-kin

⁶¹ The previous military regime of the Chun Doo-Hwan administration (1980-1988) also engaged in "sport diplomacy."

signified “natural” and universal humanity. The reality was completely ignored, however. For example, Sakhalin Korean families included people identifying as Japanese and Russian. Sakhalin Koreans were not technically from South Korea, which is a political community produced by the Cold War after 1948. In addition, as Sakhalin Koreans had lived on Sakhalin for more than forty years, they were culturally different from South Korean citizens in South Korea. More importantly, the earlier “abandonment policy” of the South Korean government was completely abandoned. Through this politics, Sakhalin Koreans were recognized on the basis of invented humanity, namely in terms of an unchanging ethno-national-kin bond. This political imaginary served the South Korean government’s engagement with the family reunification and return of Sakhalin Koreans.

As a consequence of this politico-ethical project, Sakhalin Koreans were transformed into legitimate bodies for crossing the border at the time of the Olympic Games in Seoul. Those who were invited included those working for the local Sakhalin Korean media as well as representatives of ethnic Korean associations on Sakhalin. The government arranged for the South Korean Red Cross to oversee the homeland tour. Sakhalin Koreans were taken to amusement parks, cultural institutions, and large factories. Encountering a “prosperous” South Korea that was no longer the poor country that they remembered, it was hoped that these Sakhalin Koreans would report on the material “development” and “prosperity” of Seoul. In addition, following 1989, one year before the establishment of diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union (1990), the South Korean government exceptionally allowed family reunification *in* South Korea. Along with this humanitarian service, since 1990 Sakhalin Koreans served—just like the ethnic Korean Chinese—as a source of cheap labor in South Korea’s labor market. Many middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans whom I met had experienced working in its service sectors. They also worked in restaurants and on construction sites using visitor visas with three month-stays to shuttle back and forth between Sakhalin and South Korea. While some older Sakhalin Koreans found working in South Korea fun and exciting, others had difficulty adapting to its strict hierarchical relations in the workplace and heavy workload.

Although family reunification and short-term labor migration were welcomed, the South Korean government was deeply concerned about the domestic security of settling former members of a socialist society. The South Korean state employed the fictional

ideology of homogenous ethno-national-kin, but they excluded many Sakhalin Koreans from this political community. In addition, there were also concerns about the financial burden of settling them. In 1990, the Japanese cabinet approved a budget for Sakhalin Koreans' return. Nonetheless, the South Korean government delayed the implementation of their return, contending that the full costs of return and settlement in South Korea should be paid by the Japanese government. The South Korean government's engagement with Sakhalin Koreans was deeply affected by Cold War politics and the political economy of the time. This politics also reflected inconsistent and limited return entitlement.

1.4.3. Fifty years after the Asia-Pacific War

After the end of the almost fifty-year rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan and the election of Tomiichi Murayama, a member of the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), as Prime Minister, politics shifted.⁶² The Japanese government began to interpret the Sakhalin Koreans' return in different ways—in line with the emergence of a humanitarian regime in Japan. The origin of humanitarian aid and other humanitarian actions by the Japanese government, state and quasi-state institutions, private corporations, NGOs and NPOs, and individuals can be found in the post-Asia-Pacific War context of the 1960s (Nishikawa 2005).⁶³ Humanitarian action initially took the form of development aid. The material and economic assistance of development aid was juxtaposed with Japan's shifting position as an economic superpower in the 1970s, as well as with the discourse of “internationalization” (*kokusaika*) in the 1980s.⁶⁴ To situate the Japanese government's involvement in Sakhalin Koreans' return within a broader context, I briefly discuss the

⁶² This transitional moment is also closely linked to Japan's political shift, called the end of “the 1955 System,” which refers to the long-term post-war political system in Japan from 1955 to 1993. In 1993, the bi-party system between the ruling party, LDP, and the opposition party, the Socialist Democratic Party, that had been maintained since 1955, unravelled. Dower (1993) discusses the U.S. influence on this system from the 1940s.

⁶³ Nishikawa (2005) discusses the religious foundations of Japan's humanitarianism by examining the case of humanitarian actions in East Timor. In contrast, I show how the Japanese government's engagement with Sakhalin Koreans' return cannot be contextualized within an examination of only religious and philosophical origins.

⁶⁴ After World War II, Japanese private enterprises developed business in the Asia-Pacific regions that were once occupied by the Japanese military. State organizations including the ODA (Official Development Agency) and its governing body, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), played a key role in instituting material aid.

Japanese government's humanitarian approach to the return of Sakhalin Koreans by examining three key domestic and international changes.

One key domestic change was the establishment of an organization consisting of non-partisan Japanese assembly members. In 1987 they were tasked with discussing the Sakhalin Korean issue not only with the state representatives of Japan, but also with government officials from South Korea and the Soviet Union. By 1994 the number of members had grown to 155. Another change beginning in the 1990s was the emergence of a discourse of "post-war responsibility" that was widely circulated by civil, scholarly, and juridical actors. This resulted in many lawsuits demanding wartime reparations, including salaries paid to Chinese and Korean workers by the Japanese government and private corporations.⁶⁵ The 1991 public testimony by so-called "comfort women," survivors of Japan's wartime military sexual slavery, was another factor that had further social and political impacts. Altogether, these post-war political and legal actions made it difficult for the Japanese state to avoid dealing with "unresolved" issues, including Sakhalin Koreans.

Idioms of humanitarianism and moral responsibility circulated in Japan's Diet where assembly members from the nonpartisan organization and representatives of the state debated their standpoints on Sakhalin Koreans. In this debate the assembly members emphasized that Sakhalin Koreans were once mobilized for an industrialization project that was deeply linked to Japan's war efforts. Thus, repatriating the populations to their home after the war was a humanitarian responsibility. The members also maintained that humanitarian actions should be taken for Sakhalin Koreans who "longed for home" (*bōkyō no nen*)⁶⁶ and for reunification with family who had not been able to meet for more than thirty years. The government representatives responded that although the government is not able to take political and legal

⁶⁵ In the 1990s, an awareness of political issues, which had been long muted by Japanese state institutions' and private corporations' regarding development aid during the 1970s and 1980s emerged in many Asian nations. In addition, this change coincided with another critical issue examined by civil society activists about Japan's reliance on the Security Treaty and the U.S. during the Cold War (Yoneyama 1999:7–8).

⁶⁶ The significance of the symbol of "home," *furusato* (or *kokyō*), in Japan is noted by Creighton (1997). Creighton demonstrates that "hometown" and "home village" (*furusato*) are symbolized by rustic rural scenery in Japan. "Home" evokes emotional memories and the memories of childhood, as it is also linked to nurturing and motherhood. Since the 1970s, the image of *furusato* has been commodified in the market in changing social situations such as the growth of urban dwellers and the influence of Western lifestyles and culture. In the commodification process, nostalgia for *furusato* has been intensified, but the specific places of "home" are not identified; instead, "home" is "de-contextualized" (1997:239). Creighton argues that the quest for the symbolic "home" has been tied to belonging and cultural identity of Japan in modern and urban contexts, where *furusato* plays a key role in linking the present and future via the past.

action (on the basis of the SFPT and the South Korea-Japan normalization treaty), they would deal with Sakhalin Koreans' return from a humanitarian standpoint. This attitude was related to another repatriation project.

Since the 1980s, the Japanese government had arranged return for overseas Japanese from northeast China. This emerged as an unresolved post-war issue (Tamanoi 2006; Watts 2010). However, the Japanese state did not clarify a rationale for its responsibility because the justification of the repatriation of those Japanese subjects required the government to identify uncomfortable historical facts, such as the colonization of Manchuria and exploitation of China (Efird 2008:378–379). While leaving these issues ambiguous, the Japanese government promoted return migration of Japanese civilians from China to Japan. In a context where the rationale for engaging in the return of its “co-ethnic” subjects remained unspecified, the historical and political backdrops to the situation for the “Other,” Sakhalin Koreans, were also hard to identify. Instead, the Japanese government drew on the idea of “longing for home,” something humans are universally thought to have, to justify state involvement in the return of Sakhalin Koreans.⁶⁷ Based on the belief that a longing for home reflects their humanity, the government announced it would take humanitarian action.

In August 1994, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, Japan's Prime Minister Murayama officially released a statement about the Japanese government's role in Sakhalin Koreans' return, as follows:

This issue [repatriation of Sakhalin Koreans] cries out for our attention particularly from a humanitarian perspective, and the government intends to decide upon support policies as soon as possible, in full consultation with the governments of the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, and to implement them as [and when] they are firmed up (Murayama 1994).

In Murayama's statement, along with Sakhalin Koreans, two other issues were raised: moral responsibility for former “comfort women” and a financial obligation to the residents in

⁶⁷During this research, I visited the Hokkaido Prefecture of Japan where many returnees from Sakhalin had lived due to its geographic proximity to Sakhalin. I visited a local non-profit organization (NPO) that provided social support for returnees from Sakhalin. This NPO had been established to arrange the settlement of Japanese descendants from China.

Taiwan.⁶⁸ Within this political context that the emerging humanitarian regime associated with Sakhalin Koreans can be understood. The Japanese government separated a moral domain from the political histories, leaving the political ambiguous. In the next section, I show how Japan and South Korea's involvements resulted in ambiguous and inconsistent return entitlements.

1.5. The exodus of Sakhalin Koreans? Mixed emotions, unexpected consequences

In 1989, the South Korean media showed emotional moments of reunion among Sakhalin Koreans and their kin at Kimpo International Airport in Seoul. Sakhalin Koreans met South Korean siblings and relatives coming from southern provinces. Some other Sakhalin Koreans brought their family's ashes from Sakhalin. Still other elderly men met wives and children. In addition, many also visited their parents' graves. One expression frequently used to depict such emotional reunions was "sea of tears" (*nunmul pada*). However, how long such affective moments last is a different story. Moreover, return migration was not realistic for all Sakhalin Koreans. The following section draws on local Sakhalin Korean newspapers (*Sae Koryō Sinmun*) and coverage by Japanese journalists (*Hokkaidō Shinbunsha* 1988; Itō 1990) to portray the diverse ways that family reunification was experienced by Sakhalin Koreans from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Based on these sources, I examine the complex emotional experiences of older Sakhalin Koreans. In order to show the significant shift in the return project, the section is divided into two parts: before and after 2000.

1.5.1. Return before 2000

The transnational mobility of Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea can be considered as similar to the wider phenomenon of return mobility seen in the Soviet Union after 1990; however, the Sakhalin Koreans' case is distinctive. The first wave of migration from Russia (and the former USSR) to other Western countries from 1989-1994 was characterized by

⁶⁸ The Asia Women's Fund for "comfort women" was also established under this humanitarian regime. The establishment of diplomatic ties between Japan and the PRC (1972) left some of the war compensation for residents of the colonial Taiwan unresolved. Via the Asia Women's Fund, "Atonement project" was promoted, which includes construction of welfare facilities in Indonesia, and payments of "atonement money" and provision of welfare services and goods to former "comfort women" in Taiwan, the Philippines, the Netherlands, and in South Korea (Asia Women's Fund 2007).

migration to “ethnic homelands” for Russian Germans, Jews, and Greeks (Pilkington 1998:11–12). The normalization of relations between South Korea and the USSR in 1990 played a crucial role in Sakhalin Koreans’ mobility. Also, unlike Russian Germans, Jews, and Greeks, not all Sakhalin Koreans were eligible to return, and the South Korean government, a host country, did not actively support Sakhalin Koreans’ settlement. Rather, ambiguous, inconsistent, and limited migration entitlements provoked unexpected reactions among older Sakhalin Koreans.

Permanent return or return migration was not suggested or demanded in the early 1990s. In fact, prior to 1989, from 1981 to 1987, when South Korea and the USSR did not have diplomatic ties, temporary family reunification was already being arranged.⁶⁹ These temporary meetings had been held in Japan. A total of 51 Sakhalin Koreans visited Japan and stayed in the homes of the returnees and their advocates in Tokyo in order to meet their kin from South Korea. The question of permanent return was not posed until some Japanese advocates visited Sakhalin; at this time the Japanese government said that it might take into consideration the permanent return of those men who had wives and children in South Korea. While the issue of long-term return was not explicitly discussed, there was a sense of public sympathy for men who remained unmarried on Sakhalin and were long-separated from their families in South Korea.

With the visits of many older Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea after 1990, the issue of return migration became more prominent. Using the excuse that housing, social welfare, and other government infrastructures were not ready for the return of Sakhalin Koreans, the South Korean government only prioritized the return of Koreans who had *no families on Sakhalin* (*muyŏn’go*) who had records of household registry in South Korea. Among these subjects, those with South Korean lineal kin were allowed to return first.⁷⁰ South Korean lineal kin were viewed as a source of security and guarantee for returning Sakhalin Koreans.

⁶⁹ During this period, stateless subjects gained permission for departure more easily than did Sakhalin Koreans who had North Korean nationality. The latter subjects were not able to visit Japan. This was due to a lack of diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea and to the Russian government’s lack of authority over the departure of stateless subjects. The citizenship of Sakhalin Koreans in 1988 was as follows: there were approximately 32,000 who had Soviet citizenship, 2,700 who were Stateless Persons, and 300 who had North Korean citizenship (Kuzin 2010:164).

⁷⁰ In 1989 before the USSR-South Korea normalization treaty, the local authorities of Sakhalin permitted the departure of those Sakhalin Koreans who (mostly) had South Korean kin to act as guarantors in South Korea. After 1990, such restrictions no longer existed in Russia, while South Korea continued to regulate eligibility.

However, even though the subjects had lineal kin in South Korea, those who had families on Sakhalin were not allowed to return; they had to be ‘single’ on Sakhalin.

These inclusions and exclusions provoked various reactions among older Sakhalin Korean men in particular. For example, those “single” men who remained unmarried or did not have families on Sakhalin could move back to South Korea to live either with their South Korean kin or in a welfare facility in South Korea.⁷¹ However, the situations of Sakhalin Korean men who had families both in South Korea and on Sakhalin were complicated. These men had married in Korea before migrating to Sakhalin. After the war, they re-married on Sakhalin. Those with wives and children both in South Korea and on Sakhalin, meanwhile, were excluded from this provision, prompting some to divorce their wives on Sakhalin in order to return.

After reuniting with their family members in South Korea, these men continued to express complex feelings. Some stated that it was “better” to live at “home” than in a “foreign land” even though material conditions in South Korea might be worse and reuniting with their family was difficult. Some returnees stayed with their lineal kin such as their siblings, which made them uncomfortable. Others declared that it was hard to take care of themselves and their South Korean wives since both were elders. Without welfare assistance, it was also difficult for those men to survive; many of their South Korean relatives lived in rural areas and were also poor. As a result, some men returned to Sakhalin to reunite with their wives whom they had divorced in order to go to South Korea. Such “reverse returns” illustrate some of the unexpected dimensions of their return to South Korea.

Second, in addition to the prioritization of “single” subjects, another source of confusion for the older Sakhalin Korean men was the birth year-based eligibility requirement. According to a local Sakhalin Korean newspaper, only those born before 1927 were allowed to return to South Korea.⁷² One man born in 1928 complained about being excluded from this return policy even though he was also a forced laborer. I propose that this

⁷¹ Later, one religious organization promoted a welfare facility, and some of those Sakhalin Koreans who did not have South Korean lineal kin were allowed to migrate to South Korea and to live in the facility.

⁷² I was unable to find any official statement about this entitlement. But considering the fact that those born before 1927 were adults over 18 years of age in 1945, I presume that the return entitlement was given to those who had migrated to Sakhalin as laborers, based on a labor law which allowed companies to recruit those above 18 years of age. Later in 1994, the representatives of local Sakhalin Korean organizations demanded that those born after 1930 be included in the return.

age requirement did not consider experiences among poor Koreans during the colonial period. Koreans in general and economically disadvantaged people, in particular, did not report a child's birth to the local municipal offices right away. This was due both to the high infant mortality rate and to the view that public registration was of little significance. In addition, some under-aged Korean men used their father's or older brothers' names and IDs to get jobs; still others left their hometown to work outside of Korea on behalf of male kin and household heads who were the subjects of recruitment. Therefore, such birth-based eligibility which relied on official documents, ignored the Sakhalin Koreans' specific experience and provoked a sense of injustice.

Third, citizenship evoked emotional dilemmas among Sakhalin Koreans. Since dual citizenship was not allowed in South Korea, many older Sakhalin Koreans renounced their Soviet citizenship. Some did so because they thought that acquiring South Korean citizenship to live in South Korea was "natural."⁷³ Others did so with great concern about their retirement pension. Regardless of their citizenship status—the Soviet Union, North Korea, or Stateless—Sakhalin Koreans were entitled to a pension in the Soviet Union, and it was a key material object that held significance for them (chapters 4 and 5). Their concerns about their pension show how the return of older Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea was laden with ambivalences.

Considering the various responses and concerns that were articulated by the Sakhalin Koreans in the early 1990s, I suggest that the entitlement of return was not universally offered, but limited from the beginning. In addition, the policy did not take into consideration the quality of life after return. Despite such problems, in a situation where many senior Sakhalin Koreans were passing away and there were no policies or public assistance for return, both the representatives of Sakhalin Korean organizations on Sakhalin and their advocates felt compelled to find the most expedient way for them to return to South Korea. But after 2000, with the official implementation of return as an international state-sponsored project, the priority given to those Sakhalin Koreans who were single, had kinship relationships in South Korea, and were seniors changed.

⁷³ I found a tendency to renounce Soviet citizenship (or to stop receiving a pension in Russia) among elderly Sakhalin Korean women who did not work in the industrial sector, but instead worked in the private agricultural sphere during late Soviet times. They acknowledged that their labor pension was lower than for those who worked in the industrial sector.

1.5.2. Return after 2000

Based on an agreement in 1994 that began to implement an infrastructure for the Sakhalin Koreans' return, both the Japanese and South Korean governments began to institute the Permanent Return Project. The implementation of a material infrastructure was a response to elderly Sakhalin Koreans' desire for a space to live by themselves in South Korea. It included the construction of an apartment complex with 489 units called Homeland Village in Ansan, a suburb of Kyōnggi Province. While the Japanese government paid for the deposit and rental fee of the units, the South Korean government supplied the land.⁷⁴ In addition, the Japanese government built a medical and welfare facility called Incheon Welfare Center for Sakhalin Koreans for those who needed physical assistance. With the construction of these residential facilities in South Korea, the return entitlement of the Sakhalin Koreans also changed. Those born before August 15, 1945 became eligible. Moreover, since each household space was for *two people* and not one, *both* people had to meet the criteria. If one person was born after 1945, neither was allowed to return to South Korea. Two persons (married couples and friends) who were either ethnically "Russian" or from "the northern part of Korea" were also not allowed to return. Although the return entitlement expanded, it did so by excluding people on the basis of age groups, ethnic groups, and birthplace.

Despite the provision of such material infrastructure by the governments, there were unexpected consequences. For example, in 2000 Homeland Village remained less than fully occupied (Chōng and Yōm 1999). Partly this was because many older Sakhalin Koreans had jobs on Sakhalin and thought that it was sufficient to go to South Korea for temporary visits but not to relocate permanently. More importantly, it was hard for Sakhalin Koreans to imagine a new life in South Korea without their offspring. Another consequence of priority being given to companions was, ironically, to make single subjects "problematic"—compelling some to find a companion to live with in South Korea. Those returnees who

⁷⁴ In 2005, The Japanese government also capitulated to the demands of local Sakhalin Koreans by constructing the Sakhalin Koreans' Cultural Center on Sakhalin for those who did not wish to return to South Korea. This building includes a Korean restaurant, an event space, and some classrooms. While local Sakhalin Koreans often used these facilities, they were also available for other local residents. In addition, the Korea Education Center, an organization of the Ministry of Education of South Korea, is also located within this facility. While the local representative of a Sakhalin Korean ethnic organization initially demanded the construction of a welfare center for those elders who had not moved to South Korea, it was never seriously considered.

became widows or widowers after moving to South Korea also married each other in collective marriage ceremonies (Ch'oe 2003:122).

While many Sakhalin Koreans did not seriously consider return in the beginning, as I will show in the chapters that follow, they changed their minds when they heard from other returnees about “life in South Korea being OK.” By this, they meant that they could survive economically with government assistance. They could also enjoy South Korea as a site of consumption. With more Sakhalin Koreans returning to South Korea, Homeland Village soon became full and, after 2008, it became necessary to allocate new housing to the returnees.

Despite the growing demand for return among Sakhalin Koreans, many of the marriage partners of the eligible Sakhalin Koreans remained excluded. Responding to this issue in 2009, the Japanese and South Korean governments expanded the program to include a companion of the subject who was eligible to return.⁷⁵ As long as the Sakhalin Korean was eligible, so was their companion regardless of age, ethnicity, and birthplace. This new policy also created a distinction between “first generation” and “second generation” of older Sakhalin Koreans. While the Japanese government bore the expenses of the former, the South Korean government bore the expenses of the latter. I suggest that this introduced an international division of humanitarian aid. As a result of this humanitarian project, Sakhalin Koreans also began to occupy an exceptional position. After 1990, for older Sakhalin Koreans lacking property, social capital, and the ability to work in South Korea, the government's welfare assistance became a crucial condition of their return. Older Sakhalin Koreans became categorized as “special welfare subjects,” a topic I discuss in chapter 4.

On Sakhalin, many criticized the Japanese and South Korean governments in regard to the limited entitlement, but Sakhalin Koreans also criticized the senior Sakhalin Korean men who had negotiated the terms of the return project in the 1990s at the expense of those who remained behind. For example, in 2010 one elderly woman told me: “Those elderly Korean people thought only about themselves, not thinking at all about others and the

⁷⁵ Since 2009, “the first generation” subjects have been allowed to migrate to South Korea with one companion. But there has been another ‘exceptional case.’ Along with one companion, one disabled child is also considered “the second generation” subject and allowed to return. In this case, “the first generation” of subjects can migrate to South Korea with *two* companions.

future!” What they meant was that these senior Koreans only thought about the condition of their return without thinking about their subsequent separation from their children.

In response to these criticisms, one key person who had worked for an ethnic Korean organization on Sakhalin recollected the past and told me: “We just did what we could at the moment.” Both the Sakhalin Korean senior men and their advocates were, in other words, forced to compromise in the negotiation proceedings.⁷⁶ The advocates and the elderly Sakhalin Korean men thought return should be arranged immediately because elderly Sakhalin Korean men who wanted to return did not have much time to live. In this urgent situation, the return project was arranged without consideration of either the long-term consequences or diverse voices among Sakhalin Koreans. Hence, while many found the policy of return migration problematic, the advocates and senior Sakhalin Korean men embraced the project.⁷⁷

1.6. Permanent Return Project as imperial debris

Although the return project expanded in 2009, the entitlement of return did not change. August 15, 1945 is the day when Emperor Hirohito as Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese imperial army, officially announced Japan’s surrender. In Japan, August 15, 1945 is widely understood as the end of the Asia-Pacific War and the defeat of Japan. In contrast, the two Koreas today view this date as marking their liberation. Considering that the return entitlement is given based on this symbolic date and the political implications of Sakhalin Koreans’ return, I suggest that the Permanent Return Project in the name of humanitarian aid is a sort of “imperial debris” of the present (Stoler 2008).⁷⁸

⁷⁶ In 1989 when the South Korean and Japanese governments agreed to engage in the family unification and temporary return of Sakhalin Koreans, the advocates withdrew their appeal of the Sakhalin Lawsuit, which was filed in 1975 without the Judgement of First Instance. After this, the Sakhalin Korean plaintiffs began a new legal proceeding in 1990 demanding compensation, but this lawsuit was also withdrawn in 1999.

⁷⁷ This attitude stands in striking contrast to the case of South Korean “comfort women.” South Korean advocates strongly rejected receiving the monetary support because it was collected not only from the government but also Japanese civilians. The advocates and some of the South Korean women who were former “comfort women” viewed the state and privately funded monetary compensation for their ordeals as a form of humiliation. For controversial reactions to and consequences of the Asia Women’s Fund, see Soh (2008). By contrast, older Sakhalin Koreans embraced the return project.

⁷⁸ Pointing to the limitations of such concepts as colonial legacy and empire, Stoler (2008) proposes examining imperial formation through the concept of “imperial debris.” While the former concepts consider fixed forms of sovereignty (and also leftover and memory), the concept of imperial debris examines a process of becoming, as Stoler puts it is the “enduring quality of imperial remains” that shapes the present and future (2008:194). I build

By using the concept of imperial debris, I argue that the state-sponsored return project is what Stoler calls a graded form of sovereignty. It indicates a process and a political project that the effects of empire have reactivated (2008:194). This graded sovereignty is being formed within the present, following 1990 and the shifting geopolitical relations between Japan and the rest of Asia (Gluck 1997:16) which resulted in legal and ethical discourses of accountability, as well as suffering among civilians and former military personnel in Asia being voiced.⁷⁹ Japan's technologies of empire were grounded in exploitation, displacement, and mobilization of subjects for the purpose of war. After 1990, when the end of the Cold War coincided with the fiftieth year anniversary of the Asia-Pacific War (Gluck 1997), the Japanese government and private corporations were confronted with re-engagements with former colonial and imperial subjects. The return project of Sakhalin Koreans is a way in which graded sovereignty is being recomposed in a persistent way.

I suggest that Japan's re-engagement with Sakhalin Koreans is mediated not only by colonial history but also by post-colonial racialization. Since the 1920s, the concept of the national body (*kokutai*) served as a dominant national ideology in Japan. This ideology requires that *heterogeneous* ethnic groups to unite and constitute one national polity under the emperor system. However, in the post-war context, this ideology shifted and a new national ideology emerged emphasizing Japan as a *homogenized* nation (Oguma 2002; Weiner 2009). This racialized ideology was used to assimilate and exclude "Others" who earlier had been technically included. Koreans are one of these Others and this ideology affected the Japanese government's legal discourse concerning the nationality of Sakhalin Koreans. I contend that the humanitarian return project is interwoven with the re-assessment of political relations between the Japanese government and Sakhalin Koreans in the post-War and post-colonial contexts. The Japanese government expresses a moral responsibility for "first generation" subjects based on the date of the end of the war. This shows that Sakhalin Koreans were re-nationalized and became legitimate subjects. The Japanese government may not have completely predicted this effect. Nevertheless, the strategic

my discussion here on the concept of imperial debris because it helps me consider "strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present" (2008:196).

⁷⁹ The subjects who started to raise voices in public are not limited to people in Asia but also include "Japanese." As Gluck notes, in Japan, while heroic stories were narrated, many other civilians' stories "remained frozen memor[ies]" (1997:16) until around 1989 when the Cold War ended.

politico-ethical approach eventually formed the politics of the present (Stoler 2008:196, 198).

The concept of imperial debris suggests that imperial formations of the present cut through nation-states, as well as through an “interior” and “exterior” (Stoler 2008:204). This point helps me argue that this graded form of sovereignty is not being reactivated only by the Japanese government, but also by the South Korean government. The South Korean government placed primary responsibility on the Japanese government to address the return migration of Sakhalin Koreans. In this way, the South Korean government makes a reasonable excuse for its involvement in the return project. As they play a supplementary role, the government avoids possible antipathy from South Korean citizens.⁸⁰ By using this strategy, South Korea makes older Sakhalin Koreans victims of Japanese colonialism, and reproduces the victimized nation. South Korea’s engagement with the return ultimately recomposes the imperial debris.

In addition, considering the effects of this humanitarian action, I propose that this return project is juxtaposed with South Korea’s ethno-nation-building shaped by Cold War politics and global capitalism. South Korea performs the role of a “generous” state homeland which cares for “poor” diasporic kin from a socialist country. This fictional nation is, in fact, hierarchized based on Cold War geopolitics. By limiting the number of older Sakhalin Koreans who can live in South Korea, the South Korean government compels other younger Sakhalin Koreans to cross the state border as consumers and laborers. This is the same way that the South Korean state treats Korean Chinese and Koreans from the former Soviet Union. Diasporic Koreans from socialist countries are positioned with lower status than those from the U.S. (Seol and Skrentny 2009).⁸¹ In addition, in maintaining the non-eligible subjects, South Korea does not challenge the sovereignty of Russia (or the Sakhalin local

⁸⁰ While empathy and moral sentiments for diasporic Koreans are expressed in South Korean media, public opinion sees giving rights and entitlements to those subjects in South Korea as “unfair.” For example, I met one South Korean middle-aged woman near an apartment complex where older Sakhalin Korean returnees live. She said, “Why do only those people receive many things from the government? My parents also experienced a war.”

⁸¹ In their study of the citizenships of Chinese Korean workers and Korean Americans in South Korea, Seol and Skrentny (2009) argue that ethno-nationhood in post-Cold War South Korea is hierarchized. The subjects from China, a socialist country, are given fewer entitlements than Koreans from the U.S. I suggest that this hierarchy reflects the Overseas Korean Act passed in 1998. In this act, overseas Koreans were identified as those who emigrated from South Korea after 1948 when the Republic of Korea was established. This definition excluded Korean Chinese and Koreans in the Soviet Union because they left “Korea” before 1948.

government). For the Russian and local Sakhalin governments, out-migration of its citizens has been a constant concern, something I describe in the next section. Instead, not only South Korean media, but also the Sakhalin local media, the Sakhalin governor, and Sakhalin Korean entrepreneurs often represent the bodies of (young) Sakhalin Koreans as a bridge between Russia and South Korea. They are expected to play a role in connecting the two nation-states, but are also expected to make economic contributions to both countries in an era of post-Cold War global capitalism. Finally, I suggest that this ethno-nation-building is inseparable from the production of real “foreign” Others, such as migrants from Southeast Asia and overseas Chinese (*Hwagyo*).

I argue that the return project is part of the formation of a new regime of sovereignty within the post-Cold War transitions in Northeast Asia. I also suggest that the discourse of “the ends” of political upheavals is problematic. The return project is an ongoing political project, and I will continue to explore the return project shapes Sakhalin Koreans’ moral experiences.

1.7. Sakhalin in 2010: Everyday landscape of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk

I have briefly illustrated the new return policy after 2000 as one of the contexts shaping contemporary return migration among older Sakhalin Koreans. Yet in order to understand the complex consequences of return, another social context needs to be taken into account: the shifting social, political, and economic conditions of post-Soviet Sakhalin. By this, I consider the Sakhalin region as part of a transnational social field (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szaton 1992) in which the various discourses and meanings of return are produced and the everyday practices of older Sakhalin Koreans are carried out. This section aims to portray the landscape of Sakhalin and the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 2010. In particular, I focus on the impact of global capitalism on the region, and the local concerns and reactions to social change.

In everyday conversations among older Sakhalin Koreans, they often made contradictory statements that were full of ambivalence. On one hand, they spoke of how Sakhalin had changed so drastically; on the other hand, they complained that “nothing has changed at all.” Although their understanding of change is situational and diverse, I describe the social context of Sakhalin in which such discourses are produced and circulated.

First, one of the crucial factors to affect the local landscape of Sakhalin Island was the flow of capital through offshore oil and gas exploration, the Sakhalin Project.⁸² From the 19th century and throughout the Soviet period, Sakhalin became the object of international interest due to its natural resources, including coal, timber, and oil. In the post-Soviet context, while interest in the first two sectors declined, oil and gas exploration began receiving growing international investment.⁸³ Foreign actors became increasingly involved because the domestic oil industry lacked capital, technology, and offshore drilling experience even though it had knowledge of oil and gas (Bradshaw 2010:353).⁸⁴ On Sakhalin, the Sakhalin Projects were launched to produce and export oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) via pipelines to the Russian Far East, as well as to the Asia-Pacific regions such as Japan, South Korea, China, India, and Taiwan.⁸⁵ Involving a variety of global actors, such as multinational oil companies based in the U.S. and Europe, trading companies from Japan, and international financial institutions and service companies from around the world (Bradshaw 1998:148–151), the total investment for the Sakhalin Projects amounts to US\$5 trillion.⁸⁶

Despite the scale of these projects, the Sakhalin administration receives only a minimal share of the royalties and revenues generated by these projects (Bradshaw 2010:348). Following the election of Vladimir Putin in 1999, the asymmetrical nature of the center-regional power relations was reinforced. Such power relations are captured in the statements by many older Sakhalin Koreans: “Moscow will take 95%, leaving only 5% for Sakhalin!” In local media and among older Sakhalin Koreans, however, the economic situation and future prospects of Sakhalin are also viewed relatively positively, at least compared to the situation of other provinces in the Russian Far East, such as Yakutsk (the Sakha Republic) and Primorye. For example, local Sakhalin people find employment in oil

⁸² The Sakhalin Projects have a total of six different projects, but to date, Sakhalin Projects I and II are the only ones working.

⁸³ This decline was caused by high production costs, low labor productivity, and lack of investment in maintaining the infrastructure of the workers’ settlement (Bradshaw, Chernikov, and Kirkow 2000:197–198).

⁸⁴ See Bradshaw (2010) for the economic and political history of the Sakhalin Project. Bradshaw, an economic geographer, traces the processes of the oil and gas development project with a focus on various power relations between region and center, state control over the industry, and the international oil companies’ roles.

⁸⁵ The effects of the construction of pipelines and the Sakhalin Project on indigenous peoples is discussed by Roon (2006).

⁸⁶ These companies involved include Gazprom, Rosneft, Shell, ExxonMobile, British Petroleum, Mitsui, and Mitsubishi. State agencies of Japan, China, and India are also involved.

and gas related jobs, so there is a low unemployment rate (around 4.6%).⁸⁷ Moreover, despite the unequal revenue-sharing scheme, the projects are understood to be beneficial in supporting the local welfare system and expanding local infrastructure, such as road construction.

The growing influence of Sakhalin's oil and gas industry is seen in the shifting cultural ideas and economic activities among local people, as well as in the ethnically divided labor market in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. For example, many young people (and their parents) regard employment in an oil-related company such as Rosneft, Gazprom, and ExxonMobile as highly desirable, so they major in "practical" subjects such as English and information technology. The growing interest in these subjects is also reflected in the name of Sakhalin's first private college: the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Institute of Economics, Law, and Information. This private institute was formed by a local Sakhalin Korean in 1991. In addition, with the growing number of business traders from Pacific Asia, Europe, and North America, more local people are engaging in hotel, restaurant, and retail businesses. Finally, such economic shifts are also bringing about an increasing flow of labor migrants from the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, China, and North Korea.⁸⁸ These migrants work as bus drivers, house and office cleaners, fruit vendors, and also work on construction sites.

In addition, another prominent change is the growing spatial and social proximity of Sakhalin to the East and to Pacific Asia through the flow of material objects and the development of new transportation infrastructure. For example, in 2010, direct flights from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to Shanghai, Tokyo, and Seoul were introduced. From Sakhalin, I was able to take a two-hour non-stop flight to Tokyo and four-hour flights to Seoul. With both South Korean and Japanese consulates on Sakhalin, it is easy for the local citizens to get travel documents and other assistance. Moreover, while Eastern and Western Europe have been relatively popular destinations for leisure travel, the new connectivity of global

⁸⁷ However, Sakhalin Korean people told me that since many oil- and gas-related jobs (specifically in the construction sector) are seasonal, in winter those jobs were not available. The ratio of workers in retail, accommodation, and food service sectors is also, in fact, higher than that of workers in the oil and gas sector.

⁸⁸ Migrant workers' moves to Sakhalin are also explained by local out-migration and the relatively stable retail and service industry in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk.

capitalism in Asia encourages more Sakhaliners to travel to other temperate climates in regions such as Southern China, Taiwan, and Thailand.

Furthermore, these proximities are experienced in everyday consumption through flows of material objects. The majority of cars are imported from Japan, many processed foods and seasonings are shipped from South Korea, and imports of vegetables from China are increasing. It is not difficult to find Japanese and Korean restaurants in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. The retail market in the city is called “Peking” (Beijing). Clothing comes from countries all over Eurasia such as Moscow, Belarus, Turkey, China, and South Korea. Clothes and other fabrics and accessories are sold not only in the local markets but also in mid- and large-scale shopping malls located on the outskirts of the city, which attract many young people. In contrast, a Soviet-style department store (*univermag*), located in the central area of the city, is becoming less popular. In this material landscape, the local people, in particular older people, are sensitive about the origin of consumer objects. For example, in market and every day talk, older Sakhalin Koreans often discuss whether an item is from “Russia,” “China,” “Europe,” “Moscow,” “Sakhalin,” or “South Korea” etc. In 2010, the local Sakhalin peoples’ everyday socioeconomic lives were very oriented towards East Asia.⁸⁹

These transformations do not necessarily lead to a better life for Sakhaliners. The local government, media, and people often express concern about various problems, including a declining and aging population. The Russian Far East, in which Sakhalin is located, has faced an out-migration of people for the past two decades. The populations in Magadan, Kamchatka, and Chukotka have been in consistent decline. While the local government of Sakhalin has promoted professional class migration of Russian citizens from the mainland, in particular, medical doctors and other skilled workers, few have heeded the call. Older Sakhalin Koreans often lamented that “all smart Russian people who used to live on Sakhalin have gone” and “only people like ‘us’ are left behind.” They made sense of the population decline through devaluing those living in the Sakhalin region. Aging is also considered a problem. One-third of the population on Sakhalin is older than 65 years of age.

⁸⁹ Such shifting sociocultural and economic orientations to East Asia are also mentioned by Bruce Grant who first conducted fieldwork in 1990 on northern Sakhalin and then revisited in 2011 (Grant 2012). Grant briefly compares the sense of remoteness of Nivkh people when northern Sakhalin was a closed border zone in 1990 to the contemporary sense of proximity to East Asia.

The low pension was an everyday source of discontent for older people. Older people criticized the government's inability to take care of its people. Like impoverished people in Russia talk about themselves (Höjdestrand 2009), older Sakhalin Koreans also considered themselves as beings no longer needed by society.

In everyday conversations and reflections on their lives, older Sakhalin Koreans evaluate the local and national social change in diverse ways. Life on Sakhalin is not evaluated in terms of whether it is "good" or "bad." I will discuss this in the following chapters. In this section, I would like to note that, like other areas of Russia in the post-Soviet context, older Sakhalin Korean people felt a sharp gap between the rich and the poor. I witnessed this gap among older Sakhalin Koreans when I visited the house of one of the richest Sakhalin Koreans who had a garage-sized bathhouse and sauna and two domestic workers. The house was a cottage-style house, located on the outskirts of the city, like those across Russia that emerged as social stratification intensified in the 1990s (Humphrey 2002). By contrast, I saw other elderly people sharing a bedroom with their adolescent grandchildren. Many older Sakhalin Koreans who moved to the city from the rural regions of Sakhalin after the closure of the mines struggled to find a source of income. Moreover, when they talked about local social change, many older Sakhalin Koreans were also concerned about their grandchildren's future. One middle-aged man told me: "This country does not teach children anything good!" Some expressed fear about their grandchildren growing up on Sakhalin with its high rates of crime. Their concerns reflect the local media and television programs which frequently report crimes by gangs and young people who are addicted to drugs.

I have focused on several notable socio-economic changes on Sakhalin, and have briefly described the everyday social lives of people on Sakhalin from the older peoples' perspectives. I have considered these points in order to provide the basis for a more nuanced examination of older Sakhalin Koreans' social imaginaries, of their production and negotiation of meanings and values, and of their sense of belonging in a time of return. In the following chapters I discuss all of these subjects.

1.8. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced Sakhalin Koreans' return. By considering the legal, political, and ethical discourses, as well as the political actions of various actors, I have shown how their social bodies and border crossing have been made into a "problem" demanding a "resolution." This chapter has also contextualized the Sakhalin Koreans' return within shifting geopolitical transformations. These include the end of World War II, the emerging Cold War structure, the easing of Cold War tensions, and the emerging humanitarian regime. Tracing these processes, I have sought to highlight how the Sakhalin Koreans' return has become a state-sponsored humanitarian project.

Drawing on anthropological studies of humanitarianism, this chapter has also examined the distinctive political implications of the return project of Sakhalin Koreans. The key actors of many humanitarian projects that scholars study are religious groups and UN-based institutions and organizations. In contrast, I have proposed that the return project of Sakhalin Koreans intersects with imperial formations and nation-building whereby both Japanese and South Korean states re-engage with Sakhalin Koreans as former colonial subjects in strategic ways in the post-colonial and Cold War contexts. I argue that what makes the experiences of return mobility and transnational lives of older Sakhalin Koreans distinctive is precisely the colonial and Cold War histories.

Despite this chapter's focus on large social transformations, I also maintain that these contexts do not reveal or explain all the practices and consequences of return among older Sakhalin Koreans in 2010. Their actual experiences are full of complex, inconsistent, contingent, and unpredictable elements. Moreover, the meanings and understanding they have of their lives remain contested. Thus, in the chapters to follow, my ethnographic study offers further analysis of older Sakhalin Koreans' experience of kinship and citizenship to demonstrate why and how this humanitarian project ironically provokes moral discourses around what is "inhumane."

Part I: Separation and Union in the Transnational Space

In Part I, I examine how return migration shapes older Sakhalin Koreans' experiences around family separation and union in transnational settings. I argue that return mobility entails complex imaginaries, emotions, aspirations, and discourses of connection and disconnection. Considering the ways that Sakhalin Koreans encounter and live through unexpected situations, Part I aims to show how their relational mode of being and a sense of personhood are reconstituted in the context of returning.

Part I is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the parent-child tie. I examine the kinds of discourses, emotions, and meanings that older Sakhalin Koreans produce and circulate around the subject of separation and union of parent (mother) and offspring between Sakhalin and South Korea. Second, I consider that older Sakhalin Koreans represent and narrate their return migration as they evoke symbolic connection with and disconnection from other kin. Chapter 2 highlights how older Sakhalin Koreans make themselves into kinds of subjects through kinship in the process of crossing the state border and migrating to South Korea.

Chapter 3 explores how the migration entitlement based on year of birth and housing arrangements in South Korea also encourages older Sakhalin Koreans to imagine, manage, and appreciate symbolic separation and union in relation to friends, as well as companions. I focus on the specific moral discourses and imaginaries surrounding such friendship and companionship, and explore how these processes involve the negotiation of gender and power, and everyday closeness.

By demonstrating a range of experience around separation and union in a transnational setting, I suggest that kinship serves key components of older Sakhalin Koreans' personhood. It is not simply that family is 'naturally' a given for older Sakhalin Koreans. Rather I argue that the return migration project forces them to reckon with kinship, across diverse times and spaces.

Chapter 2: Parent – Child Ties Across Multiple Times and Borders

In Incheon Welfare Center for Sakhalin Koreans, I had casual conversations with elderly women in public spaces such as corridors, the television room, and gardens, and also in their living quarters. One day, as I talked with one elderly woman in her room, she whispered to me: “You may hear from the grandmothers that they left their children on Sakhalin, but the truth is they are not cared for by their children on Sakhalin. That’s why they had to leave Sakhalin.” On Sakhalin, Kolya, in his late 50s, thought I was a representative of South Korean organizations or a South Korean journalist, and suddenly came to me with tears in his eyes, saying: “How is it possible for parents to abandon children and leave [for Korea]? There are no such human beings in the world! Only Koreans! Koreans are really unlearned (K. *mospaewössta*).”

Throughout my fieldwork, older Sakhalin Koreans’ conversations, both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, constantly circulated a discourse of separation between parents and children—specifically older women and their adult children. I also found that women became targets of the discourse, and of moral criticisms. In this chapter, I examine this phenomenon and ask a number of questions. For example, how does the transnational migration of older women who are mothers become problematized? Within the context in which many women have left Sakhalin, how do older Sakhalin Korean women, both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, imagine and appreciate both living apart and living with adult children? How do returnees actually practice connecting and disconnecting in transnational contexts? These questions are discussed drawing on the subject of transnational family and kinship.

Along with the mother-child bond, Sakhalin Koreans also associate transnational return migration with symbolic separation and union in relation to other relatives, including deceased parents and their living relatives in South Korea. The latter half of the chapter explores the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans manage their emotions and commitment to these persons, who are embedded in past emplacement and displacement. In addition, I discuss the new type of discourse and sentiments regarding return by comparing them to the dominant discourse of homeland in the Cold War era.

This chapter aims to show ways that the inter-subjectivities of older Sakhalin Koreans are re-formed through complex imaginaries and acts of connection and

disconnection, under circumstances where transnational mobility becomes possible for themselves and for those close to them. I also discuss what kinds of roles kinship plays in the older Sakhalin Koreans' negotiation of a sense of personhood.

2.1. Subject-formation through connecting and disconnecting

My analysis of older Sakhalin Koreans' experiences of separation and union concerns kinship. But drawing on the analytical lens of everyday moral experience, I extend the discussion of personhood and kinship into a transnational setting. This section clarifies this point. First, the study of everyday moral experience helps me to examine specific acts of older Sakhalin Koreans around kinship connection and disconnection, without interpreting these acts based on a simple dichotomy of "good" or "bad." In the scholarship of kinship, expectations around and ideal models of gender and kinship roles are considered significant social factors that shape people's behaviors and ideals. However, as Zigon (2008) and Mattingly (2014) point out, people do not always have fixed ideals in their everyday lives. Even in the moment where particular subjects confront radical changes and find themselves in "bad" or unfamiliar situations, this process does not necessarily entail explicit expectations.

I use this perspective in my discussion of the ways in which subjects negotiate personhood. The processes of qualifying and reflecting on a sense of self in relation to kin and others do not always involve fixed and ideal forms of kinship roles attributed to a homogenous nation and culture. Subjects draw on fluid and flexible ideas in diverse settings. In her study of Afro-American women who have children with disabilities, Mattingly suggests that although those mothers make efforts to be "good mothers," being a good mother is not static (2014:20). The women's moral endeavors to be good mothers constantly change in specific circumstances where they face plural moralities in institutions and spaces such as homes, clinics, churches, and streets (2014:8).⁹⁰ The case of divorced fathers' sense of fatherhood in Britain also provides an example of a non-static sense of personhood (Strathern 1996 [Simpson 1994]). An example is given of a divorced father who has six children expresses fatherhood in different ways in relation to each child. Emotional and

⁹⁰ Zigon (2008) also suggests that we think of women's moral endeavors to be undertaken not with the aim of being 'good mothers' but with the aim of "being good" at being mothers.

financial commitments, residential arrangements, and qualities of contacts affect varied senses of fatherhood.

The discussion of everyday moral experiences offers a perspective that a sense of personhood, embedded in certain kinship, is not fully determined by a fixed and ideal model of kinship roles. This does not suggest that this scholarship disregards structural conditions, rules, and norms. However, as other scholars also propose, a range of everyday moral and ethical lives are not completely reduced to large historical processes and national ideologies (Rogers 2009:18). It is also argued that moral enactments can change over time in response to various actions, including the subjects' own realizations and actions, as well as the presence of others (Zigon and Throop 2014:10). Drawing on this analytical framework, which looks at temporal and situational aspects of being-in-the-world, I examine the types of transformative and challenging moments and circumstances in which older Sakhalin Koreans reckon with kinship separation and union, and negotiate fluid personhood.

Second, my analysis of subject-making processes among older Sakhalin Koreans, which involves both specific acts and imaginaries of connection and disconnection, is inspired by the idea of “kinning” and the study of adoptees' acts of searching for families. These are useful in analyzing the transnational situations of older Sakhalin Koreans and their commitment to self in relation to kinship. As discussed in Introduction, Howell's concept of kinning (2006) that informs Norwegian parents' incorporation of foreign children in transnational space, helps me to examine older Sakhalin Koreans' discourses and imaginaries of separation and union as a subject-making process that they undertake in making *themselves* kin. In addition, Carsten's analysis (2007) of adoptees (mostly living in Europe) helps me to examine the subject-making processes of older Sakhalin Koreans involving kinship knowledge, as well as acts of ceasing connection.⁹¹ Some scholars have argued that biological kinship knowledge serves as a source of personhood in Euro-Western contexts (Strathern 1999), but Carsten finds that while kin information makes adoptees feel a sense of connection, many adoptees often suspend their search for kin, which she considers an act of “limiting adoptees themselves” (2007:418-422). Carsten then develops her argument that kinship relations are not only about knowledge, but also entail actions taken when utilizing this knowledge. Drawing upon Howell's and Carsten's discussions, I examine

⁹¹ This echoes the idea of cutting, ending, and stopping flows of networks (Strathern 1996).

how the diverse discourses, imaginaries, and practices surrounding kinship separation and union in transnational contexts of Sakhalin Koreans constitute a process of re-making themselves.

I also explore the personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans, as reconstituted through diverse moral acts surrounding connecting and disconnecting in a situation where older women and men have migrated to South Korea. Both chapters 2 and 3 examine this question, with especially chapter 2 exploring parent-child relations. The following section begins with a discussion of mother-child separation.

2.2. Elderly mothers on the move

Observing everyday conversations, including rumor, gossip, and jokes, and interviewing older Sakhalin Koreans both in South Korea and on Sakhalin, I found that their discourse problematizes mothers' migration. Some women found clear explanations for their mobility and for staying away from Sakhalin, while many others were struggling in search of meanings for their absence from Sakhalin or their decision to stay. In the following sections, I explore the women's contested emotions by considering three discourses, including: (1) abandonment; (2) burden; and (3) completion of mothering. In addition, I provide a section that considers the experiences of mothering of older Sakhalin Koreans to offer a nuanced understanding of why and how different generations of Sakhalin Korean women (and men) consider mother-child separation as morally imperative. I go on to show how older Sakhalin Korean women not only criticize mother-child separation, but also produce new meanings and imaginaries to make sense of the migration of older mothers.

2.2.1. The discourse of abandonment: Who abandoned whom?

As I showed with Kolya's and one elderly woman's commentaries about mothers' migration leaving children behind, Sakhalin Koreans articulated mother-child separation on Sakhalin and in South Korea. This is because of the return migration policy that does not allow adult children to migrate to South Korea. In this context, the idea around abandonment circulates among older Sakhalin Korean women themselves.⁹² I found that their feelings vary

⁹² When Sakhalin Koreans express a sense of abandonment, they invoke not only the word, "abandon" but also other words, including "left," "being left," "care," "being cared for."

slightly, depending on generation and age, place of residence (South Korea or Sakhalin), and past experiences. Moreover, among returnees in South Korea, such factors as residential space and their length of stay in South Korea affect their understanding of the relationship between parents and children. Considering this diversity, I examine the various ways in which older Sakhalin Korean women represent their own mobility or decision to stay and how they deal with their own emotional struggles.

In South Korea, I witnessed and heard how elderly women living in the welfare center often compared their situation to animals and insects. They viewed their own behaviors of having left their children as “inhumane,” making them worse than animals. For example, in 2011, I met Ki-Bok (age 86), who had lived in South Korea since 1995. She often invited me to her room, and liked to talk about her life and her children living on Sakhalin. She reflected on her situation:

When I was sitting still outside, I saw ants crawling near my foot. Even ants move with and take care of their own children. Tears came to my eyes. I am worse than that.

When hearing the life story of another woman who had also lived in South Korea for more than ten years, the woman suddenly asked me: “Do you know the cruellest creature in the world?” I said I had no idea. She responded: “Human beings. It is because parents [which indicated herself and other elderly returnees] leave their own children. How cruel we are!” I visited one elderly woman who spent her youth on Sakhalin and had lived in Moscow with her son before migrating to South Korea. She had lived in South Korea for two years when I met her. Greeting her in a typical Korean way, I casually asked her how her physical condition was, and she said, “I do not have any energy... we are like birds, flying alone here without children. That is not a human life, is it?” I learned that elderly returnee women blamed themselves and considered their migration to South Korea as “inhumane.”

Mother-child separation was also a key topic among elderly stayee women (first generation subjects) on Sakhalin. But elderly stayee women evaluated their own decisions to stay on Sakhalin in comparison to returnees’ decisions to leave Sakhalin. They spoke about their main reason for staying, explaining that they cannot possibly migrate to South Korea, thus leaving and abandoning their children on Sakhalin. In the Korean Senior Center on Sakhalin, where they gather and sing songs, dance, and have lunch twice a month, I met

one elderly woman in her late 80s. She came to the gathering by taxi, which was a journey taking one hour. When we sat down on the sofa, I carefully asked if she ever considered living in South Korea. She got a little excited and said: “How can I abandon my children whom I breastfed in a difficult time after the war? How can only I by myself live a better life in South Korea?” The reaction of another elderly woman showed a similar perspective. She regularly invited me to her house after the bimonthly gathering at the Center. Every time we talked, she wondered how and why returnee women could live separately from their children. She reflected: “No matter what bad things children do, they are my children, aren’t they?”

Middle-aged women on Sakhalin, who are not entitled to migrate to South Korea because of their (and their husbands’) ages, articulated the discourse of abandonment in slightly different ways. They criticize returnee women’s migration, but many of them also aspire to migrate. With this ambiguous set of feelings, middle-aged women attach a meaning to returnees’ decisions while they also imagine their causes. For example, while playing cards and having lunch, the women often said they wanted to move to South Korea. However, they also imagined that returnees had left Sakhalin because their relationship with their children had been in trouble: they were no longer needed by their children. The comment of the elderly returnee woman at the opening of this chapter also reflects the same imaginary: elderly women had migrated because they were not being taken care of by their children on Sakhalin. In addition, women discussed returnees as persons to be pitied. They imagined that the elderly women who had abandoned children because of their greed would no longer have a space to live in their houses on Sakhalin and not be welcomed by family members even if they were to choose to come back. Hearing everyday talk around mother-child separation among older Sakhalin Korean women, I found that returnee women were viewed as both subjects and objects of abandonment.

I also observed that by engaging with the discourse of abandonment, returnee women criticized themselves, and to some extent embraced their “inhumane” actions. However, returnee women also confronted emotional struggles after migrating to South Korea. Regardless of their generation, returnee women told me it was hard to manage their situation of being away from their children for the first couple of years. Since they had extensive free time in South Korea, they often thought of their children. For example, one

elderly returnee woman in her late 70s spoke of the early days in South Korea, saying, “Whenever I saw the sunset, I felt a pain in my chest.” Another elderly woman, who had migrated to South Korea four months before, told me: “I want to see my four children. On the phone, my son always says, ‘Mama, I miss you.’” A middle-aged woman who had lived with her husband in the apartment complexes in South Korea for two years said, “Whenever I eat delicious food, I cannot enjoy it or swallow it easily. It reminds me of my son.” Such experience reminded her one again that she is a mother; as she commented, “I found myself to be a mother.”

Considering the contested discourse of abandonment and returnee women’s emotional striving, I suggest that Sakhalin Korean women, both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, imagine and experience the situation of being an older mother leaving offspring across a national border. In addition, while women evaluate the migration of mothers in different ways, the discourse of abandonment is more powerfully felt among returnee women than among stayee women because they are the targets of blame. In the next section, I briefly discuss the experiences of mothering among older Sakhalin Koreans in order to understand why they “problematize” migration of mothers in the context of return.

2.2.2. Contexts surrounding the critique of mother-child separation

The contested emotional discourse of mother-child separation among older Sakhalin Korean women cannot be fully explained by contemporary ideologies of motherhood in Russia and South Korea. In order to understand why mother-child separation is morally imperative for older Sakhalin Korean women, I study both their actual experiences of mothering, and the social contexts involved. The following sections do not investigate these women’s entire lives. Rather I select key symbolic features of their lived experiences of mothering, drawing upon their narratives about their youth, families, and households, in which generational differences are marked. In doing so, I aim to offer a nuanced understanding as to why the transnational migration of mothers is the subject of such a powerful moral critique among older Sakhalin Korean women (and men).

2.2.3. Elderly Sakhalin Korean women: Feeding is everything

When I asked elderly women about their past experiences of mothering and childrearing, most of the women gave short comments. They tended to explain: “It was hard because we had to feed, bathe, and clothe our children.” In order to understand their short explanation, I will consider the family lives of elderly Sakhalin Korean women, which include being mothered when they were children and their own mothering.

I suggest that social status is a significant factor affecting the family lives of elderly Sakhalin Korean women.⁹³ Among my interviewees, it was common for women (the women here are interviewees’ mothers) on rural farms to participate in agricultural work, even if it was not stable wage work in Korea. Unlike the gentry (*yangban*), where women’s activities were restricted to the home, wives and mothers in tenant families in rural areas engaged in agricultural production as a key part of their household labor in Korea (An 2006: 210). Sakhalin Korean women’s narratives, which provided little reflection about their mothers, also suggest that everyday nurturing was not solely practiced by mothers. As An’s ethnographic material also suggests, mothers in poor households did not serve as educators of their children. As daughters-in-law, women were responsible for almost every household chore, in addition to agricultural labor outside the home. They had little time to care for and communicate with their children. Rather, in the households with several children, older siblings and extended kin, like cousins, took care of younger children (cf. Sorensen 1988). One can assume that elderly Sakhalin Korean women grew up in circumstances where certain elements of mothering was not practiced by mothers.

When elderly Sakhalin Korean women were younger, their lives could have been influenced by the social conditions of the Japanese imperial ideology of “wise mother, good wife” that powerfully shaping gender norms for empire- and nation- building and wartime mobilization during the 1930s and 1940s. However, this ideology was not instilled in all women in Korea. Unlike wartime Japan, where this ideology prevailed regardless of class, in

⁹³ There is relatively little ethnographic and historical work on everyday family life in rural Korea during the Japanese colonial period (especially the 1930s and 1940s). In this section, I refer to An’s (2006) and Sorensen’s (1988) studies. An’s study (2006) is one of the few of family lives among Korean women during colonial times that draws on women’s oral histories. Sorensen’s work (1988) in a rural village in Kangwŏn Province during the 1970s presents practices similar to those seen among elderly Sakhalin Koreans.

colonial Korea this gender ideology was limited to young girls who were able to receive public education (Choi 2009).⁹⁴

Social class distinctively shaped the experiences of elderly Sakhalin Korean women. However, the elderly women's ideas were forged by the dominant gender and kinship norms of the time; being a woman meant being a wife and a mother (of sons), and sacrificing oneself for kin members, including children, husbands, and husbands' natal families. For example, most elderly women explain that marriage and having children were unquestionable duties, saying, "Because we had to," or "Because everybody did." Marriage, and becoming a wife and mother, were obligatory.

After they married, the women's most significant responsibility was to make sure their children survived. Sakhalin Korean elders whom I met had an average of six to nine children.⁹⁵ But the infant mortality rate was high. I heard from almost all elderly people that one or two of their children had died as infants or toddlers. For example, one elderly woman who gave birth on Sakhalin said to me: "I gave birth to a baby but it soon died, and again I had a baby but it died, again and again... It was strange and I had no idea why my babies frequently died. But one day, someone suggested I bury the babies' bodies on the east side of the mountain. So I moved them. After that, I had another child and he did not die." Her example shows that in order to protect their children from death and ensure their security, women resorted to alternative practices not available in hospitals.

During the Soviet period after the war, Sakhalin Korean women played a pivotal role in feeding and clothing children, which is similar to peasant Soviet women's lives in rural areas (Denisova 2010:157). Aside from basic provisioning for children, the other concern for women was their children's education. However, the experiences of elderly Sakhalin Korean women suggest that their mothering in this era was constrained due to limited resources. In Korea and China, having male children was part of mothers' strategy within the conditions of an unequal gender power structure, which prevented women from taking on various roles

⁹⁴ Choi (2009) also argues that the ideology of "wise mother and good wife" is a modern construct of "convergence of Chosŏn Korea's Confucian notion of womanly virtue, Japan's gender ideology of 'good wife and wise mother,' and American Protestant missionary women's ideology of domesticity in mission schools" (2009:3).

⁹⁵ An (2006) argues that there was another gender ideology, "bear children and multiply" (*J. umeyo fuyaseyo*), during the 1930s before the war in Japan and in colonial Korea, which encouraged women's fertility. At that time, Korean women gave birth to an average of six children, but An maintains that having multiple children was affected by the local patriarchal ideology in existence prior to colonial times (2006:191–205).

and positions of power. Mothers performed pragmatic motherhood as they identified their position as mothers of sons. If a son became a lineage successor through the inheritance of property, the mother of such a son, received respect and *hyo* (filial piety) from kin. Similar to Margery Wolf's concept of the "uterine family" in China (1972), having children, and especially sons, served to establish a woman's power and possible upward mobility and status in Korea (Cho Han 1988). In a similar way, the elderly Sakhalin Korean women I met tried to raise their children to obtain education and to acquire socially prestigious jobs — something important for children, as well as for the family. However, after Sakhalin was annexed to the Soviet Union in 1945, Koreans confronted limitations such as poor Russian language skills, insufficient social networks, and partial citizenship (chapter 5), all of which prevented women from performing such mothering well. Thus, elderly Sakhalin Korean women's responsibility was limited to helping children succeed in school by feeding and clothing children until graduation. They were not physically present with their children all the time because they spent most of their time doing household chores and working in the gardens. I suggest that Sakhalin Korean women aspired to upward mobility through their children, but the actual support they could provide was limited. Rather, the Soviet state played a pragmatic role in children's education.

The past experiences of mothering among elderly Sakhalin Korean women reflect that feeding children was considered a major responsibility and was the practice they consistently carried out within the transitional context where south Sakhalin was integrated into the Soviet Union. I also propose that feeding children was a crucial component of their womanhood because their other kin roles as daughters, daughters-in law, and sisters were relatively absent due to the family separation caused by migration. Considering their life trajectories, I argue that raising children was one of the women's few possibilities, which in turn engenders moral confusion in the context of return. The next section turns to the mothering experiences of middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women.

2.2.4. Middle-aged women: “Women need children”

This section discusses what makes middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women’s experiences of mothering distinct from those of the older generation. But the women’s narratives include their reflections on changing family lives and perceptions of differences with diverse others. I suggest that the state’s intervention in the upbringing of children (*vospitanie*) and women’s mass labor mobilization were paramount factors that affected the experience of mothering among middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women, and made their experience of mothering different from those of their own mothers. Mothering practices were systematically shaped by the gender and family policies of the Soviet Union (and Eastern Europe) in the late socialist era when the state played the role of co-parenting with mothers, in a way replacing fathers, by offering diverse material incentives and institutional support (Ashwin 2000; Bloch 2003; Gal and Kligman 2000; Haney 2002; Rockhill 2010). The dominant gender ideology did little to draw men into family responsibility in the domestic sphere, so women played the primary caregiver role for their children, while also working outside the home. Utrata argues that the state policy in the late socialist period granted special rights and responsibilities to motherhood rather than to marriage (2015:29).

Middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women’s narratives about their family lives when they were young show that they viewed birth control, smaller family sizes, and having a job outside the home as making their family lives “civilized,” in contrast to the lives of their mothers. For example, they had an average of just two or three children because, as one woman explained: “Having many children is not ‘civilized.’ Koreans had many children but Soviet people around us didn’t. So we realized that it’s a civilized way of living.” In addition, abortion was more accessible and enabled the women to practice birth control.⁹⁶ Indeed, I often heard from middle-aged women that they had had more than one abortion, and many of them embraced the notion that medical abortion was a rational means by which to control family size. They also emphasized that the physical burdens on them had been reduced in comparison to their mothers’ generation. Unlike their mothers, farming was no longer their major economic activity because they worked for state enterprises.

⁹⁶ In the Soviet Union, abortion was legalized in 1920 to “liberate” women from the home. In 1936, it was criminalized to increase the birthrate, but this resulted in illegal abortion-related deaths. Abortion was legalized again in 1955, although the state encouraged women to give birth (Nakachi 2006a; Rivkin-Fish 2013:572–573).

These changes, however, did not mean that women's domestic work was reduced. As many recollected, comparing their situation to their adult children, they spent considerable time doing household chores because of the shortage of domestic products. Also, this cohort of Sakhalin Korean women practiced more "kin work" than their mothers had done. One woman with three children talked about her experience. She worked in an office until midnight and was always tired. But she did not sleep much even during holidays because she felt she had to do something when her mother-in-law woke up early in the morning. In addition, as the number of Sakhalin Koreans increased after the war, the middle-aged women's kinship responsibilities also multiplied with siblings, in-laws, cousins, nephews and nieces. Thus, the women engaged in various types of kin work (Di Leonardo 1987), predominantly the management of inter-household relations through visiting and engagement in rituals.

In middle-aged women's narratives about their younger years, their specific ideas of mother-child ties were usually not articulated. Instead, at the time when they interacted with me, middle-aged Sakhalin Korean men and women expressed their thoughts that mother-children ties are inseparable. Since I was not married and had no children, almost all of the middle-aged women (and men) with whom I talked and emphasized, "You must have children. Women need children." After hearing that I was thirty years old, many were also surprised and suggested: "If you already have a man [a dating partner], you should first have children." They meant that for women in their late twenties and thirties, marriage was not essential, but the women have to have children because of biological limitations. When I asked why I should have children, many women reacted: "How can women live without children?", and "As long as women have children, women can live." One man also said: "Because women's bodies want them to have a child." These comments reflect the idea that mothers and children are inseparable from each other because children provide women their meaning in life and because women are "naturally" made to give birth.

In addition, Sakhalin Korean people commented on the mother-child bond as a defining feature that made them different from Others, especially South Koreans. For example, middle-aged Sakhalin Korean people were surprised to learn of the family practice in South Korea where children would live with the father (or father's family) if a couple is divorced. Many Sakhalin Koreans frequently asked me: "How are children taken care of by

fathers in South Korea? Children need their mothers.” When they compared their gender and kinship to that of South Koreans, Sakhalin Korean people emphasized the idea that children can be separated from fathers but not from mothers.

However, these ideals that “women need children” and “children need women” do not reject or negate the relationship between fathers and children. For example, family naming systems and practices reflect how Sakhalin Koreans differentiate a mother-child bond from a father-child bond. I found that many middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women who maintained their surnames after marriage thought that children, including their children, belong to patrilineal kin. They considered such a practice to be a ‘Korean’ kinship practice, even though couples were legally able to have separate surnames (*familiia* in Russian) in Russia and, indeed, many Sakhalin Koreans did so, based on this system. The Sakhalin Koreans I met thought that children symbolically belong to a fathers’ lineage but also that mother and child are physically and practically inseparable.

To understand the emphasis on strong mother-child bonds in the kinship and gender norms of middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans, I draw on Utrata’s study of Russian mothering through the lens of single mothers (Utrata 2015:30–39). Drawing on interviews from “late Soviet single mothers” who experienced mothering during the late 1960s to the 1980s, Utrata shows how marriage was considered compulsory, and women’s decision to marry was related to social respect, housing provision, and career options. Becoming a mother was regarded as a “civic duty and the natural destiny of every woman” (2015:35). Some women also recollect that they married to become mothers. Utrata contextualizes the women’s lives within the late Soviet social conditions: (1) materially stabilized citizens’ lives; (2) state assistance for mothers; (3) high divorce rates due to men’s irresponsibility; (4) support from other family members; and (5) reinforcement of the dominant gender ideology that emphasized “natural” gender differences (and gender roles). In these socio-cultural contexts, late Soviet women married, divorced, and raised children. Utrata suggests that among those women, becoming a mother was considered “a fulfillment of feminine destiny” and “compensation for hardships” (2015:35). This analysis is helpful in understanding why middle-aged older Sakhalin Koreans reflected that women need children.

In this section, I have attempted to discuss why both generations of women (and men) problematize mothers’ migration. Despite varied experiences of and thoughts about

mothering in different social contexts, the idea of women's civic duty to have children was not dramatically modified across two generations. Regardless of the number of children women have, their marital status, and status of employment in either factories or farming, the kinship and gender norm of having children as part of a woman's "natural" life course did not differ greatly across the two generations. Thus, the ideas that "women need children" and "children need women", which signify an inseparable tie between a mother and child, constitute a sense of motherhood.⁹⁷

More importantly, I suggest that the transnational migration of mothers is of moral significance to older Sakhalin Koreans because the migration of older mothers is a new and experimental experience (Mattingly 2014). They consider that it is 'normal' that young people leave home, leaving behind parents. There was no previous knowledge of cases in which older mothers moved abroad and lived apart from their adult children and grandchildren. This is a radical transformation. Thus, elderly and middle-aged women express surprise, blame, and criticism of mothers' "abandonment" of their offspring. I argue that women's actual migration tends to be seen through a normative lens that a child and mother are inseparable, and to a sense of personhood is closely tied to being a mother. However, in the next section, I will show that not all women evaluate theirs and others' return migration in a negative light.

2.2.5. The discourse of burden: Staying as a burden or leaving as a burden?

In South Korea, while many returnee women blamed themselves, they also explained to me their situation of living apart from their children on Sakhalin, saying, "If elderly people live with their children, it might give their children trouble (K. *kosaeng*)."

This meant that living with older parents would be a burden for adult children. I found that older Sakhalin Korean women not only criticized themselves, but also reflected on their behaviors and tried to transform themselves through another moral discourse of burden. This section shows how older Sakhalin Korean women responded to the moral dilemmas of mother-child separation.

⁹⁷ The norm of the inseparable nature of the mother-child relationship is not the only source of women's senses of motherhood. I suggest that it is one of numerous components that shape the women's fluid sense of motherhood.

Considering the case of Tamara, I first discuss how the discourse of burden is affected by the socio-economic conditions of older Sakhalin Koreans and of their adult children. Tamara was one of the middle-aged women I met in South Korea. She was in her early 60s and had two adult children on Sakhalin. Her son was in his early 40s and lived with his daughter and his wife, a kindergarten teacher. He installed and maintained heating appliances in commercial buildings and apartments for a living, but in the summer he also worked in the northern region of Sakhalin Island, where oil and gas development had attracted many domestic and migrant workers. Tamara told me that it was hard for her son's family to raise a small child. Tamara also had a daughter in her early 40s, who was a single mother living with a ten-year old daughter. In 2010, Tamara's daughter gave birth to a baby, but as Tamara explained, her daughter did not marry the baby's father and their relationship broke up. Since the daughter could not work outside the home or afford childcare, she had been faced with managing her livelihood without any source of income. Tamara said, "How can she live like that?" Tamara and her husband were both retirees and did not have the economic ability to provide their daughter with financial support.

Around 2008, when the return policy expanded and many middle-aged older Sakhalin Koreans started to migrate to South Korea, Tamara did not have a strong desire to move there. In her everyday life, she constantly felt anxiety over not providing any material assistance to her adult children, as well as a fear that she and her husband would become an economic burden on them. She gradually thought moving might help her and her adult children's economic conditions: by renting her flat while she stayed in South Korea, they could gain a source of income (chapter 4). Her own and her adult children's economic conditions at that moment were one factor encouraging her to consider migration.

Many older Sakhalin Koreans, who no longer have much access to any stable financial resources, find it difficult to survive on a meager pension, and find their children's material support crucial. Indeed, whether they lived with children or not, the elderly Sakhalin Koreans in their 70s and 80s whom I met on Sakhalin all received financial support from their adult children, for example, assistance in paying rent and utilities. However, I found that the anxiety of becoming an economic and emotional burden was more strongly felt among middle-aged people. They were afraid of getting older in the economically uncertain conditions on Sakhalin, and they expressed a feeling of rejection about receiving

material assistance from adult children who frequently had small children. Middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans believed financial support should flow from older to younger generations. In this context, return migration, which offered a range of welfare assistance in South Korea, was attractive to them (chapter 4).

Material conditions in part affect their decision-making processes. However, I suggest that older Sakhalin Koreans' comments about being a burden also assume an important discursive dimension. The discourse of burden serves to mitigate the moral discourse of abandonment, through which women make their migration understandable to themselves and others. For example, Tok-Sun, a returnee woman, had lived with her son and daughter-in-law for more than ten years before moving to South Korea in 2000. In her narrative about her decision-making process, she explained:

I felt uncomfortable because my daughter-in-law cooked breakfast for me every morning before she left home for work. So it was hard to live together... I then heard everybody would go to South Korea and my son asked me whether I would go or not. So I told my children that I would be back if I did not like the life in South Korea. Now, several years have already passed.

Like Tok-Sun, elderly returnee women who had lived in South Korea for several years provided a similar explanation. They expressed uneasiness over becoming a burden with statements like: "My children have to take me to the hospital." "My children often visit me while I live alone in the house." "They have to take care of me when I get sick." From their accounts, I did not find any evidence that actual conflicts with adult children directly affected their decision to migrate. Rather, returnee women attached a meaning to disconnection from their children, voicing that their presence near their children might bring trouble.

On Sakhalin, I witnessed different reactions. The narratives of stayee women on Sakhalin contradicted such returnees' explanations of why they had migrated to South Korea, which also meant that they had chosen to live apart from their adult children. The stayees insisted that it would be a burden on their adult children if older mothers lived in South Korea. For example, one elderly woman proclaimed: "Living separately from children makes them suffer! If those elders get seriously sick and cannot move, their children have to go to South Korea. But children cannot take holidays suddenly, and imagine how expensive

it is if all of the children visit South Korea.” Stayees consider that the migration of mothers creates a heavier economic and emotional burden for the children.

Those stayee women, however, do not think that living physically close to their adult children is the best way to live, either. I argue that elderly stayee women struggle to find a solid reason that makes sense of their decision to stay for their children. For example, Pong-Hŭi, an elderly stayee woman, usually expressed her sense of surprise about other women’s migration to South Korea. However, when many of her friends had left, she reflected on her decision to stay. She told me about her complicated emotions: “I think living near one’s children is better than migrating, but I often wonder whether this is really good.” I saw small potato seedlings in her living room and she was looking forward to planting them at her *dacha*. But one day, when I had dinner at her house, the potatoes had disappeared. She got a phone call from her son and was surprised to hear that her son’s family had planted them without notifying her. According to Pong-Hŭi, her son thought she enjoyed being with her friends in the Senior Center, therefore he had not let her know that they were going to the *dacha*. However, after talking with her son, her facial expression seemed sad and she repeatedly said: “Why didn’t they tell me anything? Since I cannot ask them to go to the *dacha*, they have to call me.” She also said, “Children never understand their parents’ mind (K. *maũm*).” Pong-Hŭi often said that she feels so happy and thankful to have her son, who often visits and takes care of her, that she cannot imagine leaving her children behind on Sakhalin. However, she also cannot openly speak about her honest feeling of disappointment and her wishes because, she assumes, her behaviors would be an emotional burden to her son. Elderly stayees constantly wondered whether staying or leaving would be a greater burden to their children.

These examples show that like the discourse of abandonment, the moral discourse of burden is contested. On one hand, through articulating the moral discourse of burden, returnee women try to create a counter-meaning for their decision in its context, in which they feel they are being subjected to the moral blame of being “inhumane.” Some stayees also imagine that their migration would be helpful for socio-economic reasons. In this instance, an ideal model of a “good mother” is insignificant. I suggest that older Sakhalin Korean women produce an expectation of themselves not to become bad elderly parents. By considering another key moral discourse with regard to the mother-child dis/connection, the

following section continues to examine how older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate a sense of motherhood in a transnational space.

2.2.6. Completion of mothering?

When returnee women talked about their migration to South Korea, many of them emphasized the need to keep some physical distance from their adult children, both for their own well-being and for the well-being of their children. In addition, when they discussed the subject of detachment, the completion of a mother's role was highlighted.

Older Sakhalin Korean returnees told me that they lived separately from their children on Sakhalin because they had finished their role and the duty of raising their adult children. For example, Hye-Ok, a returnee, recollected the past when she had left Sakhalin more than ten years earlier:

My children are living well in Russia with jobs and families. There is nothing to worry about. Even my grandchildren are no longer small and are all grown up. So I have nothing to do.

While they reproached their own migration as “inhumane,” returnee women also produced an interpretation that *their role as mother is completed*. Ki-Bok, the elderly returnee woman who compared her migration with ants, also explained to me, “I came here [South Korea] to rest in a quiet place, my homeland.” In this conversational context, the academic and career achievements of their children and grandchildren were often recalled with pride. For example, women's refrains were about children: “Having a ‘red’ diploma,” “Finishing more than two institutes”, “Graduating from a university in Moscow,” “Doing big business,” and “Working as a head or director.” In addition, even when their children did not have such achievements, many of the returnee women reflected on how they had finished bringing up their children.

It is noteworthy that, being affected by returnee women, middle-aged stayee women on Sakhalin also express a wish to complete their mothering roles. Liuba lived with her husband, two adult daughters, and one grandson in a three-room flat. While her husband and the two daughters worked weekdays, she picked up her grandson from kindergarten and prepared supper every day for the family. Sveta lived with her husband, the first son, a

daughter-in-law, a fifteen-year-old granddaughter, and their second oldest son. Sveta stored rice and various side dishes at different times in order for each family member to have meals at different times. Return migration was always a topic of these two women's everyday conversations. One day Liuba said with a sigh, "I'm so tired of caring for my grandson." Sveta then reacted: "We all reared our children and they became adults, so we should go to South Korea. We want to rest there like other people who went to South Korea." I found that the women's actual transnational migration across state borders invoked a gendered social imagination and aspiration among the local stayee women on Sakhalin whereby mothers can detach themselves from their offspring, and can withdraw from caring for their adult children and grandchildren.

I suggest that by engaging in the discourses of burden and of completion of mothering, older Sakhalin Korean women imagine new possibilities for themselves. As I will discuss later, the age of elders and their adult children plays a significant role in producing the meaning of detachment. The discourse around the completion of mothering shows that women's sense of motherhood and personhood is not fixed throughout their entire lives. It changes over time. As they emphasize their age and mature offspring, older Sakhalin Korean women proclaim that their own absence is not problematic.

I argue that the discourse of abandonment coexists with the discourses of burden and of the completion of mothering. As women circulate these three discourses, they are becoming moral subjects. However, among these discourses, the former (mothers leaving children) is more powerful, and the positive evaluations of mothers' absence cannot mitigate it. I suggest that although detachment is explained in a positive light, returnee women find it difficult to disconnect completely from their children and they make an effort to return to a 'normal' way of life by connecting with children and engaging in kin work in transnational space.

2.3. Transnational connection

Within the transnational field where older Sakhalin Koreans discuss mother-child separation, returnees move on as they try to practice not only mothering, grandmothering, fathering, and parenting, but also a range of practices of "kin work" (Di Leonardo 1987) in the transnational setting. Di Leonardo offers the concept of kin work to join two analytical

concepts, household labor and domestic work. Kin work is a supple concept that can be used to analyze women's family lives, such as women's management of inter-household relations in preparing for ritual events, attending to phone calls, sending cards, and offering emotional and material support to kin members such as cousins, nephews, nieces, and their husbands' relatives.⁹⁸ Di Leonardo argues that unlike child-rearing and household chores, such kin work do not have any "correct" models or expert instructions. Thus, women engage in kin work for the well being of family members, but there are also situations where women are unable to practice it, which results in a sense of guilt. I find the concept of kin work to be useful because what returnees do on Sakhalin is not defined as mothering or fathering, but more as kin work. In the following sections, I present the kinds of kin work that returnees practice across state borders, and how they also strive to maintain ties with their children and grandchildren, as well as other diverse kin. I also examine how these processes entail unpredictability and emotional sentiments.

2.3.1. Technologies of connecting

Living in South Korea, older Sakhalin Korean returnees use various technologies to maintain their relationships with their adult children. For example, the telephone is a primary means for staying in contact with children. Returnees usually buy international telephone cards for 1,000 Korean won (about \$10) at kiosks and these allow for two to three hours of conversation. Related to this, I found that returnees carry an address book bought in Sakhalin, in which telephone numbers of their relatives and friends, both in South Korea and on Sakhalin, are listed. When I stayed at Olga's house in South Korea, her address book was full of names of not only her children but also her siblings, relatives, and friends in South Korea and on Sakhalin.

Since returnees' children live all over Russia, before calling, Sakhalin Korean returnees always think about the time difference between South Korea and the locations in which their children live. They also try to call on weekends when children are off from

⁹⁸ Di Leonardo proposed the concept of kin work as she found that feminist theorizing about divisions of public labor and domestic households had reflected an understanding that perceived women's practices as either self-oriented or other-oriented (altruist) in many industrialized societies. This dichotomy does not capture women's agency and their complex lives incorporating family, gender, and work. She also argues that a household exists not only to link to larger social structures, but also to connect with other households. To analyze and understand women's broader sense and range of work, di Leonardo offered the concept of "kin work."

work. I observed a brief conversation that one elderly woman had when she talked with her adult children, saying, “Are all of you are ok? I have no problems.” The elderly women recounted that they only occasionally called their children since they were afraid that the children did not want to talk to them too often. Additionally, when adult children called their parents, the children hung up and the parents called back because the phone card fee in South Korea is cheaper than it is in Russia. I found that in the conversations between returnees and their adult children, Sakhalin Korean women did not talk about everything that had happened to them. For example, they tried to downplay their illnesses and physical conditions even when they felt sick. When Chǒng-Sun, a widow, one year after living in Incheon Welfare Center, discovered she had stomach cancer, she did not inform her family on Sakhalin of her health. She was shocked to know that she had developed cancer and needed to have surgery, yet she did not reveal her diagnosis to her siblings or two adult sons on Sakhalin. In fact, before I left for Sakhalin in 2011, I met Chǒng-Sun and she asked me not to tell her siblings about her cancer when I saw them. For Chǒng-Sun, not informing her family of her illness was her best choice as a sibling and mother to make sure her family did not worry.

In addition to the telephone, older Sakhalin Korean returnees use the Internet to keep in touch with adult children in Russia. Skype is most popular. When I visited Victor’s house in South Korea, he was talking with his son in Khabarovsk, and they were watching each other’s faces through a web camera. Another middle-aged woman also talked with her child in Moscow through Skype. In the apartment complexes which returnees are allocated, as is common in apartment buildings throughout South Korea, high speed internet connections are easily obtained via telephone companies. Furthermore, in Homeland Village, the municipal government offered the Sakhalin Korean elderly residents computer classes as early as 2000. Thus, many elderly residents told me that they were able to use computers and used these to talk with their children in Russia.

Sakhalin Korean returnees also try to maintain ties with their adult children not only through communication technology, but through other returnees. When they hear that their neighbors or their siblings will be travelling to Sakhalin for an emergency or for some special occasion, returnees ask them to meet their adult children and pass on gifts. Sakhalin Koreans’ social networks in South Korea play a new role in staying connected with their

adult children. Along with these means that enable them to maintain ties with adult children in Russia, parents' direct visits provide the possibility for significant kin practices, and the (re)negotiation of relationships with adult children.

2.3.2. Cross-border kin work

In South Korea, Sakhalin Korean returnees constantly talk about two topics: when they will visit Sakhalin and what kinds of gifts they will take to Sakhalin. I found that for returnees, going to Sakhalin during the summer was an annual custom. In this context, one of the symbolic practices of parenting is gift giving. Returnees also engage in various types of kin work such as helping with family businesses, doing household chores, maintaining inter-household relations, caring for grandchildren, fixing up houses, and participating in family rituals.

Returnees whom I met had a strong sense that the parents cannot go back to Sakhalin without gifts. Since they considered that they were living in a "better" place (chapter 4), they tried to fulfill a sense of gift-giving obligation as a compensation for their absence. In addition, they felt the obligation of giving gifts because they were "visitors" who should give gifts to the "host." However, choosing gifts is not understood as a matter of mere obligation. They actively practice "gift hunting" in South Korea. In his study of mothers' shopping practice in north London, Daniel Miller (1998) give examples of how the ways in which mothers purchase products for children involves projecting their expectations of their children onto the gift objects (1998:39). Similarly, returnee women purchase clothes and luxury goods for their adult children and grandchildren. Rather than based on personal expectations of offspring, however, this process involves their imaginations. Returnee women pick up gifts as they imagine which size, color, and design would be best suited for their children. They often shared their shopping finds with me. For example, one day Chŏng-Sun opened her closet and showed me a sweater that she had bought in a market. She asked herself, "Is this too big? I remember he is big, but he might have lost weight." She told me, "Russia and South Korea have different measurements, so I don't really know if it fits him." The most popular gifts are shirts and socks, since clothes are one of the most expensive consumer goods on Sakhalin. During their stay in South Korea, returnee women keep in

mind that they can find clothes for gifts in the course of everyday grocery shopping. I suggest that this practice can be seen as a symbolic connection with adult children.

In addition to gift-giving, Sakhalin Korean returnees return to Sakhalin and participate in rituals such as wedding ceremonies and birthday parties. What I found was that their return influenced the temporality of kinship gatherings on Sakhalin. For example, Vera, a stayee woman, told me about contemporary trends and shifts in the ritual seasons among Sakhalin Koreans. Vera had made a living selling Korean rice cakes on Sakhalin. She said, “In the past, we had such ceremonies in winter. We could not have ceremonies in summer because there were no refrigerators big enough to store foods for numerous guests and families. In summer, the food rotted.” She continued to explain current changes. She said, “Nowadays people order rice cakes for such occasions and parties in the summer because many returnees visit Sakhalin in the summer and fall. So I’m busy this season.” As Vera explained, many returnees attended parties and ceremonies in the summertime. Olga’s example shows the ways in which returnees engage in transnational family practices and also how their mobility transforms material practices on Sakhalin.

During her stay on Sakhalin for three months in the summer of 2010, Olga organized her grandson’s one-year birthday ritual (K. *tol chanch’i*).⁹⁹ Although only in-law grandparents and Olga’s family participated in the ritual, she served all the dishes. Moreover, she helped to prepare for her brother-in-law’s 60th birthday party (K. *hwan’gap*) at his house. Her six siblings and each family member attended the party. From early that morning, Olga went to her sisters’ house and cooked with her two sisters (one of them was also a returnee). The table was full of dishes from noon to night as each family member visited at different times. Finally, Olga helped to work at her younger sister’s fish processing plant, which was located far from the city. Olga stayed in the dormitory located on the premises of the factory, and she served meals for workers, mostly temporary migrant workers from the republic of Buryatia.¹⁰⁰ Like other workers, Olga’s room was inside an old

⁹⁹ Sakhalin Korean migrants generally stay on Sakhalin for no more than three months at a time because they receive a pension in South Korea, and if they spend more than three months outside Korea, the pension is not paid (chapter 4). The legal constraints on their mobility are discussed later.

¹⁰⁰ In the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, the majority of migrant workers were from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. But Sakhalin Koreans told me that people from Buryatia were temporarily hired in fish processing plants in coastal regions (in the southern part of Sakhalin). I visited another marine product processing plant owned by a Sakhalin Korean, in which Buryats worked. This shows the ethnic division of labor on Sakhalin.

boxcar, and she worked in the factory for one week. She told me she did not want to work but she did “because my sister needs help, I cannot refuse.” Olga engages in this work not to supplement her income; rather, all of the activities across households were part of social support practices, as well as part of fulfilling kin responsibility, which shaped everyday lives.

I also found that returnee women engaged in events like *kimjang*—preparation of kimchee for the winter on Sakhalin. Once Sakhalin Koreans make kimchee at the end of each fall, they eat this until the following spring when new crops of Chinese cabbage appear.¹⁰¹ From approximately October to November, many Sakhalin Koreans check the price of cabbage in the markets. Usually kimchee-making for the winter is done when the climate becomes colder. However, Sakhalin Korean returnees finished the process before they left Sakhalin. Women often talked about which cabbage—from China, from the local Sakhalin Koreans’ farms, or from the farms on Sakhalin that South Koreans own—would be cheaper and more delicious. They also exchanged information about which red chilli pepper powder—from mainland Russia, Central Asia, China, or South Korea—would be more tasty. While I lived with Olga and Tolya, they purchased 100 kilograms of cabbage. Olga and Tolya salted this in a bath-tub for one night.¹⁰² Then they made seasoning with garlic and red chilli pepper powder. The salted cabbages were seasoned one by one. Olga and Tolya wore rubber gloves (imported from South Korea) and prepared *kimchee* together in the kitchen all day long. After that, Olga put the new kimchee in the kimchee refrigerator, which was an imported product from South Korea. She prepared mild kimchee for her son and daughter’s families while leaving the spicier one for me. A few days later, Olga also helped prepare the *kimjang* in her sister’s (a returnee) apartment and the three of us prepared it together.

Yulia is another returnee woman who came back and did kin work on Sakhalin. On Sakhalin Yulia served as a sanitation worker in a rehabilitation facility for alcoholics, and migrated to South Korea with her husband. They had lived in South Korea for two years. In

¹⁰¹ Older Sakhalin Koreans called Chinese cabbage *paech’a* and *parch’ae*, which are dialect expressions for standard *paech’u* in Korean. When one Sakhalin Korean man showed me his recipe note, *paech’a* was written in Korean.

¹⁰² Those who live in a ‘personal house’ make kimchee outside the house (outdoors) while Sakhalin Koreans living in an apartment use a bath-tub after cleaning it. The amount of cabbage is different depending on the number of family members. Although men help to purchase and take cabbage to the house, making kimchi is usually considered middle-aged women’s work. If they make kimchee for five or six family members, they need to buy 200 or 300 kilograms of Chinese cabbage.

the summer, since Yulia's husband was asked to help with his friends' work on Sakhalin, she also temporarily visited Sakhalin. They stayed at their flat where her divorced son had also lived. While living in South Korea, she was always thinking about how her son lived alone and when he would remarry. Yulia told me, "I came back here because I can't leave men [her son and husband] alone in the house. Men cannot do anything." Just after arriving at the flat on Sakhalin, she cleaned the whole house. She also cooked every day for her husband and son. When I visited the apartment, her husband had already left for South Korea again, but she stayed on Sakhalin for a couple more weeks to take care of her son.

I suggest that returnee women engage in family and household practices as active agents across state borders. Returnees connect with family members and friends through gift-giving, organizing and helping to arrange kinship rituals, and doing everyday household chores. While spending two to three months doing all the family chores and housework, time passes and their "visit" ends quickly. Then returnees go "back" to their apartments in South Korea. For example, after finishing with the *kimjang*, which was her last task before leaving Sakhalin, Olga settled herself on the couch and said, "It's time to go back home to South Korea." Returnees' kinship practices show the ways in which they are trying to do their best within a given time frame as they work on connecting with families and on mothering activities. In addition, I suggest that their practices produce a new temporality in the transnational field.

2.3.3. Limits of connecting and disconnecting

Although returnees try to maintain attachments to their children and kinship across state borders, their intentions and plans are not always practiced successfully. I demonstrate three types of limitations whereby the connections of older Sakhalin Korean returnees with family members in Russia are constrained.

First, one primary constraining factor is the health condition of both the older parents and their adult children. The physical conditions of returnees can prevent them from being connected with their offspring in Russia. One of the most common factors is pain in the legs and weakened leg muscles that directly affect returnees' decisions about whether or not to go to Russia. For example, one elderly woman told me, "There is nothing good in this situation. I cannot walk properly on Sakhalin. It will create troubles for my children." In the case of

those who had an operation in South Korea, they tried to recuperate in South Korea without going to Sakhalin. I frequently heard from such returnees that they did not have the energy (both physically and emotionally) to travel to Sakhalin. For example, one elderly woman spoke about the news of her grandchild's wedding. Her adult children had called and implored her to come to Sakhalin. She said to me, "Even if I said yes, I'm not sure I could go and I'm scared to go because I am not confident that my condition would be good at the moment." She ultimately declined to take part in the wedding ceremony.

As Hyŏn-Gil's (a 94-year-old man) example illustrates, physical conditions determine the limitations of connectedness. Born in Chŏlla-namdo, the southwestern province of South Korea, Hyŏn-Gil had migrated to Sakhalin when he was a teenager and also worked in Japan. After the war, he married and had a child but his wife passed away. He raised his son without remarrying, which was considered 'not normal,' both by himself and by many older Sakhalin Koreans. He was very quiet and always sat on a couch in the welfare center. Unlike other elderly men, many of whom complained about life in the welfare center where the majority of the residents were women, he participated in various programs and activities that the center offered and enjoyed his life in South Korea. As in my other initial meetings with elderly Sakhalin Korean returnees, I avoided asking about children, and this was also how I proceeded with Hyŏn-Gil. After meeting several times with him, I eventually asked which family members lived on Sakhalin. Tears suddenly filled his eyes, and he stopped talking. He then said to me: "I am too old and it is time to go [i.e., to die]. I can't move freely when I go there [Sakhalin]. Maybe if I visit Sakhalin next time, that will be the last time before I die. If you have a chance to go to Sakhalin, you can visit my son's house. And please tell him not to worry about me [he strongly emphasized and repeated this]. I have no problems and I am happy to live here." He was hard of hearing and not able to talk by telephone, so he asked me to transmit his message. For Hyŏn-Gil, connecting with kin on Sakhalin was difficult and created uncertainty.

Second, returnees' legal and social status constrains their connections with family members. Due to their status as welfare subjects in South Korea (chapters 4 and 5), if they stay outside Korea longer than three months per year, their pension is terminated. For example, when Olga took part in various parties and rituals on Sakhalin in the summer, she knew that her niece would have a wedding ceremony in early fall. Because this wedding

ceremony would be held in a big hotel and many guests were invited, Olga had looked forward to taking part in the ritual occasion. However, the wedding date was arranged in November when Olga's resident term would have expired. During the time she stayed on Sakhalin, she enjoyed listening to her sister [bride's mother] talk about how her niece had been preparing for the wedding. For example, her niece went to Moscow and South Korea to find a wedding dress to her taste and took wedding pictures in South Korea. These stories were exciting for Olga. On the wedding day, however, among her seven siblings, only Olga and her husband missed the wedding ceremony. Olga simply told me: "There is no help for it."

Finally, Sakhalin Korean returnees' new citizenship status in South Korea also causes trouble. Among returnees, those who migrated to South Korea before and around 2000 renounced their Russian citizenship. This is because dual citizenship was not allowed at that point in time, and also because some elders thought Russian citizenship was no longer necessary for them. Thus, their new immigration status as "foreigners" (*inostrantsy*) in Russia sometimes leads to complicated problems during their summer visits.

I occasionally visited the Korean Reunification Association in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, which overseas various tasks, including finding divided family members between Sakhalin and South Korea, communicating with the Red Cross, and carrying out return migration procedures. In the summer of 2010 when I visited the office, the staff members were busy exchanging documents by fax with the Korean Red Cross, as well as issuing documents for the local immigration office. I asked what sort of things might happen during the travels of Sakhalin Korean returnees back and forth between Russia and South Korea. One staff member recounted frequent cases of elderly returnees not giving their adult children enough notice about their need to return to Russia. Some elders arrived at Sakhalin airport without the necessary invitation document and were not able to pass through immigration at the airport. The Family Association was then called upon to issue an emergency invitation document on behalf of the elder's family. Based on Russian immigration law, Sakhalin Korean returnees without a Russian passport had to receive invitation documents from families (or other Russian citizens and institutions in Russia) if they planned to stay in Russia for more than one month.

Facing such material difficulties and limitations in uniting with offspring in Russia, returnees also tried to find a way of “forgetting about” their children. For example, I observed that many elderly women in the welfare center in South Korea knit socks. Some women bought their own woollen yarn, but this was expensive for them, so the center staff provided yarn for free. The free yarn was thinner than that sold in markets and the quality was not as good, but the elderly women used it nonetheless. They first unraveled the yarn from skeins and wound it into balls. The women often complained about who took an unfair share of yarn and who hid yarn in order not to share with others. Since the yarn given away for free was grey, which they do not consider beautiful, some women mixed it with other bright colored yarn. In various spaces like the corridors and private quarters, the elderly women knit in their free time. Ki-Bok said to me: “When I knit, I can avoid thinking about my children. Doing nothing often makes me feel lonely. So it [knitting] is good.”

I found that it was ironic that the women knit for their adult children and grandchildren while knitting was meant to divert their thoughts from their offspring. As she was knitting, Ki-Bok also said, “You know, young people do not like woollen socks like this. I know. They love the ones that are more elastic, and there are lots of those kinds of socks they can get on Sakhalin.” Other women also mentioned similar things. I suggest that knitting is not just an everyday habit, but in the return migration context, has become a symbolic action which enables elderly women to both connect and disconnect. In addition, within the constraints of limited resources and health conditions, knitting is one of the few activities through which elderly returnee women feel they are doing something for their offspring.

Although many returnees look forward to going to Sakhalin, for elderly people, crossing state borders is not easy. Their reverse return always involves unpredictability and uncertainty about what might happen. The physical conditions of returnees, their limited length of stay, and their new citizenship status —as ‘visitors’ in Russia and as welfare subjects in South Korea—constrain their connectedness. However, despite the challenge of maintaining connections, older Sakhalin Koreans continue to do mothering and kin work within the given material conditions.

2.3.4. Aging, life course, and transnational kinship

The moral experiences of mother-child separation among older Sakhalin Koreans are better understood by considering the discussion of transnationalism and family. Within the context of unequal global capitalism, women from developing countries leave their home countries in search of jobs abroad (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Piper and Roces 2003; Yeoh and Huang 1998). In this context of the growing transnational mobility of women, ethnographic studies demonstrate how women as mothers and daughters negotiate family and gender relations in new transnational settings (Bloch 2011; Constable 1999; Parreñas 2005). These studies show how the transnational movements of mothers entail moral dilemmas because the women cannot fulfill the gender roles expected of them, including that of caregiver for the children left behind in home countries. Such dilemmas are also affected by criticism about the absence of mothers produced by public institutions such as churches and by media. However, scholars suggest that in new transnational settings, women find themselves to be economically independent subjects and also income earners whose economic activities contribute to their households and child-rearing. These studies show that women's mobility prompts them to transgress the norms of women's kinship roles. However, the kin work or practices of assisting children and family members transnationally do not completely transform the dominant kinship norms — rather they result in reproducing them.

In the previous sections, I have presented paradoxical aspects of the transnational migration of mothers. While the migration of older Sakhalin Korean women brought about criticism of their abandonment of children, their actual mobility, which results in leaving behind offspring in Russia, is not so straight-forward. Women's mobility challenges the notion of a quintessential mother-child bond via which women are not separated from their children. However, the ways in which returnee women practice kin work and mothering between Russia and South Korea show that they strive to maintain mothering roles.

I also propose that aspects of aging and the life course makes the discourses and practices around mother-child separation of older Sakhalin Koreans distinct from the cases of transnational migration of young and working mothers. For example, working-age mothers justify their separation from their children by pointing to their economic contributions to child rearing through labor in different countries (Parreñas 2005). In

contrast, because most Sakhalin Korean returnees do not engage in labor in South Korea, they are not able to point to a similar set of meanings that would compensate for their leaving.¹⁰³ Instead, older Sakhalin Koreans consider that their best practice as older mothers is to be as little burden as possible on their children. Both returnees and stayees articulate concern about creating greater hardship for their children, and invoke a language of burden, calculating whether staying or leaving creates greater difficulty for children. In addition, considering the women's and their adult children's ages, the women also attach meaning to the completion of mothering, thus transforming their absence to sound positive. The case of older Sakhalin Korean women demonstrates how women's discursive practices and emotions, brought about by the transnational mobility of mothers and mother-child separation, are shaped by aging and women's life course. I also suggest that their experiences reflect how return migration enables older Sakhalin Korean women to negotiate a fluid sense of self as mothers in their relations with their children.

2.4. Making self into kin and stranger

The previous sections have highlighted how older Sakhalin Koreans problematize, reflect on, and qualify themselves in relation to their adult children in Russia in the transnational field. In addition to mother-child relations, I found that return migration evokes new ways of imagining relationships and social practices in regard to other kin. In the following sections, I examine how older Sakhalin Korean returnees are remaking their sense of being moral subjects in relation to deceased parents and living relatives in South Korea.

2.4.1. Return as symbolic continuity

Before the apartment complexes were constructed in 2000, "single" persons who had lineal relatives in South Korea had been allowed to migrate to South Korea and this led to some senior men's migration (chapter 1). In reports and documentary films about Sakhalin Koreans, it is frequently noted that elderly men express strong regret that they could not perform their roles as sons in the proper way due to their displacement from and rupture with the homeland for 40 years. For these elderly men, being an adult and being a person meant

¹⁰³ Some Sakhalin Korean returnees work in South Korea where they generally work in restaurants and construction sites, but most of these are part-time or temporary jobs.

that they embodied the role of a family head and provided for their families, which ultimately re-produced lineage continuity. Whether they were the first son or not, participation in kinship rituals was also regarded as a symbolic practice essential for performing one's duty as a child and becoming a person.

Many Sakhalin Korean elderly men reflected that they had not achieved proper social lives, especially as defined by the inability to insure patrilineal lineage continuity. For example, in the film called *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (1995), one older Korean man says with resentment: "Being forced to possess an unwanted identification document, I have lived here [on Sakhalin] *only working and raising children*." For him, working and raising children do not complete him as a person: continuity is achieved by connecting with parents and ancestors. Their vision of themselves as men is not fulfilled by just having jobs, children, and material wealth. I argue that the impossibility of performing continuity fostered their desire for family connection, and that Sakhalin Korean elderly men believed themselves to be "incomplete" offspring at the moment when their voices began to appear in media coverage in Japan, South Korea, the U.S., and Russia after the late 1980s. I am not suggesting that all older Sakhalin Koreans share the feelings described above. However, I found that older Sakhalin Koreans associated return migration with connection to their parents and significant family members in South Korea; return migration acted as symbolic compensation for decades of feeling incompleteness as persons. I first introduce Tu-Sik's case to show how his relational modes of being a son and father compete, and cause him to struggle emotionally.

Tu-Sik (93 years old) is one of the few elderly Korean men staying on Sakhalin. He is from a rural village in Ch'ungch'öng-to, the province to the southwest of Seoul. In his life stories, he vividly recalled the moment when he left Korea as a teenager. He said: "My mother came to the train station and reminded me to 'be careful and come back home with a wife.'" When I interviewed him in 2010, all of his friends had migrated to South Korea and some of his younger brothers were also living in South Korea. Tu-Sik was a 'rare' Korean elderly man who had the ability to read and write both Japanese and Korean fluently. By dint of his ability, Tu-Sik had played a major role in political activities concerning the return of Sakhalin Koreans since the end of the 1980s. People all around him assumed he would migrate to South Korea, but he did not. When I asked him about return migration, Tu-Sik

pondered for a while before remarking slowly, “Permanent return... is a very complicated problem.” He then told me that he was not able to migrate, leaving behind his divorced adult daughter and his grandchildren.

Every morning, I wake up early to heat the car for her to go to work. For my daughter, not having me means that she loses her arms and legs. Of course, my daughter suggests to me to migrate to South Korea. But how can she take care of her small children alone? Besides, think about it. If I took her to South Korea with me, how could I make her work as a janitor in South Korea where she would not understand Korean, even though she graduated from university here. So I am in a situation like this. I can’t leave. If she found a husband, I could leave. But definitely I will go to South Korea before I die.

Tu-Sik then asked me to call his younger brothers in South Korea and to tell them that he is well and not to worry, and that he would go to South Korea soon. Tu-Sik’s emotional struggle reveals the contested processes of negotiating personhood. On one hand, as a father, he wants to care for his offspring on Sakhalin. On the other hand, his bodily experience and feeling of separation in the past drives his aspiration for reuniting with relatives and for completing his life (and death) in South Korea. His relational mode of being and personhood, involves not only his role as a father, but also his other kin relational statuses, such as being a child and sibling.

I found that the symbolic meaning of compensation attached to return migration was sometimes more sentimentalized among the middle-aged generations who were born on Sakhalin during the late 1940s to the 1950s. Although their return to South Korea is newly interpreted in pragmatic ways (chapter 4), return migration allows them to articulate their memories of the longing of their deceased parents for their homeland. When I was on a bus on Sakhalin, I met a middle-aged Korean woman who had lived in South Korea for two years with her husband. We were talking casually about life in South Korea and about her adult son on Sakhalin. Putting her hand on her chest, she tried to contain her emotions and said, “I migrated to South Korea *on behalf of* my dead father; how he longed for his homeland... It [migration] is my selfish deed, I know.” Like other returnee women, she was blaming herself as a mother for leaving her children, but she also produced meaning for her migration as a symbolic connection through which she pursued her deceased parents’ wish to return as a child.

Vova's case shows a more complicated type of kinship connection between South Korea and Sakhalin. Vova (67 years old) had worked at the electric power plant owned by the local government on Sakhalin until one week before his departure to South Korea. He told me that his wife had not wanted to leave Sakhalin where her widowed elderly mother remained behind.¹⁰⁴ However, he persuaded her, saying, "All of my brothers live in South Korea." As a participant in the anti-Japanese movement, Vova's father migrated to Sakhalin during the early 1930s, leaving his wife and three children in Korea. On Sakhalin, his father married a different woman and had three more children. In South Korea, Vova had his relatives, and also his older brothers (born and grown up on Sakhalin) who had migrated to South Korea earlier. Vova told me that his South Korean cousins arranged a burial site for his brothers. The conversation below suggests how Vova talked about connecting with living and dead kin across state borders.

S (Sung-Sook) : Your parents' graves are on Sakhalin while yours will be in the family cemetery in South Korea, which your brothers arranged for you?

Vova: Yes, I need to bring our parents' remains... [I] have to dig them up on Sakhalin. I already got the information about it. Since cremation is not practiced in Russia, the state funeral service does not do that. So I will do this through a *yame* ("black market" merchant).¹⁰⁵

S : What will your children do if they want to visit your grave?

Vova: (Laughs) They can fly to South Korea [in] only three hours!"

S : Do you hope that your children will also be buried in the same grave site where you will be buried?

Vova: (Laughs) We cannot care about such things. I am not even sure where these young people will live in the near future; perhaps in America or somewhere else.

Vova's comment illustrates that his connection with patrilineal kin in South Korea entails not only envisaging a space where his body will be buried in the future, but also relocating the bodies of his deceased parents which are now on Sakhalin. However, he did not expect his offspring to practice this type of connection, because, as he said, "It will give my

¹⁰⁴ Vova and his wife used to live with his mother-in-law, but she moved to her son's house. According to Vova, his mother-in-law decided to stay on Sakhalin for fear of being separated from her son.

¹⁰⁵ When older Sakhalin Koreans used the word, *yame*, it meant "unofficial" and "illegal" activities and also "black market." This word is also used in similar ways among South Koreans. *Yame* is a loan word adopted from a Japanese term *yami*, but the meaning of *yami* in Japan is different. In Japanese, *yami* means "darkness" which does not have a connotative sense of "illegitimacy." When *yami* is used with the word, *ichi* ("market"), *yamiichi*, it refers to the "black market." I will discuss cremation practices among Sakhalin Koreans on Sakhalin in chapter 5.

children much trouble (*kosaeng*). How often do South Koreans do kinship rituals — seven or eight times a year, don't they? That's all *kosaeng* for young people." Similar explanations were heard from many other Sakhalin Korean returnees.

I argue that the migration of middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans to South Korea symbolizes union, which situates them on the vertical, patrilineal kin line between the deceased father, living and deceased relatives in the homeland, and themselves as offspring. I also suggest that in the return migration context, older Sakhalin Koreans re-discover and make themselves not just as someone's grandmother or grandfather, but also as someone's offspring and relative. These processes of reconfiguring personhood entail emotional and moral sentiments. The next section turns to show how older Sakhalin Koreans also manage themselves by disconnecting from kin in South Korea.

2.4.2. Not knowing is better: Detachment from kin

While I observed that returnee Sakhalin Koreans imagine and practice symbolic union, I also learned that many returnees hesitated and intentionally refrained from connecting with living relatives in South Korea after migrating. I examine how returnees detach from their relationships with relatives, and in doing so, returnees make themselves strangers.

In the case of elderly returnees, some have younger siblings in South Korea. In their conversations about families in South Korea, they also talked about their in-laws (younger siblings' marriage partners), cousins, nephews, and nieces, in terms of where they lived and what they did. Some elders occasionally kept in touch with them, but most did not. For example, one elderly woman who had lived in South Korea showed off some herbal medicines that her younger brother had sent. Indicating each medicine, she explained to me: "Look at this one, this one, and this one. My brother did well for me. He always said to me, 'You have to be healthy in the homeland.' I really thank him." She also took out her address book, which is a key material object for returnees to connect with relatives and friends both in South Korea and Sakhalin. Proud of her Russian literacy, the woman showed how many relatives she had in South Korea. She added: "for a while, it is strange... I have not had any calls from him or my sister-in-law. I have no idea what happened." I suggested that she call him, but she strongly refused. She tries not to call him because "I feel bad."

Regardless of generation and age, returnees avoid long-term engagement with relatives in South Korea because, they say, “We are not welcome.” For example, even though Vova was participating in kinship rituals in South Korea and planning to be buried at his kin members’ grave site in South Korea, he told me that he and Sakhalin Koreans were, in fact, not welcomed among South Korean families. Another returnee elderly man, also told me about his uneasy union with his kin. His adult children stayed on Sakhalin while some of his siblings whom he had left in the past still lived in South Korea. He told me: “I have already lived all my life. It is enough just to see the faces of my son and grandchildren on Sakhalin. I would not like to live there [Sakhalin]. If I were to go back to Sakhalin again and any accidents were to happen, what could I do there?” He then continued: “Wherever I go... even my hometown [in South Korea], I can’t stay at the house of my younger sister. Here and there... no place to go now. If my parents live there, it is still *home*, but there is no home now. The first encounter with relatives is pleasant, but if I stay there [the hometown in South Korea], who will welcome me?”

An elderly returnee woman also spoke of her relatives in South Korea based on the memory of her mother. For her, her late mother’s hardship plays a crucial role in shaping the memory of the returnee woman. Since her father had an affair with a woman and did not perform his proper role as a family head, she saw her father as the cause of her family’s poverty and her mother’s misery. As the eldest sister, she continued to perform the son’s role of ancestral rites for her mother on Sakhalin. Before she moved to South Korea, she had prevailed upon her younger brother to keep practicing the rite instead of her. In her narrative, while she has a strong sense of connectedness with her mother, her sense of belonging links to her father’s hometown in South Korea where she was born. Emphasizing that she had knowledge and information about her hometown, she said:

I have relatives there [her father’s hometown]. Since my father was the youngest child, there are some cousins. But I feel ashamed. I was born there... I still can’t sleep well at night. They don’t know where I am here. I don’t know what I should do... should I visit the cousins or not? While I lived on Sakhalin, I was not able to get in touch with them. But I *know* their names and addresses. I *know* the addresses but not telephone numbers. At the time (when living on Sakhalin), I did not know the numbers. I’m still thinking about whether I should tell him that I have come to South Korea or not.

A similar hesitation requiring uniting with relatives in South Korea due to a feeling of shame was also a feature of the narratives among other elderly returnees. They were concerned that their visits might be viewed negatively by South Korean relatives. For example, Sakhalin Korean returnees were afraid that their initiative in meeting relatives could be seen as poor family members begging for something from the better-off South Korean relatives. One elderly woman told me: “South Koreans believe that ‘we’ from *Soryŏn*¹⁰⁶ are poor. So they are afraid that we will ask them to give us something if we visit them.”

In addition, gift practices create an economic and emotional burden for the older returnees. Sakhalin Korean returnees feel pressure to give luxury products to South Korean relatives, but they cannot afford to buy such products with the pensions provided in South Korea. Moreover, it is hard for them to figure out what kinds of gifts sold in South Korea would please their South Korean relatives. Some Sakhalin Koreans in Russia gave dog-salmon, vodka, and chocolate as gifts to their families in South Korea. However, choosing proper gifts *in* South Korea for South Korean relatives was difficult. Although many of them had knowledge and information that their relatives live in South Korea, these material conditions constrained their union with relatives, and older Sakhalin Korean returnees themselves often curtailed such kinship practices.

Furthermore, I found that some returnees, especially women, rejected even “knowing kin.” Sun-Ok used to live with her female friend in the apartment complex in Homeland Village for eight years. Their life in South Korea had been fun: living with a friend and attending cultural activities. However, since Sun-Ok’s friend had a stroke (resulting in paralysis) in 2009, Sun-Ok had moved alone to the welfare center. When she talked about her migration, she also spoke of her late husband. She said, “All the time he said that he would go to South Korea. While living on Sakhalin, he repeatedly heard the rumor that return would be permitted this year. But he died (before return migration was permitted).” Hearing her narrative, I asked if his relatives might be in South Korea. Sun-Ok then spoke:

My parents-in-law all lived in South Korea and there are still my husband’s brothers and their wives, but who will like people like *us* without my husband any more. In 1993, I met the wives. But I thought about it for a while... We have not had contact with each other for decades now. I have my husband’s relatives, but he already died. So I wondered *which connection allows me to enter the house as a daughter-in-law?*

¹⁰⁶ For “the Soviet Union” in Korean.

After I had visited them once I ceased contact with the relatives. Nobody knows that I live here [the welfare center] now. No relatives. I could not find any of my own relatives in South Korea. When I was twenty, my father passed away early and nobody let me know about who lived where in South Korea. So I don't know what home is and which relatives are alive... But *it's better not to know*. When I came here [South Korea], I was asked where my home is. I answered I have no home, and was told 'your home is Ansan.' Yes, my home is Ansan. I betrayed my home [She laughed]. Now I am an Ansan person.

Another returnee woman in her early 80s remembered a gathering with relatives in South Korea. She said: "There were too many people there. Brothers, in-laws, cousins, nephews, nieces, and each of their family members... Too noisy! I want to be in a quiet place. That's good."

In contrast to a symbolic union with the deceased parents (father), returnees attach an idea of "nothing special" to their relations with living kin in South Korea. Many have information about their kin in South Korea; nonetheless, they cease to attempt to connect with relatives there. I argue that older Sakhalin Koreans' acts of disconnecting reflect their desire to make themselves strangers as a way of grappling with the tension between diasporas and the state homeland, South Korea, a political space shaped by the Cold War.

2.5. Chapter conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the relational mode of being among older Sakhalin Koreans is re-formed through diverse discourses, imaginaries, and practices around separation and union between Russia and South Korea. I have shown that the contemporary discourses around return render women as prime bodies and subjects. I also pointed to how women's experiences provide a way of understanding the contested and complex emotions invoked by transnational mobility.

Considering that the return migration policy leads to separations of mothers and offspring between Russia and South Korea, I examined how three moral discourses of abandonment, burden, and the completion of mothering overlap with each other and circulate among older Sakhalin Koreans. Older Sakhalin Koreans criticize the migration of mothers as "inhumane" when returnees leave adult children behind in Russia. However, women's actual return encourages both returnees and stayees to imagine and speak about their mothering as being completed, and also to make sense of separation as a better choice

for aging parents, as well as for their adult children. These processes show that older Sakhalin Korean women negotiate various ideas and senses of motherhood.

Within a context where such moral reflections around the mother-child tie are produced in a transnational space, many returnees make an effort to do kin work, which is also intended to be engagement in everyday lives, as well as compensation for their absence. They practice giving gifts, visiting, and caring for grandchildren, as well as participate in rituals on Sakhalin, even though these acts can be difficult to perform due to physical restrictions and their citizenship statuses.

Along with separation and union between mothers and offspring, return migration also engenders a challenging and transformative moment in which older Sakhalin Koreans, especially returnees, make themselves either kin members or, conversely, strangers. Returnees interpret their migration as a symbolic connection with their deceased parents. However, after migration, the majority of returnees try to be strangers through symbolic practices of detachment from living relatives in South Korea. I argue that whether they distance themselves or connect depends on whether older Sakhalin Koreans perceive themselves to be persons who are significant or insignificant to kin members.

The symbolic and actual attachment and detachment from offspring and relatives among Sakhalin Koreans reflect their flexible and fluid personhoods which they manage in the context of returning. The next chapter continues to elaborate on their subject-making processes by considering other key forms of relatedness, in particular, companionship and friendship.

Chapter 3: Everyday Togetherness and Intimacy: Friends, Companions, and Strangers

I continue to examine the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans act upon separation and union within a transnational space, but this chapter focuses on other types of relatedness: friendship and companionship. The limited entitlement and housing arrangements for return in South Korea provide a possibility of transformation for older Sakhalin Koreans. They encounter and imagine new connections and disconnections as they problematize, reflect, and act on engaging in everyday practices of gender, intimacy, and togetherness. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how both returnees and stayees produce, circulate, and understand moral discourses around companionship and friendship. I also consider paradoxical and unexpected consequences of these forms of relatedness among returnees. This chapter aims to show how relations with friends and companions also involve the remaking of personhood of older Sakhalin Koreans in the transnational milieu.

I first explore the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans connect return migration with the maintenance and rupture of everyday social networks and with a sense of togetherness with the same generation of family members and friends. Considering that connecting with friends allows for the perpetuation of everyday rhythms among older Sakhalin Koreans in the contexts of post-socialist transformations, I show how ways of connecting with friends are both sustained and shifting within transnational settings. In addition, I elaborate on the discursive dimension of friendship, to examine how it is linked to the other discourse of parent– adult children relations.

The rest of this chapter looks at symbolic union and separation within two types of companionship: (1) between older men and younger middle-aged women; and (2) between female companions. I highlight how these companionships are represented and imagined in aged and gendered ways, and also how Sakhalin Korean women and men problematize and make sense of their own and others' behaviors. I also discuss how the discourse of companionship informs the ways in which gender norms are (re)produced and challenged.

I suggest that the moral dilemmas and discourses around friendship and companionship among older Sakhalin Koreans show that material and emotional aspects are intertwined in the social relationships of marriage, exchange, care, intimacy, and everyday togetherness. In addition, accumulated knowledge and understanding of others achieved over time is another significant aspect of intimate social relations among Sakhalin Koreans in

older adulthood. The goal of this chapter is to show the processes of constituting personhood of Sakhalin Koreans in a transformative circumstance where friendship and companionship are renegotiated in the context of returning.

3.1. Everyday togetherness and closeness

When I asked one retired middle-aged Sakhalin Korean man what he thought about return migration, he expressed a negative attitude toward emigrants and emigrating: “No way! I have all my life here [Sakhalin], family and a house. I will never go.” One year later, however, he migrated with his wife. I met him again on Sakhalin in 2011 when he temporarily came back from South Korea. He explained his decision to move to South Korea by saying, “All of my friends left! Nobody is here [on Sakhalin]. I have nothing to do here.”

One of the consequences of return migration on local Sakhalin Koreans is that they have fewer chances of gathering with friends. The sections that follow show that separation from the same cohort of friends has been a key factor through which older Sakhalin Koreans try to sustain and change themselves within the new transnational contexts. First, I discuss fluid boundaries and the nature of friendship in former socialist societies. Second, I present contemporary practices regarding social relations such as friendship among older Sakhalin Koreans in a context of post-socialist change. Finally, I examine the contested discourses of friendship among returnees and stayees, as well as returnees’ unexpected feelings of connection with and disconnection from friends after migration.

3.1.1. Friends beyond public and private

Anthropologists have analyzed relations of friendship using the concept of fictive-kinship. The scholarship of kinship has demonstrated how friendship relations are different from kinship relations, and also how ideas and practices of friendship are extended not only in kin relations but also in wider social organizations. While these studies contribute to a cross-cultural analysis of friendship, Desai and Killick (2010) also express concern that the analysis is informed by the Western lens through which it takes place, specifically, the dichotomy between private, egalitarian, and emotional one one hand, and public, hierarchical, and rational on the other. In order to challenge such assumptions, Desai and

Killick propose to examine how culturally shaped practices and ideas of friendship are related to personhood and the idea of relatedness (2010:15).

While the dichotomy between private and public has limitations in helping us to understand specific practices and ideas of friendship in diverse social settings, ethnographic studies of everyday life in Russia and in former socialist societies use it as a basis for the analysis of the fluid nature of friendship. Many studies suggest that the idiom of friendship in socialist societies consists of everyday networks and support systems, which have developed into other forms of relations, including those among neighbors and co-workers (e.g., Berdhal 1999:186–188; Ledeneva 1998; Pine 2002). In his study of Romanian workers, Kideckel (2008) shows how the workers' practice of "getting by" allowed manipulation of the public system during the socialist period. He argues that such public arrangements facilitated everyday connections within and beyond residential spaces and workplaces (2008:15–16). Other scholars, focusing on the Russian context, also discuss how friendships thrive in intimate domains and are characterized by trust, reliability, and unconditional giving, and by shared emotional and personal attachments (Höjdestrand 2009:149–150; Lindquest 2005; Markowitz 1991). These studies demonstrate that the social milieu of friendship and networks is developed through daily practices and transactions in intimate domains, as well as through institutional arrangements.

I have introduced these works not to identify a static interpretation of friendship in post-socialist spaces, but instead to offer a social context for my analysis of the means by which older Sakhalin Koreans articulate connection with, and disconnection from, friends in the transnational setting. Before analyzing this point, however, I will present in the next section an overview of older Sakhalin Koreans' contemporary practices of friendship and everyday togetherness on Sakhalin.

3.1.2. Uneasy connection in the context of post-socialist transformations

Friendships as everyday social relations are not timeless and fixed; like other relationships, relations with friends are affected by political and economic changes. In post-Soviet Russia where economic inequality has increased, socially disadvantaged people, including elderly people, find that everyday connectedness with friends and acquaintances

serves primarily as a social safety net in order to survive uncertainties (Caldwell 2007).¹⁰⁷ In this context, the quality of intimacy related to everyday security during the Soviet era (2007:67) has also changed given material conditions.

On Sakhalin, I witnessed that maintaining relations with friends and members within individual social networks was difficult for retired elderly and middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans with limited accessible resources. In particular, the practice of exchange was felt to be burdensome. For example, some older Sakhalin Koreans felt anxious about expectations of bringing such products as vegetables, juice, and candies to their daily gatherings; such social practices are constrained due to a lack of stable financial resources and high inflation, which affected the cost of local products. Older Sakhalin Koreans also spoke of the burden of needing to give a monetary gift at rituals, including birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, and the first birthday of a baby in 2010.¹⁰⁸ When these rituals were held in hotels and restaurants, a guest paid about 1,500 to 2,000 rubles (about US \$50-\$60). This amount could be higher depending on the degree of closeness with the ceremony's host.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, within the socio-economic context where consumption became a way of life in Russia (Patino 2000, 2008), the distinction between those with and those without money (Bourdieu 1984) was sharply recognized through daily products that others possess, such as clothes, bags, and shoes. In such circumstances, older Sakhalin Korean pensioners who could not afford to purchase such luxury goods tended to be absent from public rituals and events. Consequently, those who were not able to perform the practice of exchange gradually faded out of such activities with families and friends.

3.1.3. Effort to do something together

Despite these changes, however, older Sakhalin Koreans make efforts to maintain connectedness in daily settings. Their practices and thoughts show how a sense of connectedness is an important aspect of living a fulfilled life. Kolya's struggle to find

¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, Kideckel (2008) discusses how "getting by" was a source of pride in workers' ability to survive and to strive for social mobility under the socialist economy of shortage in Romania. However, it has been shifted to "managing basic survival" in the context of post-socialist transformation (2008:15-16).

¹⁰⁸ Among Sakhalin Koreans, guests are expected to give a monetary gift to the bride's parents at weddings and to the ceremony organizer at birthday parties.

¹⁰⁹ Each guest wraps the cash in a sheet of white paper. During the ceremonies, when the ritual host arrives at each table, the guests pass the gift to the host. In the case of a wedding ceremony, either the bride's or groom's parents receive the gift.

acquaintances across space and time shows this. Kolya had moved to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 1995; the transitional moment came when he had to leave a job in a rural area since he had not been paid for more than a year. Recollecting the past, Kolya spoke of the difficulties he experienced when moving to a new place:

When I moved to the city, I knew nobody and I didn't know much about here [the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk]. I used to have lots of friends there though. So I tried to find somebody. But it was hard. If you make a friend in old age, it is too late. When you are young, you can make friends because you work together. Without working together, you can't.

Kolya's account implies that a connection with local acquaintances is imperative when settling into an unfamiliar space. It also shows the ways Kolya thought that an institutionalized arrangement (a workplace) played a key role in providing a space for making friends, based on his past experience. Furthermore, he told me that friendship is produced not in one or two days but over time, through sharing time and space, by *doing something together*. After moving to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Kolya found a few of his schoolmates and he has occasionally met with them. Kolya introduced his school mates to me, and we gathered sea vegetable [so-called seaweed] at the ocean, which was still half-frozen in early spring. Although he was not at all interested in the local associations among ethnic Koreans, he started to participate in the civic activities among Sakhalin Koreans because it provided him with a sense of connectedness in the city. Kolya's example shows how he found himself in a situation where he could live a life by establishing friendships and a sense of togetherness given the socio-economic change in a trans-local space. In addition, within a context where public institutions no longer facilitate social networks for retired people, ethnicity is re-appreciated among Sakhalin Koreans as a symbolic resource which aids in material and psychological wellbeing for them.

While Kolya confronted difficulties with establishing a social network due to trans-local migration, the case of Olga, who had lived in the town for a long time, illustrates how relationships serve as a resource for fostering daily activities and the norms of everydayness. While staying in Olga's apartment, I was surprised by her daily practices of endlessly calling and inviting her friends to her house to take part in shared activities. At first, I thought that she was perhaps introducing informants to cooperate in my research, but her routine behaviors including calling friends, arranging scheduled meetings, purchasing food, and

cooking, enabled me to observe how she engaged with friends. Olga was also frequently asked by her friends to cook piroshky (*pirozunki*), deep-fried piroshki (*chebureki*), and steamed dumplings (*pianse*).¹¹⁰ As I spent more and more time with Olga, I learned how to cook these dishes. Even on occasions when she was not asked to cook, Olga usually made at least thirty buns, and sometimes more than fifty buns at one time. Most of them were given to her friends and kin. Olga laughed and said, “We [Olga and her husband] always eat the leftovers, only one or two. That’s enough for two of us.” When I expressed my surprise at how many friends she had, Olga took her behavior of connecting with friends for granted and said, “How can you live without friends?”

In addition, Olga’s practices of being connected elucidate how ethnicity plays out in a sense of closeness. During my stay in Olga’s apartment, I thought that she introduced only Korean friends to me on purpose since I was researching Sakhalin Koreans. But I also did not hear her speak with Russian friends on the phone. Furthermore, when Olga saw her former co-worker (a Russian woman) on the bus, she greeted her and chatted with her, but she did not invite her to her apartment, nor did they go to the park with her. For Olga, while pragmatic support was practiced with friends and acquaintances both within and beyond ethnic boundaries, those people designated as “friends” have a shared ethnic proximity that is derived from historical experience. Olga’s Korean friends were primarily her schoolmates from the ethnic Korean school on Sakhalin, Korean neighbors whose parents were friends with Olga’s parents, and the same generations of siblings and relatives. Since Olga had remained in the city, she had been able to maintain relationships easily with ‘Korean’ friends she had met in her younger years.

As I will argue throughout this chapter, spending time with friends is a crucial component of older Sakhalin Koreans’ everyday lives, especially for women. For example, when I was invited to their houses, older Sakhalin Koreans often had their friends and siblings to visit. Also, as discussed in the introductory chapter, I observed and joined women’s daily lives: they got together and had tea, played card games, went to the park, and went on nature walks. They talked about what was going on with their adult children, grandchildren, spouses, and other friends, and they chatted about the prices of daily

¹¹⁰ Older Sakhalin Koreans call steamed dumplings *pianse*. Sakhalin Koreans like *pianse* and sell them on Sakhalin. Older Sakhalin Korean people told me that *pianse* came from Soviet Koreans in Central Asia. *Pianse* derives from Korean words, “*p’yönsu*” and “*byönschimandu*.”

necessities, economic situations, and health issues. The women often told me that they gathered for a simple reason, saying, “We pensioners (R. *pensioner*) have nothing to do.” Yet I learned that women had endless domestic chores and things to do. I suggest that finding and arranging a time and space for *doing something together* and exchanging information inflected by diverse emotions and values allows them to sustain everyday rhythms and to be a relational self with friends in the changing world. In addition, considering that the information and goods they exchange are related to their families and households, I argue that for the women, relatedness with friends aids in perpetuating a relational self as being a mother and wife.

I do not contend that every older Sakhalin Korean has many friends and maintains fixed and egalitarian relationships. Nor do I generalize Olga’s example to the entire population. Still, working with many older Sakhalin Koreans, I found that social ties with friends was one of the components of personhood. Despite the fact that socio-economic changes constrained interactions, older Sakhalin Koreans did not reject each other or suddenly cease such relations. Connecting with friends is still a form of sociality that facilitates everydayness and their relational mode of being in mid- and late adulthood. I also suggest that a sense of closeness for older Sakhalin Koreans involves knowledge — how well they know one another—which is accumulated by *doing something together* over time. In the next section, I will examine how connection with and disconnection from friends are represented, reinterpreted, and managed in the context of return migration.

3.1.4. Migration as a better life for being with friends

Along with the local socio-economic changes that affect the everyday practice of connectedness and togetherness, the age-based return migration entitlement shapes relationships between friends. As I will discuss further (chapters 4 and 5), return migration divides middle-aged people into entitled and non-entitled subjects within Russia and South Korea. Consequently, it has brought about feelings of separation from close friends on Sakhalin. Stayees’ conventional accounts are that “my friends are gone.” Also, as shown at the beginning of this chapter, many returnees and would-be returnees told me that they decided to migrate so that they could reconnect with many Sakhalin Korean friends in South Korea.

In addition to the emotional and spatial aspects of separation and union, I found that Sakhalin Koreans' accounts of friendship had a discursive aspect which served as a source for the production of meaning about transnational movement — a better life to connect with friends — within the space where they were exposed to another discourse of separation from children. For older Sakhalin Koreans, return migration is not intended to involve only separation; it is also interpreted as reunion with friends. I argue that the emphasis on connectedness with friends is in part understood as a discursive performance, which helps them to make sense of their movements as choosing to spend their everyday life with friends, which is more satisfying and better than being with their adult children. For example, one elderly returnee told me:

It is enough to see my children's faces one or two days. They don't like to be with older people. But in South Korea, I have friends, siblings, and in-laws. We older people all talk every day and go out together. That is much more fun.

Nevertheless, the importance of friends is often denied. For example, an elderly woman who decided to stay on Sakhalin criticized returnees' accounts of friends: "Those people repeatedly say 'friends are good!' But who feeds them? Friends feed them? No. Children feed them." Not only stayees but also returnees expressed similar sentiments. For example, on Sakhalin, I met Valia, a middle-aged returnee. She and her husband had migrated to South Korea two years earlier, but she was temporarily visiting Sakhalin to work in a flower shop for her pregnant grand-daughter (the owner of the shop). She said, "It was boring there [South Korea], just cooking and cleaning. I can't sit all the time." Valia explained that she was the only kin member who could help the grand-daughter. I then commented, "But many people say they like to be with friends in South Korea." Valia responded, "No way! *Meeting with friends one or two days is enough!* It is not fun to see friends' faces all the time. They have their own lives." Her expression was the same as that of the returnee woman mentioned above. Another stayee woman also said, "Whatever people say, we older people cannot avoid being assisted by children when we get older. So older people should be quiet." I found that the discourse of friendship is contested by the emotional counter-reaction which emphasizes the importance of relations with offspring.

Considering the contested and emotional discursive practices among older Sakhalin Koreans, I argue that the discourse of friendship functions somewhat to mitigate the discourse of abandonment around the mother-adult child tie. However, because they have different ideas regarding relations with their cohort of friends and with their children, the discourse of union with friends does not completely suppress the discourse of the mother-adult child tie. In relation to friends, older Sakhalin Koreans imagine (but do not explicitly expect) everyday togetherness and having fun; however, they do not anticipate nursing or care for “non-kin” members. In relation to their adult children, they have more mixed emotions. Although trying to refrain from becoming a burden, they feel obligated to admit that children are the only family who will and can take care of older parents. I argue that both discourses exist in parallel and that these two different relationships are intermingled in remaking Sakhalin Koreans’ inter-subjectivity. In the following section, I describe ambiguous connectedness between friends after migration.

3.1.5. Ambiguous closeness

In South Korea, older Sakhalin Koreans are assigned to Incheon Welfare Center for Sakhalin Koreans, Homeland Village, and other apartment complexes (chapter 4). Working with returnees, I learned that friends living in the same residential space served as emotional and material security after migration. For example, the elderly women went to grocery stores and markets together, and gave food to friends, siblings, and in-laws who were not able to go out due to physical problems.¹¹¹ In the Welfare Center, elderly women cared about each other’s everyday health conditions, and they reported what happened to roommates to the nurses or the social workers. I suggest that older Sakhalin Korean to some extent avoid a sense of isolation in South Korea because of the presence of the friends and kin, all facilitated by the housing arrangements.

However, it is difficult to say that all returnees maintain deep trust, reliability, and unconditional affection for one another in South Korea. For example, in the Welfare Center, it was not unusual for women to change roommates due to personal conflicts. Also, in one

¹¹¹ In South Korea, elderly Sakhalin Koreans’ everyday social relations involve not only non-kin friends but also in-laws (K. *sadon*). Their affinal relations are established through marriage among their children, as well as among their nephews and nieces, and sisters and brothers. It shows that since ethnic endogamy was practiced among elderly and middle-aged generations, elderly Sakhalin Koreans are linked through affinal relationships.

apartment complex, one middle-aged woman told me, “I do not hang out with others [returnees] in South Korea. Elderly women [returnees] watch and talk all the time about what other Sakhalin Koreans are doing. I do not even say hello to them.” She told me that she spent considerable time with her grand-daughter visiting from Sakhalin, and that she often went back to Sakhalin where most of her close friends lived.

I suggest that unlike older Sakhalin Koreans who place an emphasis on maintaining closeness with friends, returnees find themselves in a challenging situation in which they establish relations with new people. The next section shows how connections and disconnection with cohorts of kin and friends are experienced in complex ways in multiple spaces and for various lengths of time.

3.1.6. Reunion in South Korea and on Sakhalin

Upon arrival in South Korea, not all returnees reunite with their close friends whom they have frequently contacted before migration. I first introduce an example of an unexpected reunion in the new spatiotemporal context. By considering several cases, including Olga’s, I also show how connectedness with friends is newly organized and sustained in the transnational field.

One returnee middle-aged man told me that he was surprised and happy to meet his friend in South Korea when they were assigned to the same apartment complex. His friend had moved to mainland Russia when they were teenagers, and since then they had not had contact. When I visited another middle-aged woman, originally from Sakhalin but living in Moscow, she introduced her close friend who lived in the same apartment complex. Her friend was also from Sakhalin, but she had moved to Kazakhstan after marrying. They told me they had never imagined the unexpected reunion: living with childhood friends in the same apartment complex in South Korea in their later life. Return migration makes older Sakhalin Koreans’ unpredictable reunion possible.

Olga’s case illustrates a different trajectory. When I visited Olga in South Korea, there were about sixty Sakhalin Koreans living in her apartment complex. Contrary to Sakhalin Koreans’ discourse of connection with friends, Olga did not know anybody among them. She told me that she did not find her acquaintances among the returnees. I also wondered whether Olga had met with her close friends and her sister, who had also migrated

to South Korea. Olga answered that she had visited her sister just once and that she never saw her close friends because they had all been placed in different regions and provinces, and the distance was too great for her to travel. She was afraid of getting lost taking trains and buses to unfamiliar places. Thus, Olga hardly left the town where she resided. Olga's immobility and ironic separation from her close kin and friends in South Korea is derived from the spatial arrangement that changed after 2009. The return migration policy implemented after 2009, which assigned (mostly middle-aged) Sakhalin Korean returnees to regions all over South Korea, has brought about ironic consequences: whereas middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans imagine return migration as a space and time of automatically reuniting with friends, the returnees in fact have to manage connectedness with friends and close kin in trans-regional space in South Korea.

Nevertheless, Olga did not allow the distance to prevent her from trying to connect. For example, she tried to establish new friendships in the same apartment complex. While I stayed at Olga's apartment in South Korea for a few weeks, she introduced me to her new friends, including one man and four women. They usually did their own household chores in the morning, had lunch, and then gathered in the afternoon in each other's houses. Each time, the woman who offered the space prepared tea, snacks, and fruits. While playing *hat'o*, they took a short break to eat food and drink tea. They played *hat'o* until it was time for dinner and then returned back to their own homes. During the game, they exchanged information, mostly about Sakhalin and life in South Korea. In addition to using each other's apartments, they also travelled to grocery stores by bus. What is more, as on Sakhalin, Olga was frequently asked to cook buns for other Sakhalin Korean returnees living in her apartment complex.

This connectedness did not end in South Korea. It continued when they returned in the summers to Sakhalin. During the summer of 2010, Olga visited Sakhalin. She met not only her stayee friends, who were not entitled to migrate, but also her older sister and close returnee friends who lived in South Korea, but with whom she had hardly met in South Korea due to the distance. Visiting their houses on Sakhalin, Olga exchanged reflections on their lives in South Korea. In addition, Olga tried to maintain her connection with the returnees who lived in the same apartment in South Korea in a unique way. Since many returnees had sold their houses or rented out their apartment s to others (chapter 4), it was

uncertain where (in which house) each of them would stay when they returned for visits to Sakhalin. Some stay with their adult children, and others stay with the other close kin. Olga told me, “[When we lived in South Korea] we promised to meet up on August 15 on Sakhalin.” August 15th is a symbolic date among Sakhalin Koreans because the biggest annual event is held at the stadium of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to celebrate the end of the war and their liberation from Japanese colonialism (chapter 5). I found that this event had become a new symbolic space and time for older Sakhalin Koreans in the transnational context, as it served as a space for reuniting not only returnees and stayees, but also returnees who lived in other regions and provinces throughout South Korea.

I have sought to capture the moments in which older Sakhalin Koreans evoke connection with and disconnection from, friends. I have also examined two aspects of social relations of friendship. One is its discursive dimension. Separation from adult children is made sense of through union with friends. The other is the emotional feeling and practice of togetherness. Since connecting with close friends make everyday togetherness possible, social bodies of friends are something critical to constituting their personhood. Older Sakhalin Koreans are concerned about how return migration may lead to separation from friends. However, while some find emotional and material security as they connect with friends in South Korea, other returnees encounter the ironic situation in which they are (dis)placed in trans-local spaces in South Korea, which leads to separation from close friends. In this circumstance, some returnees try to disconnect from unfamiliar returnees in South Korea, and others try to connect with each other on Sakhalin. I argue that through imagining and acting upon separation and union with friends, older Sakhalin Koreans strive to manage themselves in new transnational contexts.

The following sections continue to explore unexpected separation and union, turning to another aspect of relatedness — companionship. I examine how stayees’ ethical commitment to returnees who marry and have companions in transnational space encourages them to reflect on their own lives.

3.2. “Grandfathers wave a flag”: Marriage and transnational mobility

One day in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Sveta, Liuba, Olga, Katya, Lena, and I gathered at Lena’s house to play *hat’o*. Lena had prepared a meal the night before, and she had already set the table in the kitchen when I arrived at her house. We played cards until lunchtime in the large living room. Sveta started to tell a story: “Recently one old man in this neighborhood lost his wife. Since then, people have seen several women constantly visiting his house.” From Sveta’s comments, everyone playing cards recognized that those women were looking to find an older man as a marriage partner with whom they could move to South Korea. This is a typical scenario among older Sakhalin Koreans: cases in which the older man had received the migration entitlement, but he remained on Sakhalin because his wife was sick or she did not want to migrate to South Korea for some reason. After her death, however, he became a widower. Consequently, younger middle-aged women who are not entitled to migrate without a spouse seek to marry “the single” man in order to move to South Korea. Sveta said, “Old grandfathers are taking young wives. They wave the flag!”¹¹² Playing cards, Liuba and Katya echoed, “Right, [grandfathers] wave the flag!”¹¹³

Moral discourses regarding marriage are related to the housing arrangement in South Korea and the new migration entitlement. As I discussed in chapter 1, after 2009 the new return policy included the companions of “first generation” subjects based on humanitarian grounds. These individuals are categorized as “second generation” subjects regardless of gender, age, and ethnicity. This means that younger middle-aged people without the entitlement are able to migrate to South Korea as long as their companions are recognized as belonging to the “first generation” migrants. As a result, marriage between elderly men and younger middle-aged women appears to be a key aspect of Sakhalin Koreans’ discourse of connection and disconnection. I will explore how older Sakhalin Koreans problematize and appreciate this new form of marriage.

Before describing the central point of my discussion, I note a methodological issue. I was not able to, and did not attempt to, investigate if and how Sakhalin Korean men and women “really” practice (re)marriage in order to migrate to South Korea. Although the

¹¹² This is expressed as *kitpal nallida* in Korean, which indicates the way a person shows off his or her authority and power. Sakhalin Korean women use this expression to represent elderly men’s ‘advantageous’ status in the context of return migration.

¹¹³ A means of showing off authority and power.

migration policy, which encourages companionship, was publicly acknowledged, such couples were already the targets of gossip, jokes, and rumor among Sakhalin Koreans, both on Sakhalin and in South Korea. It has thus become a sensitive topic with the people who marry before migration. Considering this situation, I did not intentionally seek out such couples. The aim of this section is not to disclose the private lives of such couples. Instead, I focus on moral issues emerging as a consequence of return migration: the local Sakhalin Koreans on Sakhalin express skepticism, emotional dilemma, and criticism of these symbolic marriages. Considering their emotional reactions whereby they reflect on, imagine, and negotiate ideas about gender, marriage, and intimacy, I examine what types of gender and kinship imaginaries are produced among stayees as they engage in moral discourses about symbolic connection and disconnection that are entailed in the processes of searching for marriage partners before migration and married lives after migration.

3.2.1. Advantaged elderly men or younger women? Aged and gendered power relations

When older Sakhalin Koreans talk about migration among “the single” men and women, they invoke the idioms of marriage — “Old grandfathers take a wife” and “Women marry into [a family].”¹¹⁴ This section first presents Sakhalin Koreans’ imaginaries and appreciation of a new type of marriage. Drawing on a discussion of transnational marriage, the following sections go on to explore how the idea of older men’s advantage and newly acquired value is understood, as well as how configurations of power related to gender and age are negotiated through discourses surrounding marriage among older Sakhalin Koreans. I also show how Sakhalin Koreans’ imaginaries about the new marriages involve reflections on their own married lives.

Sakhalin Koreans’ discourse around and imaginaries of marriages between elderly men and middle-aged women attach new values to the bodies of elderly men, as Thelen’s study in Hungary (2003) shows that the newly offered entitlements to older people allow elderly men to gain some of their power. For example, some older Sakhalin Koreans evaluate return migration as beneficial for grandfathers because older men can potentially

¹¹⁴ By using Korean expressions, Sakhalin Koreans distinguish the idiom of marriage depending on who (women or men) is the subject and actor of marriage. The men’s case is referred to as “*changga kada*” (“men take a wife” in Korean), whereas the women’s case is described as “*sijip kada*” (“women marry into a man’s family” in Korean).

remarry younger wives, who can take care of them in their later life. According to this evaluation, elderly men are in luck. In addition, most of the elderly Korean men have already migrated to South Korea and few of the “first generation” have stayed in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk; within this context of a shortage of elderly men, the bodies of elderly Sakhalin Korean men are given a value as rare subjects who have an “advantage.” This attribute enables non-entitled women (mostly middle-aged women) to migrate through marriage.

However, in this discourse, marriage is not totally controlled by men’s power and advantage. Many also recognize that women strategize and seek out possibilities. For example, on one occasion I was invited to Tanya’s house for dinner. Tanya was in her 50s and a younger grandmother. She lost her husband in an accident in her early 30s and had lived as a single mother. She worked at two grocery stores and told me how difficult it was to manage a life as a single and older mother with two jobs. Tanya lived in her apartment with her grandson, while her daughter’s family (the grandson’s parents) lived in her neighborhood. The dinner gathering was held to celebrate the completion of the remodelling of her apartment, which her son-in-law worked on throughout the year. Tanya’s older sister, Kil-Cha, a returnee living in the Welfare Center (South Korea), showed up at the dinner as she was temporarily visiting Sakhalin. After Kil-Cha talked about her everyday life in South Korea, emphasizing the well-outfitted living space, Tanya sighed and said, “I want to go.” Kil-Cha soon suggested: “How about finding an older man?” Tanya strongly rejected that: “No way! I can’t.” Kil-Cha did not mention this as a joke. She seriously considered it to be the only way for her younger sister to move to South Korea. Middle-aged men also tend to view this type of marriage as a strategy for younger middle-aged women. Yet most of them do not take it as seriously as women. To my question pertaining to marriage between older men and younger women, Sakhalin Korean men smiled, became silent, and simply said, “Women have wits (K. *kkoe*),” or “In order to live, women have to do that.”¹¹⁵

Older Sakhalin Koreans’ imaginaries and discourses around marriage echo the discussions of women’s experiences of cross-border marriage and transnational mobility elsewhere (Constable ed. 2005). Women’s mobility from less developed regions and countries to wealthier countries, and their intimate and romantic relationships with the men

¹¹⁵ It is expressed as a Korean word, *kkoe*, which means “resourceful ideas” and a “resourceful or even cunning means to manage or solve problems.”

who live in the places of destination, are often depicted as cases of “hypergamy,” when viewed in a positive light, or even “trafficking,” when seen as more sinister. Migrant women are often framed as simply being victimized by patriarchal structures. Challenging this notion, scholars demonstrate women’s complex emotional experiences, revealing the ways in which they exercise their agency and engage in aspiring forms of marriage and intimate relations to fulfill their various goals, plans, and desires in moments of courtship (Constable 2003) and after migration (Bloch 2011; Cheng 2007; Freeman 2011). These studies demonstrate how women utilize marriage as an instrumental strategy for material security and the acquisition of citizenship, but the boundary between “fake” and “real” marriage (and love) is blurred as they engage in changing relationships with boyfriends or husbands. In addition, scholars point to paradoxical consequences of women’s experiences: cross-border companionship provides new possibilities, but women’s marital lives are also constrained by local gender regimes and men’s (or other kin members’) gender expectations. These discussions help frame my analysis of older Sakhalin Koreans’ marriage in transnational settings. I am not so much concerned with specific men and women who marry, but these discussions help me to examine how symbolic marriages in the context of transnational return migration involve women’s complex emotional experiences, their agency, as well as paradoxical outcomes shaped by gender norms.

Listening to older Sakhalin Koreans women’s gossip, rumors, and opinions on marriage among returnees, I discovered the emergence of a discourse around the advantage of elderly men, as they evaluate marriage as a strategy used by women with limited resources. The “second generation” of single women without the return entitlement marry elderly men for transnational mobility and to acquire (welfare) citizenship in South Korea (chapter 4). Stayees think that because this form of marriage to elderly men offers women a chance to live in South Korea, these women have to perform as wives and meet men’s needs by offering emotional and domestic care even when there is no emotional bond between the man and woman.

The next section will provide further discussion about gender and kinship imaginaries invoked in regard to marriage among returnees. I explore stayees’ emotional reactions to hearing and imagining that such marriages turned out to be “unsuccessful.” I also examine how stayees’ responses to and reflections on un/successful married life are

shaped, and how these discourses shape asymmetrical relations between men and women in terms of gender and age.

3.2.2. Episodes of performing and underperforming as a wife

Stayees express curiosity and concerns about not only the moment of marriage, but also married lives among returnees after migration. This section draws on the situations that I witnessed in which stayee women interacted with three returnee women and they talked about the returnee women's "unsuccessful" married lives. I explore how stayee women interest themselves in the returnee women's married lives with men whom the women do not know well by gathering together, listening to, criticizing, expressing empathy for, and giving suggestions to the returnees. Framing these exchanges as everyday moral experiences, I argue that their critique and evaluations show the ways stayee women also reflect on their marriages and family lives. In the section that follows, I first describe three returnee women's stories and discuss the types of norms around married life in mid and later life produced by stayee women.

Natasha's story

The same people who played the *hat'o* card game mentioned above gathered one day in Sveta's house as usual. In the kitchen they started to talk about their friend Natasha's story. Natasha is in her mid-50s, and does not have migration entitlement. She is a single mother living with her two adult children and working as a housekeeper in a house on Sakhalin. All of them knew that she had suffered as a result of her former husband's alcoholism when she was young. Expressing empathy, Olga spoke of Natasha's character: "I remember how much she suffered. She was hit all the time, but she was so patient. She did not divorce easily." One day they heard that Natasha would marry an older Korean man and move to South Korea. She had found the man through her acquaintance. Sveta said, "We stopped her from marrying again. I told her, 'Why don't you just live with your daughter without a husband on Sakhalin as you have lived? Living with the daughter has no worries.' But she insisted that the man (the one she would marry) this time would be okay." When Natasha had gone on a trip to China, she had met a fortune-teller. The fortune teller read her

palm, and Natasha heard that the relationship with the man would work well. Without knowing much about her future husband, Natasha officially registered their marriage.

Once they settled in South Korea, Natasha's new husband started to drink. Natasha had had no indication of his drinking habit at all before marrying. She found a part-time job in a location far from her apartment, so she hardly spent time at the house. Sveta and Liuba recollected the moment when they had gone to the airport to bid farewell to Natasha. Liuba told us, "There was a man whom I had seen somewhere else before... But I was surprised to realize that he was a man with whom I had worked in the past! He was drinking all the time." Sveta also knew him: "I also remembered him. He has a bad habit of drinking. I did not know he was Natasha's man [future husband]!" In South Korea, Natasha and her husband rarely spoke or had meals together. Olga commented, "Why did she not care about her husband at all? She thinks only about work. If she had cared for him a little bit more, their relationship would not have been so bad." The others said, "She does not have luck with men."

Later, Natasha temporarily came back to Sakhalin alone. Natasha joined the card game with us. All of them asked, at the same time criticizing: "Why did you believe the fortune-teller?"; "Why did you go there without knowing him well?"; and "Life here [on Sakhalin] is better than in South Korea." Natasha simply nodded and answered: "I know. I know. You're right. I was wrong." Natasha told the women she had decided to go back to South Korea and work for several months, after which she would divorce.

After hearing that, Olga seriously asked me: "If they divorce, will this mean she cannot live in South Korea anymore?" The unexpected question surprised me. I had not thought about divorce in South Korea and what would happen to those, like Natasha, who had not originally had migration entitlement. Later, I called the Red Cross office in South Korea and asked the same question. The worker replied that they did not expect such a case would happen. I learned that the return migration policy does not fully take into consideration the realities of older Sakhalin Koreans and possibilities of divorce in South Korea.

Lila's story

Lila was born in 1946, which means she does not have migration entitlement. On Sakhalin, she owned a huge apartment where she lived with her daughter. The kitchen and the living space had been remodelled and were decorated with fancy souvenirs they had gathered from the many places she had travelled to, including Eastern Europe, western Russia, Japan, and Korea. After perestroika, Lila had started a business on Sakhalin selling accessories purchased from South Korea. She has been known for being a hard worker. Lila also had an invalid entitlement (R. *invalidnaia*) (see chapter 4), and she received free medical treatment and prescription medicine. Lila's friends thought she was managing her livelihood without any severe financial difficulties. But three years earlier, she felt compelled to migrate with a man who was introduced to her by an acquaintance. They had moved to South Korea two years earlier.

After hearing that Lila was visiting Sakhalin, Olga and some of the other women visited her apartment. Since they had already known of the problematic relationship between Lila and her new husband, they soon started to talk and asked about Lila's married life in South Korea while preparing lunch together. As if partly joking and lamenting married life, Lila told me what living with a strange man was like:

I made the wrong choice with this marriage. He complains that everything that I cook is tasteless. Besides, you know what, he does not even have (upper) teeth! Even when acquiring a dog, I first *know* whether it has teeth properly! I married a husband without *knowing* whether he has teeth or not.

Lila then continued to lament. Her new husband had physical difficulty in walking. When she was hospitalized, her friends visited her but he did not come. Lila said: "If he tried, he could come by taking a wheelchair or whatever." What disappointed her was that her new husband did not eat all the types of foods she prepared, and that their tastes differed greatly. Lila explained, "I like hard rice while he likes it soft." Lila had come to Sakhalin without letting her husband know how many days she would be staying on the island. She did not know what he was doing in South Korea while she was absent.

It is noteworthy that the other women did not blame Lila's new husband entirely. Rather, they suggested that Lila arrange meals to suit her husband's tastes. Lila emphasized: "I did everything. But he complains all the time that what I cook is bad." Later, I spoke for a

short time with Lila's daughter. She told me briefly about her mother's marriage. Recollecting when they met before migrating, Lila's daughter told me: "My impression of him was not bad. He has a son and their relationship seemed good [i.e., he seemed to be a good father, and Lila's daughter imagined that he would have a good family life with her mother]. After they migrated, I talked with my mother on the phone. Her voice sounded strange. It was really weak. I then heard about their lives in South Korea. I wonder why she went to South Korea to suffer (K. *kosaeng*) although she could live here [on Sakhalin] without any problems." Like Natasha, Lila also decided to divorce.

Marina's story

Marina had migrated to South Korea ten years earlier. Since she was born in 1948, in order to migrate she had to marry an older man. In the summer of 2010 on Sakhalin, Marina visited Lena's house where we had already eaten lunch. Marina had temporarily returned to Sakhalin to renew her Russian passport. Marina said, "When I am here, I feel like I have come back home. Her words frustrated Liuba who responded: "That's why all of you (returnees) are blamed! You dared to move *home*, to South Korea, but once you come back to Sakhalin you say 'Sakhalin is home'." Marina was asked if there were many single older men left in South Korea. She laughed and answered, "There are a few elderly men. Grandfathers wave the flag. Women are competing to get the men!"

Marina had lived in South Korea for more than three years with an older Sakhalin Korean man. However, she did not get along with the new husband. All the women playing cards in Lena's house knew about Marina's unsuccessful relationship. In Marina's apartment, there is a border (visible only to Marina and her husband) dividing Marina's and her husband's space. Marina never went inside her husband's space. She told us that even the dining table is divided by the border. Her husband has his own refrigerator, not in the kitchen but in his own room. Marina complained that her husband cooked and ate only noodles. She is not interested in what he does every day, but instead goes out and spends time with her neighbors. Lena asked, "Does it work? You married and are living together with the man, aren't you?" Marina then laughed and said, "He smells so bad because he hardly bathes." After hearing Marina's words, Sveta and Liuba, who had aspired to migrate to South Korea, jokingly said, "If you don't like living in South Korea, can you let us stay in

your apartment? We will live there instead of you.” Marina answered, “Fine, you may live there, if you wash his testicles.” The people there all burst out laughing at Marina’s choice of words. Wiping the tears away, Lena said, “Don’t say such words in front of a young woman [meaning me].” But they all kept laughing and Marina added: “Because he really smells bad. I think the bad smell comes up from ‘there’.”

In everyday conversations and interactions, the discourse of separation and union through marriage between older Sakhalin Korean men and younger middle-aged women has emerged because of the new transnational context. I suggest that in the discourse of companionship, what is morally unacceptable is that strangers officially marry in their mid- and later life without knowing each other at all, for the sole purpose of moving to South Korea. Moreover, stayee women express rejection if such marriages are based on the obligation to perform as a wife who ideally sleeps with and cares for her spouse, even if he is a man whom the woman does not know well. The next section continues to discuss this point.

3.2.3. Minds (*maŭm*) match

How do stayee women reflect on “successful” and “failed” married life by exchanging and expressing emotional reactions and evaluative talk about the consequences of marriage for returnee women like Natasha, Lila, and Marina? First, I suggest that not men, but women crossing state borders are regarded as “problematic” subjects that transgress gender norms in transnational space. In fact, in South Korea, I met one returnee couple—a wife who had the entitlement to return while her younger husband did not. Both of them had their own families and had been divorced in the past. The woman and man had lived together on Sakhalin, but married legally in order to move to South Korea. This opposite type of companionship between an older woman and a younger middle-aged man does occasionally happen. However, this does not serve as a source of moral discourse.¹¹⁶ Instead, women

¹¹⁶ I also found that there was little space for returnee men to articulate their emotional dilemmas about their married lives. One middle-aged man I met in South Korea in the public space of an apartment complex where returnee men played chess and billiards told me that he spends most of the time outside the house to avoid verbal abuse by his wife. He had divorced in the past and lived alone on Sakhalin. But a woman suddenly moved to his house and strongly suggested return migration since she knew he was from the first generation. He lamented that the woman always yells at him, and regrets the marriage. I suggest that the discourse of marriage is feminized; however, it also constrains men’s experiences in different ways.

become targets of moral discourses. For example, during the talk pertaining to returnees' married life in South Korea, Sveta wondered and asked, "Why are only women blamed?" Another woman, a returnee, also told me, "Women have to behave carefully in South Korea because bad rumors about women will spread quickly (on Sakhalin and South Korea)." As in the case of the discourse on mother-adult child connection and disconnection, the discourse around marriage also positions women's transnational mobility as something that brings about subsequent problems and unexpected kin relations.

I also found that Sakhalin Korean women, both in South Korea and on Sakhalin, did not expect that living with a new marriage partner in later life within a new space would change their lives so dramatically, as a woman performing the roles and duties of a wife. While women (and men) closely associated marriage with women's performance of the wife role, including caring for a husband and doing domestic chores, they were unprepared for the reality after moving to South Korea. As the three women's stories have shown, they consider that the main obstacle in married life is that women find it difficult to properly practice the wife's role of caring for their husbands. Even though return migration provides to some extent an autonomous space where elderly and middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women do not necessarily practice everyday mothering, the woman's obligation as a wife is refashioned. The responsibility that comes with having a "successful" marriage is imposed more on women than men. Thus, even though some women resist the wife role, they are blamed or morally criticized and this does not challenge the norms of gender and married life.

The stayee women do not always blame the returnee women, however. They are able to imagine how difficult it is to be a wife without emotional attachments to the husband. Hearing, talking, criticizing, and expressing their thoughts about remarried life in South Korea, the local Sakhalin Korean women explained how matched "minds" (K. *maŭm*) are the most important element of a successful marriage. This concept includes thoughtfulness, which indicates willing acceptance of what a spouse does for one; and cooperation with each other. Rejection and ignorance are causes of "failed" marriages, which means that minds do not match. This norm is not limited to the relationship between husband and wife, and is also applied to the relationship between parents and children, as well as between kin. Many older Sakhalin Korean people consider that people with "unmatched minds" living together in a domestic space is, emotionally, the most unbearable situation.

Furthermore, the dominant point of view among older Sakhalin Koreans who have been married for decades is that matched minds are achieved over time. When Olga (a returnee) met her sister (a stayee) on Sakhalin, her sister asked about the life of remarried couples in South Korea. Olga spoke of the difficulties of living with a stranger in old age, saying, “It is hard for aging people like us. We are not young people. If they are young, they take care of each other even though they do not know each other well. Even though he [her husband] has problems, we continue to live together because we have already lived for a long time.” Olga’s account suggests that the process of knowing and establishing an emotional attachment with a new companion in later life is not easy for middle-aged and elderly people. Especially in South Korea, where married couples do not have any other space to escape to from their “failed” marriage, they have to endure the situation. Through reflections on their own experiences, many middle-aged Sakhalin Korean women conclude their thoughts with the phrase: “After all, my husband is my husband.” I suggest that stayee women reflect on “matched minds” as something *achieved*, as women gradually come to know their husbands’ preferred tastes, personality, temper, and habits through everyday practices.

By considering older Sakhalin Koreans’ moral discourse and understanding of symbolic marriage among returnees in the transnational field, I argue that such marriages, as a site of older men’s practical and symbolic power, as well as of women’s complex agency, evoke discourses of gender and kinship practices among stayees. Despite the fact that the entitlement is given to older men based on neither their concrete deeds, nor their ability, the advantage held by old men is represented and appreciated with the words “waving the flag.” In that sense, older men’s power is both practical and symbolic. In contrast, the women’s case is more complex. Marriage among those who are single is considered a women’s strategy to manipulate men’s power. However, older Sakhalin Korean women think that the returnee woman’s duty to perform as a wife determines whether a marriage is a success or a failure. In other words, women’s actions are judged according to the gender norm of women caring for their husbands. In this context, older Sakhalin Korean stayee women view women as symbolic bodies responsible for reproducing the gender norms in transnational space, even though women like Natasha, Lila, and Marina have transgressed gender norms for wives. In addition, hearing about “unsuccessful” married lives among returnees, stayee

women feel that the practice of living with and caring for a stranger is not easily achieved. They consequently reproduce the norms of married life in mid- and later life, where gendered duty and obligations are pursued in close association with emotions, knowing, and thoughtfulness.

In addition to marriage, another moral discourse around companionship is circulated both in South Korea and on Sakhalin. Relations between female companions are the subject of this new form of companionship, which will be explored next.

3.3. “Doing *kompanii*”: Tension among women in domestic space

I learned that older Sakhalin Koreans negotiated companionship within the transnational context not only between men and women but also *among women*. According to the return migration policy, the apartment in South Korea is assigned not to a single subject, but to each migrant and a companion. This policy indicates that even though one is entitled to migrate, single returnees, such as widows, widowers, the divorced, and the unmarried, are required to find a companion to live with in South Korea. As a result, the “first generation” of elderly women (widows) choose to live with female companions. Older Sakhalin Koreans represent the women’s companionship as “*kompanii hada*” and “*tongmu hada*.”¹¹⁷ Both in South Korea and on Sakhalin, rumors, gossip, and talk about companionship among women are circulated and interpreted. Just as they are interested in separation and union between elderly men and younger women as presented above, stayee women are highly curious about women’s connectedness in South Korea. Because this type of companionship is new and experimental (Mattingly 2014), I will argue that older Sakhalin Korean women confront a transformative moment. Considering Lamphere’s discussion of women’s relations in domestic space (1973), I discuss how older Sakhalin Koreans problematize women’s companionship.

As feminist anthropologists have shed light on women’s perspectives and experiences in family and domestic domains, scholarly attention turned to power relations

¹¹⁷ Older Sakhalin Koreans say “*kompanii* (R. companion) *hada*” and “*dongmu* (K. friend) *hada*.” After both nouns, they put *hada*, a Korean dummy verb meaning “do.” When using the former expression, older Sakhalin Koreans use a plural form of companion (“*kompanii*”) rather than using a singular feminine form of a companion (“*kampaniia*”). In this study, I use this plural form.

between women in domestic space (Lamphere 1973).¹¹⁸ Scholars have long studied women's conflicts among co-wives in polygamous relationships, between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, and among sisters-in law. Lamphere, however, reveals diverse cases of cooperation and competition among women in various cultural settings. In her analysis, Lamphere studies women's power and authority, with a focus on practices such as decision making and requests for help from kin members. She argues that women's authority over other female kin is affected by public and domestic divisions, by men's power, and also by changes in the developmental cycle of a household. In a similar vein, studies in cross-cultural gerontology demonstrate that older women's power and authority over younger female kin in later life vary depending on economic activities, systems of gender hierarchy, and socio-cultural changes (Dickerson-Putman and Brown 1994). These perspectives inspired me to look at older Sakhalin Korean women's female-to-female companionship as a site of negotiation of authority and decision making.

However, Sakhalin Korean women's companionship is distinctive in that it does not involve inter-generational ties and in that whether the women are kin or not is ambiguous. This type of relatedness is similar to relationships between roommates, but older Sakhalin Korean women hardly articulate such ideas because, I suggest, they have not experienced roommate-like relations in the past. My analysis will show how older women's companionship involves and brings about specific moral experiences and imaginaries of connection and disconnection.

3.3.1. Freedom from “performing wife,” and sources of trouble

Sakhalin Korean people on Sakhalin express different reactions to returnees' stories about companionship among women. On one hand, some stayee elderly women imagine that living with female friends might be more comfortable than living with strange men because the former situation does not require the obligation of being a wife. They just care about themselves, and they often help each other by cooking, eating, and cleaning together. In hearing from their friends in South Korea that being with friends is fun and “better,” the

¹¹⁸ Lamphere notes that feminist anthropologists and anthropological studies on women after the 1970s contributed to shifting the focus of kinship study from kin roles and duty between men and women to women's perspectives and experiences in relations to other female kin in domestic space (Lamphere 1973).

elderly women imagine that living with female friends would be a convenient option. On the other hand, the majority of women on Sakhalin (also in South Korea) constantly circulated the rumor that female-to-female companionship had brought about more troubles than marrying men. I was often told that the main cause of conflicts among women is utility expenses. Reflecting her decision to stay on Sakhalin, one elderly woman who had a sister who had migrated with her friend said: “I heard that those who do *kompanii* often fight with each other. I don’t know why. It is because of money, I guess. They fight over how much each has used the water and electricity. Living with a woman is hard and it makes people lonely. I think it (return migration) is good, but it is sad. People split as they live.”

While this type of comment circulated, some middle-aged Sakhalin Korean men have a different understanding. The men who have strong aspirations to migrate to South Korea see such companionship problems as a “women’s issue.” They contend that women’s conflicts are not a serious matter. For example, Slava, who often complained that he was not entitled to return commented, “Because those women do not know each other, they might have trouble. But as they live together, the situation will get better. Think about astronauts. They have an experiment living together for months before going to space. They gradually get to know each other, which would prevent trouble.”

While stayees’ feelings and attitudes about women’s companionship vary, nonetheless, stayees are more likely to imagine negative consequences than peaceful relations between female companions. In the rumors concerning female companionship, stayees also report that food is another source of conflict. Different everyday practices surrounding meals — different food preferences, eating and cooking habits — affect women’s relationships. This means that two women sharing one domestic space, in particular a kitchen, experience conflict because a kitchen is considered as space for *a woman*, not *women*.

Within the situation where diverse imaginaries and meanings are attached to migration of two women, elderly women continue to migrate to South Korea by doing *kompanii*. In this section, I provide two examples that show how not only life after migration but also the process of finding and living with a female companion is contested. I examine the ways in which elderly women grapple with a new transformative situation where they realize the possibilities and impossibilities of companionship with other women.

Sun-Dők: Disappointment with a companion

Elderly Sakhalin Korean women (mostly widows) frequently consider finding a female companion in order to migrate to South Korea. This process, however, involves emotional struggles as shown in Sun-Dők's case. Sun-Dők, an 82-year-old woman, had two daughters who both lived on the mainland of Russia, while she lived with her divorced son, a grandson and his pregnant wife, and the second grandson in a single house. Sun-Dők often emphasized her distinctive character by stating, "I've always been at home and am not the kind of person to socialize with other people." From a young age, she had spent most of her time caring for her household, and had rarely attended public events and gatherings with friends. The family and household were her primary spaces throughout her everyday life. With the help of her pregnant grand-daughter-in-law (an ethnic Korean woman from Kazakhstan), Sun-Dők cooked for all the family members every day. From morning until noon she also worked in the garden, cultivating berries, carrots, potatoes, and lettuce.

Sun-Dők was not eager to migrate to South Korea. One day, however, her friend suggested they be companions and move to South Korea together. They had known each other since they were young, having lived in the same neighborhood. Following her friend, Sun-Dők applied for return migration. She said she would not tell her son of her decision until her migration was officially arranged. Sun-Dők was worried about separating from her sons and grand-sons with whom she was living, but after she was informed that the apartment in South Korea was ready, she felt excited and awaited the day that she would move to South Korea.

A few months later, I visited Sun-Dők again. She told me that her friend had suddenly called her and told her that she would not migrate to South Korea. According to Sun-Dők, her friend lived with her eldest adult son, but her daughter-in-law did not live with them because they did not get along with each other. Sun-Dők commented: "I don't understand why she has trouble when she is getting old. Probably she has a sharp tongue." Sun-Dők continued to explain. The daughter-in-law had come back to live with the family, and Sun-Dők's friend suddenly decided not to go to South Korea. I asked Sun-Dők if she had asked her friend why she suddenly changed her mind. Sun-Dők had not. She just said, "I don't know. She is a fickle person." Sun-Dők was disappointed with her friend's behavior.

Later, I saw Sun-Dŏk's would-be companion by chance. Since she was in a hurry to go somewhere, I briefly asked her why she had suddenly decided not to migrate to South Korea. She left just saying, "My son does not allow me to do so." Uncertain that she could find a new companion, Sun-Dŏk postponed her migration plan. In the winter, she was offered a chance to visit South Korea, on a brief visit called a "Homeland Tour," sponsored by the Japanese government as a form of humanitarian aid. I met her upon her return from South Korea. She talked to me about all the things she had seen and eaten, and she exclaimed that it had all been great. At that moment, Sun-Dŏk's mind was already on South Korea.

Sun-Dŏk then found a new companion through an acquaintance. Sun-Dŏk did not know her at all, but she hoped to be successful in finding a companion this time. Before finishing my fieldwork and leaving Sakhalin, I asked her if I could visit her in South Korea someday. She kindly said to me, "You can come any time." She looked happy at that moment but it is not certain how Sun-Dŏk's companionship will really work out at this time.

Ok-Cha: Living with a strange companion

Ok-Cha's example shows another reality of companionship in the new space, South Korea. When I met 83-year-old Ok-Cha for the first time on Sakhalin, she lamented the lack of Korean friends on Sakhalin: "When I went to the pension fund office, there were no *Chosŏn baba* ("Korean grandmothers"). Only me! And the Russian worker there told me 'well done' (*molodets*) because I have not left Sakhalin." She always told me that a pensioner's life was boring and there was nothing fun on Sakhalin. She lived alone in a one-room apartment. Her daughters lived in her neighborhood and visited Ok-Cha's apartment after work. In her room, she had on display photos of her first son, who had died in a car accident when he was young. Ok-Cha felt emotional when talking about him. The second son had also died from an illness. Her youngest son was doing business in mainland Russia when I met with her.

When I saw the living space, cards (*hat'o*) had been left on the floor, which suggested to me that she played cards by herself. I interviewed her twice and regularly met her at the cultural events held for the local Koreans on Sakhalin. When I finished my fieldwork on Sakhalin and was about to leave for South Korea, Ok-Cha suddenly announced

to me that she would migrate to South Korea with a female companion. Before leaving Sakhalin, I asked her to meet and talk.

Ok-Cha thought that no elderly Korean women who were willing to move to South Korea were left on Sakhalin, but by chance she had found an elderly woman. However, Ok-Cha was worried that they would not get along in South Korea. She told me her first impression of the woman, saying, “I just met her [for the first time] but it seemed that she would not be an easy person.” Although she was anxious about the new companionship, she expected that life in South Korea would still be more fun since she could reunite with her close friends and kin living there. I promised her that I would visit her in South Korea.

Two months later, I visited Homeland Village in South Korea to meet with Ok-Cha. When I pushed the intercom button, nobody answered. I knocked on the door but couldn’t hear anything. I tried to open the door, and it opened as it was unlocked. An elderly woman, Ok-Cha’s companion, came to the entrance and allowed me to wait for Ok-Cha. The inside of the apartment still looked dreary compared to the rooms of the long-term residents. During our casual conversation, the elderly woman explained: “I did not want to move to South Korea at all, but I feel pain in my back, so I came. If I had not been sick, I would not have come. I have all my children on Sakhalin.” While I was talking with her, Ok-Cha came back from a sauna with her niece, who was also a returnee living in the same apartment complex. Once we started to talk, the elderly woman went into her room quietly and then went out, locking the door of her own room. Ironically, although the entrance door was not locked, they locked their own rooms.

Ok-Cha showed me around her apartment. I was surprised to find that there were two refrigerators and two rice cookers in the kitchen. She explained to me: “This is mine and that is hers.” According to the return migration policy, the Japanese government is in charge of purchasing furniture and basic necessities for the “first generation” subjects. One refrigerator had already been put in Ok-Cha’s apartment, but Ok-Cha and her companion agreed to have another. Ok-Cha pointed with her finger across an invisible border in the kitchen, and again explained, “From here to here, these are mine; from there, those are hers.” As to my question of why they used the separate cooking tools and kitchen items, she answered saying, “We like different foods. We eat what each wants and when each wants to eat.” She then emphasized: “It’s good.”

When I met Ok-Cha, her son and daughter-in-law were also visiting her from Russia. Ok-Cha at first felt uncomfortable being with her own son and me because I was a stranger, but her son invited me to join them for lunch. The son also invited Ok-Cha's companion, but the woman refused. After lunch, we visited the mother of Ok-Cha's daughter-in-law, who lived in the next apartment building. The elderly woman, Ok-Cha's in-law, served various dishes. However, her own companion quietly went inside her own room and closed the door. All of the people sitting at the table invited her to have lunch with us, but she declined. Another elderly woman (Ok-Cha's in-law's friend) furrowed her brow and said, "In this type of situation, it is not comfortable (R. *ne udobnii-da*)".¹¹⁹ Ok-Cha's in-law nodded. While the woman was in her room, we had our meal and then went back to Ok-Cha's apartment. When the two of us were alone in the apartment, Ok-Cha quietly told me: "Since coming to South Korea, I always think about Sakhalin. It might be happier to be there, living alone and seeing my daughters' faces every day. Elders' lives are the same everywhere. So sad. I should have moved when I was younger." I asked Ok-Cha if she met her friends in South Korea. She answered, "No. I am saving money. When I meet somebody, I need to give something." Ok-Cha thought it was important to refrain from visiting her friends, and instead to save money and put it to use for her daughters and grand children on Sakhalin.

By showing two elderly women's processes of doing *kompanii*, I suggest that both women used female companionship as a way to migrate to South Korea and that this experimental experience involved transformation of the self. However, both women found that such connectedness was not easy. Sun-Dōk's case shows that the relations with her friend made it impossible to move on with her plan. Despite moving to South Korea with a companion, Ok-Cha kept her distance from her companion, which appeared to be a way of making herself a stranger, or emphasizing a lack of kinship between the women.

On Sakhalin, regardless of whether they witness the lives of women in South Korea, stayees imagine "unsuccessful" companionship. The stayee women view two women sharing domestic space as problematic because, they say, there are two domestic masters in one space and it causes a clash. Thus, some middle-aged stayee women have come back to the

¹¹⁹ Older Sakhalin Koreans frequently put *-ta*, indicating a Korean stative verb, after Russian adjectives. In Russian, people including Sakhalin Koreans use "da" ("yes" as a tag question ("isn't it") after verbs and adjectives. The elderly women used the former in the context where she attempted to tell us that the situation was uncomfortable.

notion that living with men is better, reflecting the gender norm that women and men manage everyday life well by playing complementary roles (Kukhterin 2000). Lamphere and cross-cultural gerontologists examine older women's authorities in relationships with female in-laws and other younger family members, and shifting authorities based on developmental cycle of households. I add to these works that older women's authorities in domestic space compete with female friends in a transnational context.

3.3.2. Unmaking Male Companionship: "Men Need Women"

Although I heard about the discourse of marriage between older men and younger middle-aged wives and about companionship between women, I did not hear about or find any male companions living in South Korea. On Sakhalin, I visited the Sakhalin Korean Family Reunification Association, and asked whether male companions had moved to South Korea in the past. The worker told me that during the early period (around 2000) there were some companionships between elderly men but emphasized that this was highly "unusual." Every Sakhalin Korean man and woman I met just laughed at my question as to why men did not share apartments in South Korea. The subject of male companionship was a novel one for Sakhalin Koreans.

I found that older Sakhalin Koreans could not find any cultural ideas and resources to explain a lack of male companionship, but instead, intoned, "Men need women" and continued to explain: "Men cannot live alone." Older Sakhalin Koreans appreciated that if single men could not find a woman, they had no choice but to be alone. In this conversational context, they expressed pity for male aloneness. For example, one elderly woman stated: "Men living alone are the poorest persons." On Sakhalin and in South Korea, along with the discourse of older men's advantages as entitled migrants, another emotional and moral discourse also circulated: that lone men are pitiful.

The pity felt for men alone has not suddenly emerged as a result of return migration. I argue that the emotional feeling of pity for lone men is also in part historically constructed among Sakhalin Koreans. When they narrate stories of life after the war on Sakhalin, many older Sakhalin Koreans recollect that there were lone Korean men who were not able to have family lives. Whereas the population of women after World War II was larger than that of men in the Soviet Union, the situation for Sakhalin Koreans was the opposite. The number

of Korean men was almost twice that of women from 1941 to 1945 (Kuzin 2010:18), a situation brought about by men being mobilized as a labor force. Older Sakhalin Koreans also recount that after the war, there were many single Korean males on Sakhalin without wives and families; they called those social bodies of men *horabi* (in Korean), and they recollect that the men ruined their lives taking drugs and alcohol, which led to miserable deaths.¹²⁰ Older Sakhalin Koreans see those lone men as pitiful and helpless and express sympathy for them. This structure of feeling about single men affects older Sakhalin Koreans' gender norms, whereby it is explained that men should be cared for and there is a widespread sense that "men do not live alone."

I suggest that older Sakhalin Koreans actively perpetuate the norm that adult men without women are powerless and helpless. The fact that there were so few cases of male returnee companions in South Korea also reinforces this gender norm. While there is little space to imagine and consider male companions, the stereotypical image of "pitiful male aloneness" is emphasized. In the context of returning, the elderly men, who belong to "the first generation," have symbolic and practical powers, but when they marry and have wives who take care of them, manhood is "complete."

3.4. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has examined the symbolic separation and union of friends and companions brought about by transnational mobility and the related moral discourses circulated by older Sakhalin Koreans. Despite transnational mobility and socio-economic change, returnees try to maintain connections with friends who help to sustain a sense of everydayness, togetherness, and personhood even when they struggle in South Korea. In addition to the actual connection, the importance of friends is also discursively produced, and this assists older Sakhalin Koreans in making sense of their mobility and immobility, as well as their aspirations for return. This discursive practice serves to weaken the moral criticisms of separation between mothers and adult children. However, the discourse of

¹²⁰ *Horabi* means "widower" in Korean, but older Sakhalin Koreans use this word to mean "single men" without clear distinctions between those single who are divorced, or widowers. These lone men include both men who left a wife and children in Korea during the colonial time, and men who did not marry on Sakhalin. Some middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans told me that when they were children, such lone men had lived with their families. Also, many recollect that their mothers took care of those single men by offering them meals.

union with a friend cannot displace the mother–adult child discourse because the moral force of the latter is powerful.

I have also discussed another type of social relationship — symbolic companionship among “singles” — which appears to be a key to moral discourse among Sakhalin Koreans. Older Sakhalin Koreans consider marriage for migration as a site in which men’s symbolic and practical power and women’s agency are negotiated. In this context, women are also viewed as subjects who are responsible for performing the wife role for their husbands. Yet the stayee women feel that married life with a strange man in mid- and later life is not easy since the performance of a wife role requires emotional attachment, as well as knowing each other, both of which are achieved over time.

What is more, as they hear and imagine returnee women’s practices of companionship with other women, both returnees and stayees consider living together with a stranger to be a contested process. Such forms of relatedness help them to be “free” from certain gendered duties; however, this does not mean that there is no conflict. Even though women draw on idioms of friendship (*kompanii* and *tongmu*) to arrange for a “roommate,” those friends eventually change into strangers as they live together. Women also reflect on how having two women in one domestic space is problematic since women’s authorities would overlap. Thus, many stayee Sakhalin Korean women imagine such companionship will not work well, a situation which many also contribute to a norm of heterosexual marriage and heterosexual arrangements for housing and transnational mobility.

Throughout Part I, I have examined how return migration provides space for older Sakhalin Koreans to reconstitute fluid personhood through acting upon and around separation and union across multiple places and times. I argue that the return policy, particularly the limited entitlement and housing arrangements, has brought about a challenging and transformative situation in which older Sakhalin Koreans articulate, encounter, and imagine problematic and new ways of living. However, at the same time, they keep going as they manage diverse emotions and behaviors, as well as struggle to make sense of their immobility and mobility. I considered these processes as ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans incorporate and dis-incorporate themselves into kin relations, which involve qualification and transformation of the self. In the transnational setting, various

social bodies of kin, who offer both possibilities and impossibilities, play a crucial role in constituting their personhood.

Part II: Desire and Despair of State Protection

In Part II, I examine how return migration shapes the ways older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate personhood. The focus turns specifically to the subject-making processes of older Sakhalin Koreans through experiences of citizenship. By highlighting the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans become mobile and immobile subjects, I explore how citizenship is played out in transnational contexts that reconfigure relations with nation-states.

Part II is divided into two chapters. Chapter 4 analyzes how older Sakhalin Koreans become returnees, as well as recipients of humanitarian aid, in South Korea. First, I examine this by focusing on specific emotional and affective experiences that are entailed in the process of return. Second, I go on to explore returnees' transnational practices. I explore how returnees become mobile bodies by making use of their welfare entitlements, namely the rights of citizenship both in Russia and in South Korea. Finally, I analyze the socio-political implications of their "flexible" transnational mobility and agency.

Chapter 5 discusses paradoxical aspects of return migration. I highlight contested meanings and practices around citizenship among distinctive political subjects—returnees and stayees. Focusing on moral discourses of dependency and nothingness, I examine how such discursive practices and actual interactions between mobile and immobile subjects produce political differences. This chapter turns to explore how stayees struggle to become recognized as victims. I also illuminate the complicated feelings of returnees about being special welfare subjects in South Korea. Finally, I analyze the politics of inclusion of the return migration.

In Part II I maintain that return migration is largely shaped by two different modes of welfare provision in Russia and South Korea; it is within these structural conditions that older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate relations with three different nation-states. At the same time, the process of return is shaped by the diverse practices, imaginaries, aspirations, and emotions of Sakhalin Koreans. I argue that for older Sakhalin Koreans, return offers both a material context for and a means of imagining their sense of belonging and personhood.

Chapter 4: Becoming “Flexible” Welfare Subjects in the Neoliberal Era?

In initial conversations with older Sakhalin Koreans, both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, they would evaluate the return project as “good.” The following are typical explanations: “Housing is given and pension is given”; “[returnees are] to be fed, clothed, and bathed”; and “It is clean and developed [in South Korea].” I found that such statements had two implications, and these implications also helped me pose questions. First, Sakhalin Koreans used the indexical term “given” and other verbs in the passive form. This linguistic practice among older Sakhalin Koreans is similar to Russian elders’ practice. In Russian elders’ discourse of housing (and pensions), the phrase “was given” and “have been allocated” are used (Zavisca 2012:47 [Semonova 2004]). I assumed that older Sakhalin Koreans’ speech regarding housing was affected by the discursive practice in Russia, but I wondered about this and asked if the form of housing provision in South Korea was the same as that of the housing provision in Russia. Second, words like “clean” and “developed” reflected a feeling evoked by older Sakhalin Koreans’ orientation in space. I wondered how, in fact, do returnees actually live in particular residential space. To answer these questions, I focus on how material arrangements in South Korea affect Sakhalin Koreans’ particular evaluations and discourses around welfare provisions. In this chapter, I specifically link this focus to older Sakhalin Koreans’ experiences of citizenship and transnational mobility.

I first explore how older Sakhalin Koreans migrate to South Korea. I look at the ways in which would-be returnees express mixed emotions before leaving Sakhalin and at the moment of crossing the border. Second, I go on to examine Sakhalin Koreans’ lives in South Korea. I explore how new returnees receive, use, and manipulate welfare assistance such as housing, pensions, and health care. Third, I turn to analyze how returnees become transnational agents. Finally, the focus turns to older Sakhalin Koreans’ local and transnational strategies, as well as their reflections on their new lives. This chapter aims to explore how return mobility shapes and is shaped by older Sakhalin Koreans’ practices of citizenship.

Although returnees use various strategies, I suggest that the process of return entails inconsistent and ambiguous emotions. In addition, I argue that these complex emotions show that return mobility is not always predictable. It also involves luck and uncertainty. In the following section, I begin with a look at how older Sakhalin Koreans’ complex emotions and

this sense of unpredictability are evoked and expressed before moving to South Korea and at the moment of crossing the border.

4.1. Moments of border-crossing: Materiality, performance, and mixed emotions

During my stay on Sakhalin from 2010 to 2011, the number of applicants for return migration continued to grow. Once Sakhalin Koreans became would-be migrants, however, their emotions about leaving Sakhalin were complicated. I suggest that the return mobility of Sakhalin Koreans evokes complex feelings, and that mixed emotions are expressed through objects and in a space of border-crossing. I also observed that the moments of leaving Sakhalin and arriving in South Korea entailed various performances. My examination of older Sakhalin Koreans' migration process draws on Basu and Coleman's (2008) work showing that migration is grounded in objects, practices, and relationships that mediate it. In considering migration and the material world, Basu and Coleman use the concept of materiality to mean "physical objects and worlds...[which also] evoke multiple forms of experience and sensation" (Basu and Coleman 2008:317). Basu and Coleman also suggest that a particular type of journey shapes and is shaped by materiality. In addition, Burrell's study (2008) examines the significance of performance in a moment of border-crossing. Describing Polish migrants' preparation for moving to Britain, Burrell explores how Polish migrants engage in diverse performances such as family farewells and reunions. The Polish migrants also perform economic difference through their possessions in the Łódź airport (2008:368–369). Burrell argues that border-crossing spaces including an airport space are not empty spaces but are shaped by objects, possessions, and peoples' performances. Drawing on these perspectives, this section examines how the return migration of Sakhalin Koreans is shaped by particular emotions, performances, and material goods, specifically at the moment of leaving Sakhalin.

Maya, a middle-aged woman, expressed mixed and shifting emotions during the period I regularly met with her. She belonged to the second generation while her husband belonged to the first generation of returnees. When I met Maya, she kept expressing her wish to live in South Korea, saying, "I just try, I don't know if I really could go, though." On Sakhalin, a rumor was circulated that the return migration project might end, so local Sakhalin Koreans (who had the eligibility) put their names on the waiting list. Maya and her

husband also put their names on the list. Two months later when I visited Maya again, she told me, “I am going to South Korea!” However, when I asked how she felt, she answered, “I don’t know; I wanted to go to South Korea, but suddenly I feel I don’t want to leave Sakhalin.” For Maya, in reality, it was hard to imagine leaving the place where she had been born and had lived for more than sixty years. In addition, thinking about leaving an unmarried son at home, Maya found it difficult to embrace her chance to migrate to South Korea.

In addition to verbal expressions of ambivalence, complicated feelings about leaving Sakhalin emerge in the moment when Sakhalin Koreans prepare for departure. Generally, each returnee is allowed to take less than 25 kilograms of baggage by air. Older Sakhalin Koreans are well aware of this regulation and spend time selecting what to take and what to leave behind. However, in practice, most would-be returnees’ personal items that signify their past and also future aspirations do not easily fit within the allowed weight. In addition, older Sakhalin Koreans accept the fact that they need to pay an extra charge for being over the weight limit at the Sakhalin airport. This norm has been circulated as many older Sakhalin Koreans have migrated to South Korea.

When I left Sakhalin for South Korea in 2010, I travelled with Sakhalin Korean returnees. I saw that the Sakhalin airport was full of returnees, their families, and their luggage. In addition to returnees, there were South Korean Red Cross staff who had come to Sakhalin to accompany the returnees. There were also workers from the local Sakhalin Korean associations. They offered yellow vests, yellow hats, and name tags, all stamped with the symbol of the Red Cross. These items were intended to prevent returnees from getting lost at Incheon International Airport in South Korea.¹²¹ Adult children (including daughters- and sons-in-law) and grandchildren bid farewell to their parents and grandparents. Many of the returnees were smiling. By contrast, I observed how an elderly woman kept sighing. She talked little, and it seemed that she was not able to express her complex feelings. She briefly told me that she had decided to apply for return migration

¹²¹ The items are usually worn by the Red Cross volunteers and those who are provided with support and assistance in South Korea. In the photos that returnees shared with me, I learned that the yellow vests with a name tag are also worn by returnees on such occasions as picnics and short trips organized by local municipal governments in South Korea.

because, as she said, “I heard this would be the last chance.”¹²² She was also anxious about living with a female friend in South Korea. The elderly woman’s adult children and daughters-in-law were crying and watching her from outside the door at the ticketing space until she finished checking in and went upstairs to the gate. Returnees and their families in the lobby were filled with and expressed mixed sentiments and feelings.

When I had checked in and was waiting at the gate before boarding, I saw several Sakhalin Korean women unwrapping their carry-on luggage. They had been stopped at the security check and had to show the items that were detected. Since each item was wrapped several times inside layers of plastic bags, it took time to unwrap. In front of me, one woman was unwrapping bags as she laughed with a little embarrassment. She took out her and her husband’s rice bowls, spoons, and napkins (the metal detector had detected the spoons). Her husband stood next to her, just staring at her. Would-be returnees are informed and acknowledge that daily necessities will all be provided in the apartments in South Korea. Indeed, one would-be returnee man proudly said to me, “We will not bring lots of things. No worries. Everything is there, even a rice cooker!” Perhaps, men worry less about the availability of domestic goods than women. Nevertheless, returnees take along a variety of personal items, onto which anxieties about life in the new place, as well as the perpetuation of a sense of self, are projected.

Personal items are objects through which not only anxieties and a continuity of a sense of self, but also senses of hope and adventure are produced and expressed. For example, even while Olga and her husband had not been sure if and when exactly the migration opportunity would be granted, they had already bought brand-new clothes, including shirts, shoes, and pants, in anticipation of migrating. Olga’s husband, Tolya, showed them to me in his wardrobe and said, “I am going to Korea.” By contrast, Olga’s behavior was more ambiguous. She did not tell anyone about her decision to purchase the new clothes until she moved to South Korea. Her behavior suggests that she had tried to manage her expectations. Afterwards, I saw her speaking to other returnees in South Korea and recollecting her unexpressed feelings: “If I had not been able to go to South Korea, what would I have done with the new clothes that I had bought?” Both explicitly and implicitly,

¹²² Many people explain this chance as saying, “the chance for the governments to send us.” This indexical expression of “sending us” indicates older Sakhalin Koreans’ understanding that the migration is not initiated of their own will but is carried out under the authority of governments.

through material objects, would-be returnees feel and express a sense of adventure and hope about their journey. After a four-hour flight, I also observed such feelings on the airplane: the returnees applauded when the plane landed at Incheon airport.

Upon arrival in South Korea, the Sakhalin Koreans were once again faced with the task of unwrapping their possessions. Many of them were required to declare items such as meat, fish, and alcohol. All of the items were commonly brought by older Sakhalin Koreans from Sakhalin to South Korea. On the baggage carousel I saw yellow tags attached to returnees' baggage, indicating that those items must be inspected. The returnees were asked to undergo a security inspection and open the multiply wrapped objects. Generally, in South Korea meat products are subject to quarantine inspection, and more than one bottle of alcohol is subject to a customs fee. Nevertheless, Sakhalin Korean people tended to bring these products, including sausages, ham, butter, cheese, vodka, and cognac; all of these are consumed as part of daily meals and social gatherings. These items are also used as gifts for South Korean medical doctors and pastors (chapter 5).

In their encounters with South Korean customs officials, the Sakhalin Koreans engaged strategically in emotional performances. For example, smiling shyly, some Sakhalin Korean people explained, "I'm sorry," and "We will give these to my friends or family." This strategy—positioning themselves as innocent seniors who do not know the South Korean rules and laws—is one that is carefully rehearsed. The use of this performance circulates among older Sakhalin Koreans' everyday talk about border-crossing. The performances of being elders and lacking knowledge (unfamiliarity) are employed. Older Sakhalin Koreans tell each other that whether such strategies work or not depends on luck.¹²³

After going through customs, returnees arrived at their designated meeting space. Some of their family members (those returnees who already lived in South Korea) had come to meet them. The presence of these relatives made returnees feel a sense of familiarity. While returnees put on their yellow vests and name tags, most of them chose not to wear the yellow caps (since they do not like to wear caps). Passing the border examination along with some elderly people, the South Korean Red Cross workers confirmed that all the returnees had arrived at the lobby. The returnees then left for the region where they would be settled. The locations of the regions are diverse, and generally it takes two to three hours by bus to

¹²³ "Luck" in this situation was expressed by the Korean word, *chaesu*.

reach them. Some people experience a feeling of travelling a long distance. Olga's example shows her sense of being sent to an uncertain destination. Recollecting her arrival at Incheon airport and her journey to the apartment, Olga said, "It was really dark and scary. We went really far. I felt like I was being sent to Siberia!" In the process of migration, feelings of excitement and adventure are always intermingled with unpredictability.

4.2. Affective experience of becoming welfare citizens

According to the return policy, Sakhalin Koreans are treated as welfare recipients in South Korea. This means that minimum welfare services and assistance are provided based on South Korean social security law. Sakhalin Korean returnees are entitled to welfare provisions, not only because most of them do not have property and family in South Korea, but also because their health is cared for according to the ethical framework of a humanitarian program.

I considered scholarship on humanitarianism and humanitarian aid in chapter 1, but here I elaborate further. A range of scholarship has critically examined unintended outcomes of humanitarian projects in refugee camps and among displaced subjects, and also has examined suffering of the subjects (e.g., Fassin 2011; Malkki 1996; Ong 2003). Within this scholarship, my discussion draws on the studies by Dunn (2012) and Dunn and Cons (2013). Dunn describes humanitarian aid among ethnic Georgian refugees who fled into Georgia from South Ossetia due to the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. She argues that the provision of aid offers a material context for making "standard" populations based on the ethical notion of concern about the subjects' biophysiological needs (2012:7). Yet, Dunn and Cons also discuss the reality whereby the plan to forge "standard" populations fails and this leads to a crisis; this is brought about not only by bureaucratic structures of institutions but also by individual Georgians' decisions and actual responses to the provision of aid. These two studies demonstrate how unpredictable and "unnecessary" assistance is shaped by the misunderstanding of social needs. Dunn and Cons also identify the form of Georgian subjectivity forged in this context as "burdened agency" (2013:8). These studies suggest that the art of governing, to paraphrase Foucault, is not complete in and of itself, but involves the consequences of subjects' actions and intentions. This discussion is useful for my analysis of

how Sakhalin Koreans' return, as a humanitarian project, is carried out as it also entails their various responses to and interpretations of multinational material assistance.

In addition to building on Dunn and Cons' discussion, I also examine the subject-making process of Sakhalin Koreans in South Korea and in a transnational setting drawing on Navaro-Yashin's discussion of the subjective attribute of affect (2009). Navaro-Yashin reviews studies of affect in which scholars discuss how (pre-) subjectivity is formed within a space where specific emotions are felt and resonate (e.g., Stewart 2007; Thrift 2004). In these studies, particular emotions and affects resonate as human and non-human objects are assembled (Latour 2005). While these discussions shed light on the role of material objects in sensory experience and subject-formation, Navaro-Yashin critically points out the limitations of ahistorical and object-centered perspectives. Through her study of Turkish-Cypriots in Northern Cyprus, Navaro-Yashin offers understanding and analysis of subjectivity through affect. After the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1947 and the establishment of Northern Cyprus, its former Greek-Cypriot residents left while leaving their possessions and objects. As Turkish-Cypriots inhabit the space of "ruins," an affect of melancholy is discharged. Navaro-Yashin argues that the assemblage of subject and objects is not neutral and suggests considering specific political and historical relations between subjects and objects (2009:9). In addition, she maintains that affect is produced as the inhabitants experience particular feelings through various practices, including ethical discourses, production of meanings, and reflections on themselves (2009:15). This perspective helps me examine how material objects are assembled in older Sakhalin Koreans' subject-making processes not only in South Korea but also in a transnational space. I also explore how Sakhalin Korean returnees produce particular emotions and affect.

Drawing on Dunn and Cons and Navaro-Yashin I demonstrate how older Sakhalin Koreans feel, exercise agency, and produce a particular affect with material resources surrounding their residential space in South Korea. In particular, in coining the concept of "welfare assemblage," I analyze how welfare assistance and entitlements play a role in the production of affect along with various interpretations that older Sakhalin Koreans have of their lives. In addition, I examine how such practices are linked with their citizenship and transnational mobility between South Korea and Russia.

4.3. Making a home in the homeland

Even though Sakhalin Koreans are critical of the return migration policy (chapter 5), regardless of generation and gender, almost all of the middle-aged Sakhalin Korean returnees whom I met expressed a feeling of great satisfaction and happiness about their brand-new apartments. I suggest that as part of the welfare support in South Korea, housing served as an object which formed a sense of inhabitation and everyday security among older Sakhalin Korean returnees.

Drawing on a structural perspective, dwellings have been analyzed as places that represent social order given symbolic structures such as lineage, cosmologies, and memory (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). It has also been argued that spatial control and practices in and exercised on the dwelling reproduce other social forms of class and gender hierarchy (Bourdieu 1990). While developing these ideas, recent ethnographic studies of houses and home consider the house as a source and setting of mobility and change (Miller ed. 2001). This new perspective reveals complex and contradictory relationships between homes and people. This leads to a focus on the agency of home and to the question “what do houses do” (Miller 2001:4–11).

Drawing on this discussion, along with the view of affective practices mentioned above, this section examines two points. First, I will explore how older Sakhalin Koreans’ practices around domestic space, including the apartment, produce a particular affect. Second, I discuss the roles played by housing in South Korea and on Sakhalin in making older Sakhalin Koreans into mobile transnational agents. In order to explore these points, I will begin with a discussion of how multiple values and ideas around housing are negotiated among older Sakhalin Koreans on contemporary Sakhalin Island.

4.3.1. Shifting ideals and values about housing

In older Sakhalin Koreans’ conversations about return migration, I found that they hardly ever questioned the forms of housing they were allocated. In the early 1990s when the return project was not yet implemented, the senior association of Sakhalin Koreans demanded that the Japanese and South Korean governments construct single-family residence in regions where returnees wanted to live.¹²⁴ By contrast, in 2010, the older

¹²⁴ This demand was, however, not accepted by the South Korean government (Chŏng and Yŏm 1999).

Sakhalin Koreans whom I met did not make such a claim. This is partly understood by considering their shifting views on ideal forms and values of housing on Sakhalin.¹²⁵

On Sakhalin in 2010, the residential forms among older Sakhalin Koreans were diverse, yet roughly categorized into three types: (1) apartments which had been allocated by workplaces during the late Soviet period, and those purchased and exchanged after perestroika—five-story buildings called *Khrushchevki*; (2) “personal” houses, which had been built by individual home owners, and also purchased and exchanged, both during and after the Soviet era;¹²⁶ and (3) villas (*kottedzhi* in Russian), luxury houses belonging to wealthy people, which had emerged with the extreme social stratification of the post-socialist period (Humphrey 2002:185–201).¹²⁷

In this situation of housing diversity, some Sakhalin Koreans consider it “better” to live in a personal house with a garden than to live in an apartment. This is because, first of all, personal houses are more spacious than apartments.¹²⁸ Additionally, a garden provides not only material resources including fresh vegetables but also a sense of joy, fun, and vitality, as well as a space for rejuvenation similar to the meaning attached to dachas in Russia more widely (Caldwell 2011). In contrast to urban dwellers, who might have a dacha in remote areas and only visit on weekends, for older Sakhalin Koreans who have lived in rural contexts, gardens and activities in the gardens play a crucial role in everyday life.

Second, personal houses are considered valuable objects since many of them are self-built, which means the houses embody emotional attachments and memories. For example, those living in a personal house remember and explain how they built the house, including

¹²⁵ The historical change of residential space in the Soviet Union after World War II—a shift from communal apartments (*kommunalki*) to separate apartments during the Khrushchev period is discussed by Reid (2002, 2005, 2010), Attwood (2004), and Harris (2005). In this section, I sketch the social context central to the current concerns about housing among older Sakhalin Koreans.

¹²⁶ Considering housing culture in the Soviet context where the land and houses were not considered as private property, I call older Sakhalin Korean’s housing (single-family houses) “personal” (*lichnyi*) houses rather than “private” (*chastnyi*) houses. Older Sakhalin Koreans generally call the personal house *kaein chip* in Korean (“individual house”), as they differentiate it from an apartment which is called *kvartira* in Russian.

¹²⁷ Humphrey mentions that the *kottedzhi* built on the outskirts of Ulan-Ude city are not a space for living, claiming that the wealthy people prioritize security but the items inside the house are non-functional. The villa is thus a form of conspicuous consumption by wealthy Russians and is built to be “visible and ‘readable’ by everyone else” (2002:176).

¹²⁸ Sakhalin Koreans told me that family rituals used to be held in personal houses because they needed large spaces to cook meals for many guests. In addition, they explained to me that Sakhalin Koreans were afraid that Korean foods with a “bad smell” bothered apartment neighbors. One woman said that some (Russian) neighbors did not like the smell of sesame oil (K. *ch’amgirūm*) that Koreans often used in their cooking.

where, how, and from whom they gained the materials, as well as why and when they added the new rooms. Finally, a coal stove (*pechka*) in personal houses is regarded as a symbolic domestic object which offers a healthy and efficient way of life; some older Sakhalin Koreans explained to me that it enabled them to cook large meals quickly. A *pechka* can also heat the house without making the air in the house too dry. A personal house is thus valued for the role it plays in living a natural, healthy lifestyle.

However, many other older Sakhalin Koreans also express their preference for living in apartments. Shifting and plural values related to housing among older Sakhalin Koreans reflect their experiences of changing residential space, from personal houses to apartments in the past. For example, both elderly and middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans consider a personal house to be a source of production and material wealth. In particular, elderly Koreans express a greater sense of pride in home ownership than middle-aged people do.

Compared to the elderly generation, for many middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans, apartments are considered “new” residential spaces which provide a material context for a “cultured” and “urban” way of life. For example, Katya’s narrative about her marriage reflects such shifting notions of home and family. Recalling her youth, she said:

Some people introduced me to a Korean man who had his own house. At that time, people said that Koreans who owned their own houses were rich, but I did not want to marry him. I knew how much work home owners have to do. I remember when I was a child, I did not want to help look after the garden. So living in apartments is better. It is easy. Of course, it was a little [economically] difficult, but we could live somehow.

In addition, some other middle-aged women explained why they did not care much for gardens. Unlike their mothers’ generation, they had been factory and office workers when they were young. They did not have time to sit in the garden for many hours. In this way, middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans feel and produce the meaning of a “new” way of life through living in apartments, which are different from the “old” personal houses that their parents were proud of.¹²⁹

These ideas related to housing emerged within the shifting residential space on Sakhalin and within the late-socialist period of the Soviet Union more broadly when the

¹²⁹ Not only middle-aged people think apartments are “better.” In fact, there are some elderly Sakhalin Koreans who live in an apartment ‘provided’ by their workplaces, and the majority of the elderly generation of people also understand the “new” style of life in apartments through their children’s experiences.

number of apartments increased. Based on the ideals of socialist modernity, which aimed to achieve social provision and technological development in milieu of Cold War politics (Reid 2002, 2005), the state engaged in the construction of apartments across the country. The apartments signified a “convenient” and “cultured” urban lifestyle. In addition to the ideological dimension, the housing provision itself had implications. While the distribution of apartments was arranged to satisfy needs, in practice, as Zavisca puts it, “the housing was a reward for reproduction, not just need” (2012:40). The nuclear family was the basis of distribution, and this provided a spatial context for neo-local practices among married couples, which became a state of “normalcy” in the late Soviet era (2012:41–47). Considering this historical background, although there was a tendency among Sakhalin Koreans for one of the children (generally a son) to stay with the parents in their personal house, during the 1960s and 1970s many young Sakhalin Koreans experienced a sense of a “new” life trajectory as a result of being allocated an apartment. Thus, I suggest that different values and ideals about forms of housing among older Sakhalin Koreans are shaped by generation.

Along with their past experiences related to housing, I argue that the value and moral sense of living a “good” life is reinterpreted in two contemporary contexts: (1) one in which older Sakhalin Koreans perceive they are getting old; and (2) one in which local socio-economic conditions have changed. For example, those who lived in personal houses on Sakhalin often expressed embarrassment when they directed me to toilet, most often an outhouse. One elderly woman said to me, “Whenever I have guests, I’m so embarrassed to show them the toilet. It is terrible.” She also explained that she slept not in her bedroom but in the living space near the entrance of the house because, “I need to go to the toilet often in the middle of the night, so I sleep here.” Those with the means to do so strive to install a toilet inside the house, but for others who can not afford to remodel, outhouses serve as a sign that they do not have a “good” life.

In addition, the value place on owning a personal house shifts with age; in particular, for elderly people a garden comes to be considered unmanageable and contributes to a sense of burden. One elderly woman told me, “Nowadays I’m so tired and no longer work in the garden alone. It is not easy work, and we can find and buy everything we want in the bazaar, so there’s no need to take care of a garden.” One middle-aged woman also told me she had

stopped taking care of the garden two years earlier because she no longer had the physical energy to work in the garden every day. As Sakhalin Koreans age, a garden sometimes becomes a burden and a material object which is not always enjoyed by everyone. They consider that for older people, purchasing food in the bazaar is “better.”

Moreover, older Sakhalin Koreans regard a coal stove (*pechka*) as a domestic object that is a burden requiring time and labor. For example, those who live in personal houses purchase tons of coal, which is used from fall until the next spring primarily to heat the house and also their bath or sauna (*bania*). I often heard that older people visited their adult children’s apartments to take a bath because heating the *bania* took time and energy. Among older Sakhalin Koreans, apartments that had a central heating system were gaining in popularity.¹³⁰ In addition, the upkeep of personal houses created a burden since such physical work was regarded as men’s work. Elderly women needed to ask their male relatives for assistance with the maintenance and repair of houses. Thus, in a time of difficult socio-economic change on Sakhalin, older Sakhalin Koreans often reflect that living in apartments, housing that requires less work, is “better.” I suggest that their generational experiences and contemporary renegotiation around housing explain why, despite having valorized living in personal houses in the past, older Sakhalin Koreans rarely question, and in fact embrace, living in the apartment buildings in South Korea.

4.3.2. Emerging public housing in neoliberal South Korea

The emergence of and increase in public housing in contemporary South Korea can be understood by tracing the shifting political, economic, and welfare regimes after the Korean War (1950–1953).¹³¹ With this history as background, this section focuses on the socio-economic and political contexts of the government’s implementation of the National Rental Housing program in the late 1990s.

Following rapid industrialization throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which was accompanied by mass migration from rural regions to cities, apartment complexes became

¹³⁰ The heating system is one of the material infrastructures that was not abandoned in the neoliberal reform but continued to be guaranteed by the state in the post-socialist era (Collier 2011:8–9). Collier discusses how mundane sociotechnical systems for welfare and city building—what he calls “the Soviet social”—are re-problematized in the new reform processes in post-Soviet Russia (2011).

¹³¹ For further discussion of the shifting “social” housing developments in the post-Korean War contexts, see Lee and Ronald (2012).

“rational” forms of housing for the growing number of domestic migrants. However, Gelézeau (2007) critically argues that the increase in the number of apartment complexes in South Korea is distinctive. The construction of apartment buildings is a product of authoritarian, government-led economic development that sought to control *chaebŏl* (financial and industrial conglomerates). This worked by offering various incentives and imposing restrictions on them. Also, the government offered material benefits to encourage members of the new social class, such as employees of large companies and government workers, to live in these new apartment complexes. This promotion signaled the nation’s socio-economic “progress.” Consequently, this spatial distinction engendered an aspiration for middle-class values among lower-class citizens.¹³² Apartment buildings were not a goal but a means of industrialization (Gelézeau 2007:166). As dense populations have resulted in rising real estate prices in contemporary South Korean society, apartments in urban centers and suburban areas have become a powerful source for the accumulation of capital and class polarization (Nelson 2000; Song 2010). Within these housing conditions, from the 1960s to the early 1990s social housing projects, which also took the form of apartment complexes, were planned and constructed based on developers’ demands, rather than on pressing issues of social justice or redistribution of wealth (Gelézeau 2007; Lee and Ronald 2012).

Since social housing was not extensively allocated to lower-class citizens, the shortage of housing was a constant issue. In addition, because of South Korea’s particular housing market, there have been acute housing shortages for low-income and poor people during periods of intense market growth. The South Korean housing market has been dominated by a yearly leasing system called *chŏnse*, in which tenants are required to pay a sum of between 40 and 70 percent of the value of the property to the landlord in lieu of rent; this is returned to tenants when they move out. Tenants understand it as a “saving system,” but have to come up with sufficient capital to pay this large amount of money in one lump sum. This payment is sometimes larger than their annual income (Nelson 2000:51–55).

The systematic construction of National Rental Housing was implemented, ironically, during an era of neoliberal restructuring. In a reaction to the Asian Financial Crisis (or the IMF crisis) in 1997 and the political shift from a military dictatorship to democratic regimes, South Korea’s “liberal governance” by the Kim Dae-Jung (1997–2002)

¹³² As of 2010, 47.1 percent of the total population lived in apartment complexes (Statistics Korea 2011a).

and Roh Mu-Hyun (2003–2007) administrations emphasized the role of government in citizens' well-being (Song 2006). The National Public Rental Housing program was established in 1998 when the government's attention turned to social inequality and poverty brought about by free market policies (Lee and Ronald 2012:123).¹³³

National Rental Housing properties are offered on the basis of 30- and 50-year leases. Although the amount of the initial deposit varies according to the location and size of the home, I present one example of public housing in one region where my Sakhalin Korean informants live. In general, the tenants pay a deposit (\$15,000), monthly rent (\$120), and utilities plus a maintenance fee (\$80–\$150). When I conducted research in 2010, the amount of available public housing had increased in many provincial areas where local governments were vigorously trying to attract an influx of new residents; these areas had also seen the appearance of various research and development facilities, transportation, and other aspects of social infrastructure such as schools and commercial centers. Despite these plans for citizens' housing options, however, the reality was that the available public housing was primarily intended for families; namely, priority was given to newly married couples and families with children. Older Sakhalin Koreans are inserted into this particular politico-spatial arrangement as “special welfare subjects” with an exemption from the housing deposit which is instead paid by the South Korean government. In the following section, I describe Olga's case to show how material housing arrangements are experienced among older Sakhalin Koreans.

4.3.3. Becoming a returnee and special welfare subject

Olga had lived in an apartment on Sakhalin. After 1990, she worked as a shuttle trader between China and Russia and also worked in a restaurant in South Korea for one year. With her savings, she had purchased three apartments on Sakhalin. Two of the apartments were occupied by each of her adult children's families while she and her husband lived in the third apartment. All three of the apartments are *Khrushchevkas*, which, as previously discussed, are the five-story apartment buildings built throughout the Soviet

¹³³ Lee and Ronald (2012) also discuss some recent changes in public housing policy since the Lee Myung-Bak administration (2008–2013). However, these changes were not particularly felt by Sakhalin Korean returnees when I conducted fieldwork in South Korea.

Union after World War II. Olga's apartment was on the first floor. Sakhalin Koreans usually avoid living on the first floor since they say it smells and is dangerous. However, Olga chose the first floor because she was afraid that her high blood pressure would prevent her from being able to climb the stairs (*Khrushchevka* generally do not have elevators).¹³⁴ Olga often told her friends and me that the one thing she did not like about her apartment was that it did not get much sunshine because it is on the first floor and the windows all face north. Yet, she liked the apartment because it is cool in summer. Olga was also proud of the spacious home with three rooms that she had purchased. The apartment symbolized her achievement.

Olga and her husband, Tolya, were allocated an apartment in South Korea in 2009, and I visited them in 2011.¹³⁵ The building was brand new and outfitted with elevators and a surveillance camera. Each apartment also had an intercom with a camera, which enabled the residents to see visitors before opening the door. When I reached their apartment, Olga quickly opened the door, secured by an automatic lock system. Olga had bought this system since she had heard it was a common material object that South Koreans had. While pushing the number keypad and showing me how to lock the door, she explained to me, "I don't need to have a key." It reminded me that at their apartment on Sakhalin she, Tolya, and I had used all our strength when unlocking and opening the heavy and solid double iron doors.¹³⁶

In South Korea, Olga and Tolya's apartment was about 46m² (495 sq. ft.) and was comprised of two bedrooms, a washroom, and a living space with a kitchen. There were some spatial differences between their apartment on Sakhalin and the apartment in South Korea. In the former, the toilet and shower space were separated, whereas the latter had a full bathroom. In addition, the South Korean apartment had an open-plan kitchen and living space, while the Sakhalin apartment had separate rooms. While both apartments had a balcony, in South Korea, Olga was pleased to show off the bright balcony, complete with huge double sliding windows and screens to prevent insects from coming inside. Their apartment on Sakhalin had small, old-style wooden hinged windows that lacked any screens.

¹³⁴ Sakhalin Koreans also recounted that Koreans tended to be allocated housing either on the first floor or on the top floor of apartment buildings during the late Soviet era. They explained that both floors were called "Korean floors" (R. *koreiskie etazhi*), but they emphasized this was "unofficial" discrimination. By this they meant that there were no official housing policies that differentiated Koreans from other local residents, but, in practice, Koreans were discriminated against.

¹³⁵ I looked at five out of more than sixteen apartment complexes where Sakhalin Koreans live. The housing styles and environments were quite similar.

¹³⁶ I was told that such double iron doors emerged after 1990 for protection against burglaries.

Remodelling (*remont*) window sashes had become a trend signifying economic differentiation. However, Olga and Tolya had not invested in this. In the South Korean apartment, Olga was excited to show me around. Tolya also showed me how to turn on the light in the bathroom and how to change television channels, commenting, “Here we don’t have blackouts like on Sakhalin.”

Olga and Tolya then took me to the park located at the complex. The ground was made of soft-looking asphalt which was easy to walk on, and the park contained a variety of exercise equipment. Tolya showed me how to use each piece of equipment. In addition, I heard Olga and her returnee friends talking about how “good” it was that they could go to a grocery store anytime since the public space outside the apartment in South Korea was brightly lit by street lights all night long. In observing Olga, Tolya, and other returnees’ reactions to their new housing arrangements, I found that the apartment and its immediate surroundings were part of the welfare assemblage that shaped returnees’ sensory experience of becoming recipients of an aid project.

Not only the apartment surroundings, but also domestic objects were part of the welfare assemblage. Coming back from the park, I sat at the kitchen table while Olga cooked *pel'meni* (Russian dumplings). When I ran water in the sink to make tea, she stopped me and suggested using the water purifier. Olga said she purchased it because she had heard it was a domestic item that most South Koreans have. The kitchen was fully equipped with modern appliances. Olga’s favorite was a gas range: the apartments on Sakhalin in general have electric ranges, and some Sakhalin Korean women preferred gas ranges for grilling and boiling food quickly. In addition, the kitchen cabinets and living space were filled with various everyday necessities, all purchased with the funds from the Japanese and South Korean governments. Local municipal offices, business, and churches also offered other items. All of these items had been in place when Olga and Tolya moved into the apartment. Olga further explained that foods such as rice, beans, or snacks were offered to them on such occasions as the Lunar New Year, Harvest Moon Festival (K. *ch'usŏk*), and Christmas. Opening the cabinets, she excitedly told me, “I have not bought toilet paper and rice for one year!”

We moved to the couch. In a relaxed manner, Olga described the new environment as follows: “It is like a sanatorium! How good it is.” She further elaborated: “People never

understand [how returnees live in South Korea] until they actually come and live here. Some people on Sakhalin say it [the life in South Korea] won't be good. But they don't know how good it is." Her excitement and pleasure were sharp contrast to her demeanor on Sakhalin where she constantly expressed anxiety over not having a sufficient income (other than a meager pension) and often struggled to get by with her husband, who had lost his job. Olga's life on Sakhalin was not unhappy or miserable. Rather, I aim to show how the bodily experience of being provided for enables older Sakhalin Koreans to find themselves in a situation of unexpected fortune. Moreover, this fortune is experienced by returnees when they actively make use of the material comforts afforded to them in their new domestic space, thereby producing a sense of secure space.

Considering Olga's and other returnees' behaviors within the new living space in South Korea, I also suggest that a sense of security along with an affect of good fortune is produced as returnees sense a distinctive quality in the domestic objects in their new homes. For example, I found that living in the brand-new space brought about remarkable feelings of surprise and excitement among returnees. The unfurnished and unused housing enabled older Sakhalin Koreans to find no trace of former tenants. Such pristine emptiness evoked an intensive feeling of "brandnewness" and freshness.

In addition, the apartments outfitted with modern appliance and domestic products generated another sensory experience—the feeling of "lightness" (cf. Fehérváry 2009).¹³⁷ As I have already described, the doors and windows were all easy and smooth to open, close, lock, and unlock. In South Korea glass and stainless steel construction had become popular among the middle class beginning in the 1970s. These materials symbolized and were inspired by the aesthetic of 20th century "modern" American pragmatism, through which the qualities of coolness, sharpness, and cleanliness were produced (Ham 2002:75). In addition to raw materials, the spatial layout discharges a sense of "breathiness." For example, while Olga and Tolya's apartment on Sakhalin had a separate kitchen and living space, the

¹³⁷ This analysis of the values attributed to qualities of domestic space draws on Fehérváry's study of the housing reforms in Hungary (2009). In the late socialist context, the production of values of quality (including "lightness" and "breathiness," which contrasted with "heaviness" and "darkness,") was promoted and symbolized the socialist "modern." Fehérváry points out that within this set of ideals, the materials did not change. Instead, new values were attached to the materials, and these qualities were reproduced by public media. A similar change may not have happened in exactly the same way in the Soviet Union (and on Sakhalin), but during my fieldwork on Sakhalin, I observed many older Sakhalin Koreans devalued such domestic objects as furniture and wallpaper that they had come to consider "old" or too big and dark.

apartment in South Korea had an open-plan living room/kitchen with large windows. This space produced a sense of penetration by light and air.

What is more, daily items in the domestic space served as a source for affective experience. For example, these items included: a vacuum cleaner, a telephone, an iron, a table, chairs, shelving, and a table service of ten pieces; as well as 20 kilograms of rice, a instant noodles, multitude of spices and seasonings, soap, toothbrushes, shampoo, detergent, and toilet paper. The kinds of items and their quantities are all determined based on the South Korean government's notion of a "standard" way of life among South Korean citizens. This basic material assistance reflects, as Dunn (2012) discusses, the government's view of older Sakhalin Koreans as biophysical beings, while the precise everyday living patterns and needs of the Sakhalin Koreans are little considered. For example, in 2011 Sakhalin Koreans used such food products as oil, sugar, and flour more than spicy and precooked instant noodles, which were popular foods in South Korea at the time.

The important point, however, is that whereas the quality and quantity of material aid for people like refugees and asylum seekers generally brings about disappointment or ethical confusion (Dunn 2012), Sakhalin Koreans saw themselves as extremely fortunate and they were grateful to be receiving such "gifts." I suggest that a feeling of being fortunate derives from their surprise: returnees did not fully imagine the ways in which they would be treated "well" in South Korea. The sensory experiences of Sakhalin Korean returnees show how such humanitarian projects and aid may not always lead to problems and confusion, but may be received with sincere gratitude, especially when a range of domestic products is offered all at once.

In this section I have argued that older Sakhalin Koreans become returnees in South Korea as they assemble assistance, including the brand-new living space with material goods and daily items. These welfare assemblages funded by the Japanese and South Korean governments enhance the feeling of fortune that Sakhalin Koreans experience. In addition, through their practices of expressing excitement, making use of the facilities, and consuming this form of aid, older Sakhalin Korean returnees conceive of and discover themselves as fortunate beings. However, such affective and moral experiences are also part of becoming mobile bodies in transnational space, a process I examine in the following section.

4.3.4. Caring for homes as transnational tasks

When I stayed on Sakhalin, I learned that many middle-aged returnees strategically maintained their Sakhalin apartments, which were mostly located in the regional capital of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. In 2011, the city had the highest demand for housing and the highest land value on Sakhalin Island.¹³⁸ For local Sakhalin people, this phenomenon was considered to be one of the most surprising and unexpected consequences of social change in the post-Soviet period.¹³⁹ In this socio-economic situation where property has become a means for the accumulation of capital, the local Sakhalin people began renting out their apartments. For example, in 2011 I paid 20,000 rubles (about \$650) per month to rent a one-room apartment. Generally, people who possess at least two homes use one for themselves and rent out the other. However, for many Sakhalin Korean returnees without two properties on Sakhalin, a similar strategy was possible since they had an apartment in South Korea. In the context of return, returnees obtain a stable source of income through a vibrant rental housing market.

Returnees strategically utilize housing, but maintaining housing on Sakhalin is not always easy when they reside in another country. As I have shown (chapter 2), many of Olga's friends (returnees) stayed with their adult children when they temporarily visited Sakhalin since their dwellings on Sakhalin had been rented out to others. Maintaining housing in a different country requires time, money, and most importantly, returnees' ability to care for the dwellings. I observed instances in which Sakhalin Koreans reflected on the care required to maintain dwellings. I visited one elderly woman who had temporarily returned to her house on Sakhalin. Instead of renting out the apartment, it was occupied by one of her adult children while she lived in South Korea. Knitting her brows, she told me, "During the time we have been away from this house, it has become dirty. See, here and there [pointing to the ceiling], it's dark. The color has changed. It used to be clean. If I had lived here, it would never have changed like that." Echoing this elderly woman, returnee women complained about their adult children's habit of smoking inside the home, and they

¹³⁸ One woman who sold her apartment said, "Nobody imagined the price of housing here would jump." Before the housing prices increased, she had sold her apartment and moved to Khabarovsk where her daughter works.

¹³⁹ Many older Sakhalin Koreans interpreted this rapid increase in land values in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to be caused by the appearance of U.S. companies in the regional market after 2000.

thought the apartments needed to be put in order. Caring for homes on Sakhalin shapes returnees' transnational lives.

My experience on Sakhalin also shows the care required to make an apartment an inviting space. I arrived at Olga's apartment in early summer of 2010 and waited for her and Tolya's arrival. Before they arrived, I had found a rat in the kitchen, a leaky toilet, and tiny insects under the bathtub, as well as faulty television reception. I was relieved when Olga and Tolya returned. While the big rat scared me the most, Olga was concerned about the disconnected telephone line, which prevented her from keeping in touch with all of her friends. She urged Tolya to fix the line, telling me, "Without his consent, I can't touch anything in the house." Once the phone was working, she called her friends and recounted how everything had gone into disrepair while she had been away. Olga started to clean the kitchen while Tolya caught the rat, wiped the floor and ceiling, bought a television antenna, and called a repair company. Their son took them to the local bazaar by car to buy necessities such as rice, flour, and other seasonings. Several days later, we were all set up to live in the apartment.

The case of Igor, a returnee, reflects another approach to caring for homes in the two nation-states. Igor owned a house in a rural area located an eight-hour drive from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. When I met Igor on Sakhalin, he was not living in his house and was instead staying in his brother-in law's apartment because, according to him, nobody had cared for his house and it had fallen into ruin (his adult children lived in mainland Russia). He anxiously told me about the problem:

I have a headache. I want to dispose of the house. It was completely in disrepair and cannot be sold anymore. People no longer live there because there is nothing and the factories are all closed. But the problem is that I do not have time to deal with all the things left in the house. Disposing of the house also takes a lot of time. In Russia, you know, paperwork is so complicated.

Later, I heard that Igor had given up on the required paperwork, and he was back in South Korea. When he would be able to resolve this housing issue was uncertain. Because he lives in South Korea, Igor can put off disposing with his Sakhalin home.

These examples show the role of housing in Russia plays in the welfare assemblage that shapes older Sakhalin Koreans as transnational agents. Their dwellings on Sakhalin are the things "provided" by workplaces and the state during Soviet times as rewards for

workers. I argue that the Soviet allocated housing that medicates subjects and the state as components of older Sakhalin Koreans' citizenship is now serving as part of welfare assemblage that makes returnees into transnational subjects. They strategically arrange for new sources of income to be generated by their dwellings on Sakhalin. Older Sakhalin Koreans also care for the dwellings and set up the rental spaces so that they can be inhabited. Returnees try to "detach" from the properties. I suggest that these practices around the housing are accompanied by returnees' intentions, efforts, and feelings, and also social relationships (with adult children, other relatives, and institutions). The living spaces on Sakhalin and South Korea, and the returnees' practices related to these residences, transform Sakhalin Koreans into flexible (Ong 1999) and mobile subjects.

4.3.5. One woman for one apartment: Elderly women's resistances?

In considering elderly women's enactment of their agency through domestic space, the role of housing in subject-making processes is further elucidated. As I have discussed, each apartment in South Korea is allocated to two people. However, I often found that elderly women lived alone in the apartment complex in Homeland Village. Most of the women were widows whose husbands had died after their return to South Korea, but other women were living alone because their companions had moved to Incheon Welfare Centre or other medical facilities due to health problems. When I visited one elderly woman in Homeland Village and asked why she was living alone and had not found a new companion, she responded, "I don't want to live with others. It is better to live alone. It's 'free' (K. *chayuropchi*)."

Because I wondered how and why such elderly women managed to live alone, I talked with a social worker at Homeland Village. She smiled and told me, "In principle, if one resident leaves, a new person will be placed in the apartment. But elderly people, especially grandmothers, really do not like it. They want to live alone. So we can't force them to live with others." Expressing empathy for the seniors, the social worker explained that they allow such elderly women to occupy the apartment by themselves.

In reflecting such elderly women's insistence on living alone, I argue that they enact their agency through a welfare assemblage, housing. Among older Sakhalin Koreans (both returnees and stayees), it is known that Homeland Village is a special place compared to

other apartment complexes. All the lease fees for Homeland Village were deposited by the Japanese government when it was built in 2000, whereas in other apartment complexes returnees must pay a monthly rent. Thus, although many returnees are aware that Homeland Village has older facilities, they still consider it a “better” place where the residents are able to manage their livelihoods without the need for a companion.

Moreover, the elderly women who live alone in Homeland Village acknowledge that their behavior does not transgress any “laws.” As I discussed in chapter 2, the return policy does not entail any legal means for divorce among returnee couples in South Korea; it also does not treat elderly women’s decision to live without a companion as a “legal” issue. Within these material conditions of Homeland Village and in view of the return policy that does not completely control returnees’ ways of life, elderly returnee women find space for their agency— by rejecting pressure to live with strangers, they produce a feeling of “freedom,” and occupy the space. In addition, this spatial practice makes possible other practices such as short visits from adult children and grandchildren from Russia, without having to worry about a companion’s feelings (chapter 3). I contend that housing, a key part of the welfare assemblage, enables elderly Sakhalin Korean women to pursue these actions, and thus, elderly women’s agency is facilitated via objects provided by states.

4.4. Manipulating welfare entitlements

Along with housing, material aid in the form of medical care, pensions, and funerals serves as another form of welfare assemblage in which the subject-formations of older Sakhalin Koreans play out. This section continues to explore practices of mobility involving the production of secure space and feelings of good fortune, but also turns to focus on how returnees manipulate welfare services and entitlements both in South Korea and Russia. I will also demonstrate how these processes accompany their flexible meanings and practices in transnational settings.

4.4.1. Seeking “proper” types of care

To understand the returnees’ transnational mobility in terms of medical care, this section first examines older Sakhalin Koreans’ everyday lives related to medical care on Sakhalin. In post-Soviet Russia, health care continues to be provided as a public service.

Even in the era of post-socialist reform, the state has not withdrawn from the public medical domain (Kay 2011), and free healthcare services continued to be offered.¹⁴⁰ On contemporary Sakhalin, in contrast to urban centers in Russia where the number of privatized medical services has been growing, public health-care is primarily a welfare service available for ordinary local citizens.¹⁴¹ However, the care available has been discredited as being of poor quality, and those who have the economic ability to do so, travel to China, South Korea, and other Asian countries to receive medical services.

In contrast to medical services, which are officially free, prescribed drugs must be purchased; this is a site of everyday moral talk among older Sakhalin Koreans. Medicines are generally expensive and a financial burden for local seniors on Sakhalin. Many elderly people are prescribed not one but several kinds of medicines at once, many of which are imported from Western Europe. On Sakhalin I witnessed numerous times when older Sakhalin Koreans (mostly women) showed each other their medicines and recited the prices. One astonished woman complained, “I spent my entire pension on these. [They] cost more than my pension! What can I do?” With the price of medicine on Sakhalin so prohibitive, the South Korean provision exempting Sakhalin Korean returnees from medical fees, including prescription drugs, is attractive. Olga’s experience reflects how returnees feel a sense of being fortunate to have access to medical care in South Korea.

In South Korea I accompanied Olga to the local hospital with some other Sakhalin Korean residents from the apartment complex. The local municipal worker drove us to the hospital, a public service that was hardly ever offered to the local South Korean elderly. At the hospital, after Olga saw a doctor without having to wait long, she showed her insurance card and ID (the foreign resident card) at the reception desk. She then paid only the equivalent of 1,000 won (about \$1).¹⁴² In the drug store next to the hospital, Olga and I, along with some other returnees, waited for the prescribed medicine to be ready as we drank

¹⁴⁰ The costs of public medical care are “free” in principle, but medical practitioners are paid by means of bribes and gifts.

¹⁴¹ It is not the case that all elderly people in urban centers can access private health care services. In fact, Harris (2011) points out that many elderly people in St. Petersburg cannot afford such private services, and they do not know about the availability of other social services that the local government offers.

¹⁴² Based on South Korea’s Medical Care Assistance Act, Sakhalin Korean returnees, as “special welfare recipients,” pay only 1,000 to 2,000 won (1 to 2 US dollars) for regular outpatient care, 500 won (about 50¢) for prescribed drugs, and nothing for hospitalization. They pay in full, however, when an MRI and other costly treatments are necessary.

free coffee. When the medicine was ready, Olga paid the equivalent of 500 won (about 50 cents). Olga's neighbor, Zoya, a returnee woman who had come to the hospital with her, showed her medicines to us and said: "It is ridiculous to pay 2,000 rubles (about \$60) for these medicines on Sakhalin! Here, they are almost free! This is so good."

Despite the far lower medical costs in South Korea, however, older Sakhalin Korean returnees still seek medical treatments on Sakhalin. In the summer when Olga temporarily return to Sakhalin, early every morning she went to the local clinic to get a drip, a vitamin mixture administered intravenously (she said "to get *kapel'nitsa*" in Russian). I asked why she went for this treatment. Olga explained to me, "In South Korea, I guess it [a vitamin drip] seems very expensive. I heard that when people [Sakhalin Korean returnees] asked to get a shot, the South Korean doctors refused it. I don't know why... But here [on Sakhalin], everybody gets a vitamin drip once a year and it is free." She continued, "When I went there [the clinic on Sakhalin], there were lots of Koreans [returnees]!" Since Olga saw the vitamin drip in South Korea as a "special" service, which incurred higher costs, Olga chose to seek out the "normal" medical care on Sakhalin for a service that was available for free based on her Russian welfare entitlement.

The case of another returnee woman, Lila, also elucidates her experience of seeking "normal" and "proper" medical treatment in a transnational space. Lila had lived in South Korea for more than two years and regularly went to the local hospital. However, during her visits to Sakhalin and also saw a doctor. Lila told me, saying, "I go to a hospital in South Korea, but they don't know me well. Even though I receive treatments, my condition does not get better at all. But the doctor here knows my body better since they have treated me for a long time."

Lila explained that South Korean doctors' lack of knowledge about her body prompted her to seek out medical treatment in Russia. In her view, the doctor on Sakhalin had accumulated knowledge about her body, and the doctor could treat her "properly." I suggest that her mobility was possible because of her "first-class invalid" status in Russia which entitles her to free medical care, as well as necessary medicines.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Phillips (2009) describes how in Russia (and in Ukraine), since Soviet times disabled people have been referred to as "invalids." Phillips discusses that the Soviet state employed a functionalist approach to disability, in which the invalids were classified according to citizens' level of work capacity. The contemporary invalid categories, introduced in 1932, are divided into three groups. Group I includes those who are unable to work

Dima's case is slightly different from Lila's. He was prompted to go to the hospital on Sakhalin not due to his doctor's lack of knowledge; instead due to feeling unsure of how the South Korean medical system worked. At a young age, Dima had been diagnosed with diabetes in Russia. While living in South Korea, one rainy day he slipped and fell in the apartment complex and broke his arm. Dima was then hospitalized for two weeks. The hospital stay was free, and he recovered from his injury. In the summer of 2010, when he was back on Sakhalin, he prepared to be admitted to the hospital—an arrangement made through his wife's personal connections (*R. po blatu*). His blood sugar level was too low at that time. When I asked whether he could receive medical care in South Korea, he answered, "I have no idea what they [South Korean doctors] do at all. I don't know..." On Sakhalin, Dima stayed in the hospital for two weeks. Dima's wife presented small gifts to the acquaintance who had arranged for his hospitalization, but did not pay cash for the treatment.

These examples reflect how feelings of uncertainty and anxieties about the workings of South Korean medical care influence returnees' decisions to seek out medical services on Sakhalin. My discussion about returnees' ways of seeking "proper" health care shows the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans make themselves into transnational subjects. Like residence, health care and service entitlements are granted to the Soviet citizens by the state. Older Sakhalin Koreans assemble their welfare entitlements granted by the three different nation-states (Japan, South Korea, and Russia) as they move between South Korea and Sakhalin. I argue that the welfare assemblages help to transform returnees into flexible welfare subjects.

4.4.2. Double pensions: From worker's reward to new disposable income?

"I [want to] go to South Korea because a pension is given both here and there." I heard this phrase over and over again from would-be migrants and those people who were not eligible to return. Similarly, returnees also made such statements when they reflected on why they had decided to migrate to South Korea. I suggest that pensions are part of the

and require constant nursing care; Group II includes those who can work in special conditions; and Group III includes those who may do part-time and casual work (Phillips 2009 [Madison 1989:171–172]). Depending on these groups, their work history, and the reasons for the disability, various types of disability pensions are provided to people with disabilities and their dependents.

welfare assemblage which supports feelings of being fortunate and secure. As with housing and medical care, pensions are also used in the process of becoming transnational welfare subjects.

While forms of and values regarding housing and medical services have become increasingly diverse in the post-Soviet era, ideas about pensions have remained relatively stable. An older generation in Russia tends to think of pension as entitlements, an idea that remains constant from an earlier Soviet era.¹⁴⁴ Scholars point to the pension law of 1956 as playing a key role in reforming the limited and unequal pension provisions during the Stalin period.¹⁴⁵ The pension reform of 1956 was characterized by two changes. First, the entitlement became more inclusive, and second, the disparity between the highest and the lowest pension was decreased (Chandler 2004; Karasyov and Lublin 2001; Williamson, Howling, and Maroto 2006). Thus, pensions shifted to a more universal and equitable system. However, depending on the region and type of job, the amount of pension and the eligible age differed. Despite such changes, the Soviet Union theoretically maintained a pay-as-you-go system in which retirees' pensions were financed from current workers' revenue.¹⁴⁶ The insurance was not paid by the Soviet workers, but by enterprises and revenue from the state budget (Chandler 2004:15). In addition, the state played a primary role in managing pensions. Under this system, Soviet workers received pensions at retirement age, typically sixty (men) and fifty-five (women) after working for at least twenty years. Those people aged over eighty also received an old-age pension. This universal pension system did not significantly change until the fall of the Soviet Union.

After 1990, the insurance system was introduced and independent pension funds emerged. However, older generations' entitlements and their notions about pensions are, to a large extent, affected by the former pension law. People who were already receiving a pension at the time the Soviet Union fell are grandfathered in and receive pension payments according to the former system. Because of the harsh climate on Sakhalin, which is considered part of the Russian Far East, Sakhalin residents, including Sakhalin Koreans, are

¹⁴⁴ For the history of pension reforms in Russia, see Chandler (2004). The post-Soviet pension reforms (will) have a greater effect on the contemporary younger generation than on the older generation.

¹⁴⁵ Collective farm workers (*kolkhozniki*) were given a pension entitlement in 1964 (Chandler 2004:36).

¹⁴⁶ A pay-as-you-go scheme is explained as a pre-funded and unfunded system, which contrasts with another financing method, a funded system.

eligible to receive pensions five years earlier than Russian citizens in the western part of Russia.¹⁴⁷ In addition, whereas eligibility for a pension starts after twenty to twenty-five years of work, many of my Sakhalin Korean informants who used to work in coal mines became eligible for pensions after ten years of work and were paid a higher pension than other manual laborers. This is because mining was considered a high-risk job. Older Sakhalin Koreans appreciate such differential pensions not only as a marker of spatial remoteness, but also as recognition of their labor.

All the middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans whom I met received regular pensions. They also thought they deserved to have special recognition. For example, in talking about pensions, older Sakhalin Koreans tended to explain their working years as follows: “I worked for twenty years, so I receive a pension.” Moreover, older Sakhalin Koreans often refer to themselves as “pensioners” (*pensioner*) within a conversational context where they emphasize their social status as needy and older subjects. I found that the idea of pensions serves as one of the most crucial discourses by which older Sakhalin Koreans identify as belonging to Russia through reaffirming their past labor contributions and their entitlements as workers. Like housing and medical care, a pension symbolizes their achievement.

While pensions serve as a stable source of income for older Sakhalin Koreans, the amount of the pension is low given the inflation rate for daily necessities. Older Sakhalin Koreans always hesitated to reveal the exact amount of the pension they received, but according to the local newspaper, the majority of them are paid about \$200 to \$300 per month (*Sae Koryō Sinmun* 2011b). It is difficult to get by on such small pensions especially when they dedicate a portion of their pension money to help their children and grandchildren. I heard from Sakhalin Koreans and a local Russian woman that pensions are no longer used for themselves, but instead used to help children and their households. Considering older Sakhalin Koreans’ notions about pensions, I suggest that the ways in which pensions are used has changed in an era of market transition.

By comparison, in the 1990s in South Korea middle-class people with stable jobs in large corporations or in the government sector belonged to a retirement pension plan. On the other hand, many people who were self-employed or worked part-time did not have pension

¹⁴⁷ In addition, the salary supplement rate (*koëffitsient*) is higher for workers living in regions seen as having harsh climates, such as Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Russian Far North than for those living in western Russia. Many older Sakhalin Koreans view such differential benefit payments as a “good” thing.

plans. In 1998, the pension program was “universalized” as a part of neoliberal reforms.¹⁴⁸ However, because the universal pension scheme was only introduced in 1998, many elderly people had not saved enough funds to draw a pension upon retirement (Kim and Cook 2011:955–956).¹⁴⁹ Another source of material assistance is the Basic Old Age Pension (for those aged over 65 years), which was implemented in 2008; however, the amount was \$90 per month in 2010. As a result, among ordinary elderly people, their pension does not serve as a main source of income. As of 2010 of OECD countries, South Korea had the highest rate of poverty among the elderly (OECD 2013:164). Given these socio-historical circumstances, unlike older Sakhalin Koreans, South Korean elderly people attach little meaning and value to their pensions.

In this context of differential meaning being attached to pensions, older Sakhalin Korean returnees are provided with an “old age” pension in South Korea. In addition, other financial supports are offered. Based on the National Basic Livelihood Act, the government provides a household with approximately \$700 per month (\$400 for a single-person household); each returnee also receives \$70 per month for a special living expenses. Returnees consider the total amount of these forms of financial aid to be their “pension” in South Korea.

I argue that for older Sakhalin Korean returnees, such a pension does not simply enable them to live in South Korea. The pensions emerge as a new material resource through which they engage in transnational strategies. For example, the most striking strategy is that the majority of returnees save and continue to receive their pension from Russia. In summer, middle-aged returnees go to the post office to pick up their pensions accrued over the past year. When they lived on Sakhalin, the pension was considered significant but still insufficient for them to sustain themselves. However, within a transnational context, the Russian pension has become a new form of disposable income.

For example, when Olga returned to Sakhalin, she suddenly suggested to Tolya, “Hey, what do you think about remodeling the windows and balcony?” Another elderly woman considered using her pension in a different way. She was a “rare” elderly Korean

¹⁴⁸ The national pension program started in 1988, but it was available only to those who worked in a company which had more than ten employees. In 1998, it was universalized.

¹⁴⁹ As of 2010, 26.7 percent of people over sixty-five years of age received a public pension (Statistics Korea 2011b).

woman who had worked for thirty years for a state-run laundry. When I asked about her pension, she just muttered, “I gave my entire pension to my daughter. She is sick and has no money. So, to me, there is no pension.” Since her adult daughter was not able to work, the returnee woman supported her daughter with her pension while she herself lived in South Korea. On Sakhalin, I also saw a Sakhalin Korean couple trying to give cash (from their pensions) to the husband’s younger sister (a stayee), but the sister adamantly rejected the offer. These examples suggest that the pensions accumulated in Russia produce ways for returnees to manage financial situations not just for their own everyday survival but also for family members living on Sakhalin.

Such transnational strategies are mostly enacted by middle-aged returnees; the experiences of elderly women are slightly different. For example, many elderly women delegate their pension to their adult children (or their daughters-in-law). This is common among elderly women who worked in personal garden plots, rather than for the state enterprises, during the Soviet era and therefore have smaller pensions. In addition, some elderly people, both women and men, do not receive pensions in Russia. They moved to South Korea in the early 1990s, a time when they were required to renounce Russian citizenship in order to become returnees to South Korea.

For the most part Sakhalin Korean women who worked in state enterprises maintain their pension entitlement, and this serves as a source of pride for having had a job outside the home. In these cases, elderly peoples’ bodies have become a form of “proof” of maintaining their welfare entitlement in Russia. For example, one elderly woman proudly explained to me, “I have to go to Sakhalin to pick up my pension because I worked. Every three years, I have to go there and show I am alive. Then I can receive it.” For returnees, the act of travelling to Russia every three years in particular serves to verify to the Russian state that they are alive. Thus, returnees’ living bodies become an object of proof. I also suggest that the pensions (and related entitlements) encourage them to perform living in Russia. Elderly Sakhalin Koreans’ practices around pensions, including recounting, delegating, and presenting their living bodies, show the ways in which they simultaneously work on detachment from and attachment to the space of Sakhalin (and Russia).

Women and men can have different ways they connect with Sakhalin through entitlements. For example, in Homeland Village, I met an elderly woman who explained to

me that she could no longer stay on Sakhalin because life in South Korea was more fun. She told me, however, that she was going to Sakhalin to receive a maternity medal (*medal' materinstva*).¹⁵⁰ Like other Russian women who gave birth to and raised more than five children, the returnee woman was being awarded the maternity medal. She told me, “Usually, it is hard to get the medal because it is given only to women whose children are all alive. There are many cases in which one of the children died.” She then mentioned that once she had received the medal, she would return to South Korea. Her example points to how her achievement as a mother, a recipient of the Russian entitlements attached to motherhood, and the medal honoring mothers with many children, all encourage her to connect with Sakhalin, even if not to return there.

In this section, I have shown the ways in which elderly and middle-age aged Sakhalin Koreans manage pensions and entitlements between two nation-states. At a time of return migration, pensions function as a component of welfare assemblage and are employed to sustain returnees' mobile and new forms of living in a transnational setting. This process also involves reconfiguring their citizenship within multiple nation-states.

Considering transnational and local practices among older Sakhalin Korean returnees, I suggest that the welfare assemblage at the center of the mobile lives of returnees consists of two different modes of provisions: (1) humanitarian aid in South Korea, and (2) entitlements and recognition linked to previous labor in Russia. The concept of provisions helps me to discuss the ways in which subjects configure specific historical and political relations to the provider (Narotsky 2012). In the case of Sakhalin Koreans, the providers are nation-states including Russia, Japan, and South Korea. I suggest that the three states provide fundamental resources for the subject-formation of Sakhalin Koreans, and within this structure of power, Sakhalin Koreans become transnational welfare subjects, returnees, and recipients of humanitarian aid in transnational northeast Asia.

¹⁵⁰ The medal for motherhood was introduced in 1944 and the state has granted the medal to women who give birth to and raise five or more children (Nakachi 2006b:24–32)

4.5. The aspiration to live: Exploring possibilities

In tracking the ways returnees settle in South Korea and become transnational agents and subjects of humanitarian aid, I have shown how the welfare assemblages that mediate between older Sakhalin Koreans and three nation-states shape transnational lives and transform returnees into flexible welfare subjects. I argue that the transnational practices enacted around housing, medical care, and pensions have forged an aspiration to *live* among older Sakhalin Koreans.

This distinctive aspiration to live is highlighted by comparing it with the desire for a homeland represented among Sakhalin Koreans in the early 1990s. For example, the media coverage of Sakhalin Koreans in the late 1980s and the early 1990s focused on the reflections of older Sakhalin Koreans on the “homeland.” These reflections were more nuanced than reflections on “homeland” voiced by contemporary Sakhalin Koreans. Generally, in the early 1990s, Sakhalin Koreans’ thoughts about return were polarized. Some elders anticipated a temporary visit since they could not imagine leaving their livelihoods and families on Sakhalin. Others (mostly men) had a yearning to return, even though this would mean leaving their families and property on Sakhalin, especially at a time when they would not receive welfare assistance in South Korea. These men often expressed a yearn for their “homeland,” saying: “When I die, I want to die in the homeland” and “I will have my bones buried on the homeland” (*Hokkaidō Shinbunsha* 1988). I do not believe those Sakhalin Koreans really wanted to “die” in South Korea; they wished to “live” and spend the rest of their lives in the homeland. Yet, in the past in desiring to return to the homeland, the idioms of *death* and *dying* were articulated.

By contrast, the contemporary discourses around return suggest a new type of desire—the emergence of an aspiration to *live*. Older Sakhalin Koreans express the idiom of and comments related to *living* in their discourse of return. In addition, they consider that living with welfare assistance in South Korea is an experimental situation. For example, like Maya, whom I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, one would-be migrant man told me, “I just want to try to live there while I am healthy and before I get older and sick.” Another man also explained, “Everybody has said [it is] good, so I want to know how good it is. I do not want to go there when I cannot walk properly.” He then stated, “I do not want

to go to South Korea just to die.¹⁵¹ Others said that as they get old, they want to try to have an easy life in South Korea. In their speech acts, following the verb “to live,” they tend to add the Korean auxiliary verb, *boda*, which means “to try” and “to find out.” This linguistic practice indicates that they want to have and feel a new experience of living. Also, they sometimes consider that South Korea is not necessarily their final destination. I argue that the welfare assemblage enables a new aspiration to live, which offers possibilities for transforming the self.

4.6. Chapter conclusion

By examining the border-crossing, settlement processes, and transnational ways of living among older Sakhalin Koreans, this chapter has demonstrated how return migration involves unexpected moments, events, mixed emotions, and strategic practices. In particular, in invoking the concept of welfare assemblage, I argue that a feeling of fortune has emerged as returnees dwell in new housing environments and receive aid provided by the Japanese and South Korean governments. Moreover, returnees engage in transnational strategies by assembling key objects and laying claim to their rights as citizens, including housing, medical care, and pensions in the two countries. Considering the relations of Sakhalin Koreans with the welfare assemblage, I maintain that returnees become flexible citizens by making use of their citizenship between South Korea and Russia. Also, the resources for realizing their strategies are provided by three different nation-states—Japan, South Korea, and Russia. I thus suggest that Sakhalin Korean returnees actively configure their relations with multiple nation-states in the context of return. What is more, I contend that the actual transnational practices of returnees have generated aspirations for *living* among older Sakhalin Koreans.

The ways older Sakhalin Koreans become special welfare subjects in South Korea and become transnational welfare subjects show that welfare plays a crucial role in shaping the experience of citizenship. Through transnational mobile lives shaped by welfare assistance and entitlements, older Sakhalin Koreans also discover themselves to be a certain kind of moral subject: a fortunate being. Their feelings and flexible practices challenge the global discourse of a “crisis of aging” in a neoliberal era. Moreover, this chapter suggests

¹⁵¹ In chapter 5 I discuss how contemporary returnees are concerned about death in different ways.

that returnees' ways of living shape a new way of experiencing mid- and later life in which the transition to older adulthood is enacted through transnational mobility. The next chapter continues to explore subsequent experiences of return by examining the role of states in subject-making practices of older Sakhalin Koreans.

Chapter 5: Constraints and the Struggle for Legitimate Bodies

The consequences of return are shaped not only by the returnees' affective experience of citizenship, but also by immobile Sakhalin Koreans. Considering that the state return policy brings into being newly distinctive political subjects in the form of returnees and stayees, this chapter explores how both types of subjects are faced with, and struggle to make sense of inclusion and exclusion. This point is exemplified through the analytical lens of citizenship which is engaged to examine older Sakhalin Koreans' subject-making processes.

The first section focuses on the key moral discourse around dependency and nothingness produced and circulated among returnees and stayees. I examine how these discourses and the interactions between returnees and stayees entail the production of values attached to their social bodies and those of others. Second, I explore the negotiation of meanings around legitimate bodies that take place when stayees struggle to make claims to return. Finally, I consider several paradoxical aspects of returnees becoming special welfare subjects and their particular claim-making practices.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how older Sakhalin Koreans confront new forms of inequality, as well as inclusion and exclusion. I suggest that older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate personhood as they re-interpret historical influences on their (im)mobility, a sense of belonging, and life possibilities throughout their life courses in Northeast Asia. I conclude that the return mobility of Sakhalin Koreans, promoted in the name of a humanitarian project, is shaped by and shapes particular sovereignty within global social transformations, including those related to post-colonialism, post-Cold War, and post-socialist processes.

5.1. Negotiating values on mobile and immobile bodies

In summer 2010 I visited Yana on Sakhalin. She had also invited two of her friends. While talking in the kitchen, Yana told them: "Do you know about Nina? She came back to Sakhalin and bought a mink coat! It must be very expensive! Because they [Yana and her husband] receive a pension here and in South Korea, she can buy expensive things like that." Listening to Yana, her friends gave responses such as "Is that so?" Regardless of whether those who stayed on Sakhalin directly observe the ways returnees use their pensions, these women imagined that the double pension brought about economic benefits to returnees. In order to analyze how such new differentiation emerges as a result of return, I consider the

unequal access to transnational mobility. Based on a discussion of how access to mobility shapes subject-formations and moral experiences, I analyze the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans produce a boundary between returnees and stayees.

5.1.1. Transnational mobility and tension between returnees and stayees

Scholarly attention at the global level has demonstrated multi-directional flows and spatial mobilities among transnational migrants. However, it has also been pointed out that such mobility is not enjoyed by and distributed to people of all classes, genders, and nations in equal measure. Massey's critical concept of "power geometry" suggests that the global capitalist market economy shapes gendered geographies and uneven access to mobility (Massey 1993). This helps me to analyze the ways in which the transnational social world of Sakhalin Koreans is shaped by both mobile and immobile subjects, and involves inequalities and differences. In particular, I focus on two studies about transnational mobility and consequent inequality in small towns in China as a means of discussing parallel processes among Sakhalin Koreans.

Chu's study (2010) demonstrates that mobility has become a marker of the modern self in rural China. Focusing on the way mobility is materialized through transactions, Chu argues that transnational mobility has become a privileged qualisign. As Chu puts it, when things such as passports, luggage, and dollars are part of transnational travel, in which various meanings and social relations are reconfigured, mobility becomes a recognized sign that is central to assigning value to various people and their social worlds (2010:15). As a result, an aspiration for mobility is reinforced, and those who cannot legally access mobility opt for other illegal means of migration.

In a similar vein, Oxfeld (2010) illuminates the effects of transnational migration in a small village, focusing on the expectations and moral discourses that villagers who are not mobile produce. Those who stay behind expect materially successful emigrants to make contributions to the village, as well as to give gifts to them; through this process, the local kin members gain social status. This, however, has brought about new differentiation between those who have connections with emigrants and those who do not. Also, even for those with emigrant kin, if those kin are not economically successful, villagers will maintain distance from them (2010:152–171).

Although these two studies have different foci, they illuminate the uneven distribution of mobility and highlight how mobile subjects become social and political bodies that are recognized and valued by immobile subjects who aspire to migrate. These studies provide useful perspectives for understanding how return migration generates new inequality and, in particular, how the mobile ways of living among Sakhalin Korean returnees are viewed by stayees. However, whereas the two studies demonstrate that transnational mobility is structurally shaped by the capitalist market economy, the case of Sakhalin Koreans is distinctively affected by the return policy, historical border regimes, and agreements between states. In addition, age and life course affect the moral discourses of Sakhalin Koreans in distinctive ways, as I examine in the following sections.

5.1.2. “They are like pigs!”: The critique of dependency

In 2011, I met one elderly man on Sakhalin, who told me that he had not considered returning despite his given status as one of the “first generation” subjects. He explained to me, criticizing returnees: “They are like pigs [in South Korea]. I don’t like to live only receiving and eating whatever is *given* by the state.” On Sakhalin, many older Sakhalin Koreans expressed similar criticisms about returnees’ ways of living as welfare subjects in South Korea. The views and thoughts of stayees about returnees varied depending on would-be migrants, those who were not eligible to return, and those who chose not to return. However, I learned that the discourse around dependency was widespread on Sakhalin. Especially men said things like, “They are like pigs!” Among older Sakhalin Koreans, the pig, as a symbol, has a double meaning. On one hand, pigs are considered domesticated animals that served as sources of economic well-being in the late Soviet period. Earlier Sakhalin Koreans sold pigs and consumed them for special occasions, such as weddings and kin gatherings. On the other hand, the metaphor of the pig is used to refer to laziness and greediness, through which older Sakhalin Koreans imagine return migration and state protection. By producing such a moral discourse, the stayees articulate that the state’s excessive care of citizens makes the subjects similar to domesticated animals, pigs.

In Western liberal thought, totalitarian socialist systems are often criticized for making citizens dependent. This trope is used to justify the virtue of a capitalist liberal ideology of “free” citizens and the non-intervention of governments. However, ethnographic

studies have revealed that in former socialist societies (in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union), dependency has been regarded negatively. Gal and Kligman (2000) point out that dependence on the state and extended family was, in fact, condemned by communist critics during the Soviet era. They also claim that even ten years after the fall of socialist states in the region, a paternalistic state was widely criticized. Simultaneously, however, nostalgia for state support emerged and many lamented the retraction of state concern for the well-being of citizens (2000: 87–88). They argue that the subjects of public welfare assistance in socialist societies are neither dependent nor independent; the abilities of the subjects to manage their own lives are linked with public support for their well-being.

In addition, Russian elders react negatively to provisions of care that they see as creating dependency in the post-Soviet context. For example, in Moscow elderly people who are not receiving social assistance judge the recipients of church support as lazy (Caldwell 2004:179). In a similar vein, elders in a rural village in western Siberia criticize those who depend on benefits and public support, contrasting them with esteemed moral tropes of being hard-working, self-sufficient, and capable of reciprocal care (Kay 2012). Both Caldwell and Kay argue that among older generations who have lived through Soviet times, the norm is that they receive benefits and belong to social groups as long as they fulfill a responsibility to the community (usually work and reciprocal relations). Those who depend on social assistance without such contributions are labeled as “uncultured,” lazy, and drunk. Likewise, older Sakhalin Koreans’ discourse on dependency in the context of return migration positions returnees as lazy persons who have done nothing to receive such an entitlement.

In fact, Kolya, a stayee mentioned in the previous chapters, talked about lazy returnees in contrast to the moral virtue of being “hard-working” (K. *pujirŏn[h]ada*). He said: “As long as they keep working a bit harder, they can live on Sakhalin! They simply do not want to work here, and they live like pigs.” Such a critique of dependency is also enmeshed with another discourse—life without stress—through which older Sakhalin Koreans articulate and imagine what it means to live as human beings.

5.1.3. “*Stress nado*”: Life demands stress

As Yana talked with her friends about how she imagined and evaluated returnees’ lives and behaviors, she posed the following question: “But what do they really do every day? They have nothing to do, right? I think they would get old faster because they have no stress (R. *stress*). Human beings need some *stress* so that they can live.” Among stayees, the aspiration for *living* in South Korea is apparent on one hand; on the other hand, they find it hard to imagine exactly what returnees do and how they spend their money on a daily basis.

While the discourse of dependency was more directed toward returnees by stayees, returnees also felt, imagined, and reflected on a life without stress. For example, when I was invited for lunch by one elderly returnee woman in South Korea, I met her friend. She had migrated to South Korea two years earlier and was living with a female companion. When I casually asked about life in South Korea, she told me, “After coming here, I have become forgetful. I don’t know why. Maybe here we have no *stress*. Stress is necessary (R. *stress nado*).”

In this conversational context, in which returnees perceive their changing lives after migration, they use the phrase “*kol toragada*” in Korean, which literally means the “brain is spinning.”¹⁵² Many returnees use this phrase to mean “losing sense.” For example, in a hospital, where returnees could not figure out exactly what kinds of medicine they had been prescribed. They guessed and talked about this with one another: “I think this medicine would prevent *kol toragada*.” Another middle-aged returnee also told me that she regularly works out by walking in the park every day, saying, “Sitting in the house all day long would make me *kol toragada*, so I walk.” The returnees’ explanations illustrate their fears, perceptions, and feelings that the way of living in South Korea would bring about negative effects on their bodies.

I often heard the phrase “*kol toragada*” in everyday conversations among older Sakhalin Koreans. The phrase generally indicated a state of going senile, and it was often used by older Sakhalin Koreans to express anxiety about decline in old age. Dementia, in particular, was considered to be the disease that they wanted to avoid the most because it makes people enter a state of not living as humans and because those with dementia are

¹⁵² The phrase *kol tonda* (or *toragada*) is used in North Korea, referring both to being quick in thinking and to going insane. When the older Sakhalin Koreans spoke of this in the context of return migration, it indicated the latter.

burdens to their families and others. For example, many middle-aged people, mostly women, recollected their and others' experiences of taking caring of elderly parents with dementia by emphasizing the hard work that was involved. In addition, many older Sakhalin Koreans imagined and feared that dementia patients are not treated as humans in medical facilities in Russia. Older Sakhalin Koreans feared that they would no longer have control over their bodies.

In the return migration context, the phrase "*kol toragada*" has been produced in reference to a life without stress, something returnees and stayees imagine and conceive of in thinking about what it is like to live as welfare subjects who are amply provided for. Stress in this situation was not used as a pathological term referring to physical and psychological pressures that cause harmful consequences to bodies and minds. Rather, the *stress* that the older Sakhalin Koreans spoke of relates to the everyday social activities that constitute living. It is not that all returnees in South Korea have nothing to do. As I have shown in chapters 2 and 3, returnees spend time with friends, go grocery shopping, and do transnational mothering and kin work. There are also opportunities for returnees to engage in volunteer work and other cultural events. However, I propose that older Sakhalin Koreans, including new returnees, would-be migrants, and stayees, see life in South Korea (where it is perceived that everything is provided for) as making returnees non-active beings and potentially "pigs." Everyday activities, such as gardening, going for a picnic with kin and friends, caring for grandchildren, grocery shopping, preparing for a long winter, and fixing houses, all of which they get used to "doing" on Sakhalin, are components of living. In this context, these habitual behaviors on Sakhalin are considered as a form of "stress" that is essential to life.

In considering the moral discourses and critiques of dependency and life without stress, I suggest that older Sakhalin Koreans imagine and evaluate returnees as becoming passive beings, a condition caused by the state-sponsored welfare in South Korea. For stayees, however, such discourses entail mixed emotions, including frustration, envy, and aspiration to engage in return migration and welfare support. In addition, in women's cases, these discourses around dependency are intertwined with and reinforced by another critique of selfish mothers leaving their offspring, depicting mothers as blind with greed (chapter 2). I argue that the discourses and practices around dependency are part of the processes by

which older Sakhalin Koreans produce a new set of differences as they become new types of political subjects. This new difference is further emphasized through direct interactions between stayees and returnees.

5.1.4. Undervalued bodies: Sakhalin people are nothing

While the discourses around dependency and life without stress are directed toward the social body of returnees, there is another moral term that is directed at the bodies of those staying behind on Sakhalin. For example, on Sakhalin, one elderly woman told me about attending a singing class, as part of a series of recreation programs offered in the Korean Cultural Center by the local Sakhalin Koreans. The woman told me that the class was not very fun, but she went because there were so few opportunities for elderly stayees to do something together with friends on Sakhalin. After hearing this, I went to the singing class. There were six elderly women present; they sat at the table, the teacher sang first, and then the women sang along. I saw some women whom I had never met before. After singing the song, one of the unfamiliar elderly women said:

Here, people on Sakhalin are nothing (K. *amugōtto aniya*)! Don't you know how well South Korean people sing? We watch television, and everybody sings and dances very well.¹⁵³ People here are *nothing*... I went to a dance class in South Korea, but we never dance the way South Koreans dance, even though we have practiced it many times. We can never catch up with them!

After hearing her words, the other women, who had regularly attended recreation classes, fell silent. At that moment, I realized that those unfamiliar elderly women were returnees [from South Korea].

The idiom of nothingness is not completely new among older Sakhalin Koreans. The phrase “*amugōdto aniya*”¹⁵⁴ is frequently used when they express the ‘backwardness’ of Sakhalin’s regional hierarchy and the power relations within Russia (and the former Soviet Union). For example, many older Sakhalin Koreans who had lived and travelled in big cities

¹⁵³ Creighton argues that singing culture long existed as part of social activities in Korea, and contemporary karaoke-style (*noraebang*) singing practices is an extension of the existing culture. The current commoditized singing culture has been affected by urbanization and modernization (2006).

¹⁵⁴ In contemporary South Korea, the phrase “*amugōtto aniya*” has several meanings, depending on the conversational context. It generally means ‘it is not a big deal.’ However, when older Sakhalin Koreans utter this phrase, it indicates unworthiness and lack of negotiation of meaning around the value production (undervaluation) of certain objects, power relations, and hierarchies.

such as Moscow and St. Petersburg told me: “Sakhalin is nothing compared to Moscow. It is so big and so many people live there! Sakhalin will never become like that.” In this manner, older Sakhalin Koreans complain about the persistence of Moscow’s hegemonic power, which constrains the position of Sakhalin as its regional periphery.

This hierarchy of value reflected in a language of “nothingness” is now also invoked in the transnational context. The objects being evaluated for comparison now, however, are those social bodies which are living on Sakhalin and in South Korea. Moreover, returnees play a central role in this process. However, as the returnee woman said in the singing class, the moral discourse of nothingness is not only in regard to stayees. The ‘we’ she mentioned included returnees themselves who are from Sakhalin. Nevertheless, being faced with the returnees’ speech act on “nothingness,” stayees appreciate that they are the objects of an assessment of value for a simple reason—they stayed behind on Sakhalin. They became subjects with nothing special to offer. Consequently, elderly stayees often expressed frustration and irritation regarding the ways that others viewed their choice to stay. For example, I heard numerous elderly women saying things like, “Do you know what others call us? We are called ‘foolish’ (K. *mōjōri*)!” One elderly woman also told me: “They [returnees] say to us: ‘You are foolish because even through you can live in South Korea, you do not go.’ Yes, I did wrong staying on Sakhalin!” Encounters with returnees, therefore, provoke a sense of humiliation among stayees. In addition, what makes the stayees experience emotionally difficult is that unlike returnees, they are not able to escape from the moral and political world in which both returnees and stayees are forged.

5.1.5. Everyday encounters between returnees and stayees

Among stayees, frustration is not easy to avoid, since Sakhalin has become a space where interactions between returnees and stayees take place regularly. Stayees are integrated into the transnational social world in which they cannot avoid direct and indirect encounters with returnees. The following examples reflect on such occasions, highlighting the ways in which stayees are confronted with emotional dilemmas.

One of the most common issues involves comparisons of Sakhalin to South Korea. Stayees have to listen to returnees comparing South Korea with Sakhalin. For example, I met one middle-aged man who had temporarily returned to Sakhalin to visit his friends (stayees).

In their presence, he explained, “I came back to my hometown for an ancestral rite (K. *chesa*). I also met elderly grandmothers living in my neighborhood. They raised me when I was a child.” Then he said: “But I found that I can’t live on Sakhalin any more. It is dirty and too cold in winter. I have already sold my house. Everything is done so well in South Korea! The parks and streets are so clean and developed (K. *palchŏn toessta*). I really regret that I did not migrate to South Korea earlier.” His friends just listened to him without any responding. I also observed a middle-aged returnee woman talking to her friends in a car, saying, “It’s so dirty here. Look at the beaches on Sakhalin. Lots of garbage. I wish someone would buy the land and have it cleaned up.” Like the middle-aged man, she then continued, “I can’t live on Sakhalin any more. It is too cold, and everything is so expensive. Sakhalin in winter makes us feel sad (K. *sŏgŭlp’ŭda*).”

Stayees also hear returnees’ talk and emphasize the differences in the medical domains in Russia and on Sakhalin. For example, one elderly returnee woman told her in-law (a stayee) the following: “South Korean nurses are so gentle and kind. They gently asked me, ‘How do you feel?’ and ‘Where do you feel pain?’” For returnees, the ways South Korean nurses address them using honorific language sounds polite, tender, and respectful. Although she did not mention the ways patients were treated on Sakhalin, the woman’s emphasis on the gentle and kind behaviors of South Korean nurses implicitly highlights a contrasting feature of the medical realm on Sakhalin; such emotional labor (cf. Hochschild 1983) is not required on Sakhalin, since medical services are less commodified, and the elders are not situated within hierarchies inflected by respect for age. In addition, the efficiency of medical procedures in South Korea is compared with the slow nature of medical care on Sakhalin. For example, one middle-aged couple (returnees) spoke to their stayee relatives about what had happened to them in the hospital on Sakhalin during their temporary stay. The wife explained that she had to undergo a small operation on her finger and that she was advised that the operation would take place after she had slept in the hospital for seven days. She said: “If I was in South Korea, it would take only two or three days!” Her husband also told them that he had tried to have a medical check-up on Sakhalin but had waited for hours. Irritated, he flung his residency permit (*propiska*) in the hospital and came back home. After explaining this episode, he said: “I am never coming back here!”

Moreover, the encounters with returnees that are hard to avoid are also troublesome for stayees. For example, one day, two returnees visited the Senior Center on Sakhalin. After spending time singing, dancing, and having lunch, the returnees left. Two weeks later, during which time the returnees did not come to the Senior Center, the elderly stayee women (regular attendees) exchanged opinions on the participation of returnees in their gathering. One woman said, “They just stop by here, and they eat lunch. That’s not good because the young people [the volunteers] have to prepare a lot of food.” Another woman responded: “What about collecting a small amount of money from everybody [who attends the meeting]?” “No, I can’t [donate] because my pension is so small,” another woman said. As long as few returnees came to the Senior Center, the center did not collect cash. A meal was provided for free. However, as returnees increasingly participated, the stayees became anxious about the financial burden on the volunteers.

Their discussion included a range of perspectives, including such statements as the following: “I’m sure that the young people never receive money from us [elders].” “This [gathering] is held for people staying here, not for those who returned.” “They [returnees] are still younger than 65 years old, so how about only allowing those over 75 years old to join?” “Why are all of you so noisy? Let anybody who wants to join come.” These stayee women did not intend to exclude returnees; rather, I suggest that the stayees’ lives involve interactions with subjects, returnees, which sometimes causes trouble for them and involve negotiation around difference.

From the returnees’ perspectives, their talk of differences between South Korea and Sakhalin can be understood as part of a critique of contemporary Russian society and local socio-economic conditions. Older Sakhalin Koreans habitually complain that life has neither changed nor improved on Sakhalin in recent years. However, from the stayees’ point of view, the behavior of returnees is considered annoying. Some returnees tactfully avoid discussing their lives in South Korea in front of stayees, since they acknowledge that such behaviors frustrate stayees and are inappropriate. Nonetheless, the encounters with returnees are unavoidable among stayees because returnees and stayees have close relationships, such as being siblings, cousins, friends, and (former) neighbors. Reunions with returnees on Sakhalin may be considered enjoyable for some people in certain situations, but these reunions have other dimensions as well. Meeting with different political bodies is

problematic. In these circumstances, stayees explicitly express two reactions to which I now turn.

5.1.6. Stayees' question: Is life in South Korea really so good?

Although stayees may hear that South Korea is a better place, they believe that it could not be so good. Such a feeling was invoked, for example, when they heard about symbolically loaded events, such as suicides among returnees in South Korea.¹⁵⁵ During my stay on Sakhalin in 2010, one middle-aged man told me that he had heard from his returnee father by phone that one elderly returnee man had committed suicide. This was a hot topic of everyday conversation among stayees. For example, during one of the regularly held card games, Katya said, "They went to a better place, but why do they kill themselves?" Sveta then reacted, saying, "Right, did they go to South Korea *to die*? If they had stayed here, that would not have happened." Another example was found in the elders' conversations about and interpretations of suicide. One woman said, "I heard it [suicide] always happens in the same building. That building must be possessed by a ghost (K. *kwisin*)!" Hearing her words, another elderly stayee woman responded: "Living in South Korea is something bad. So it is better to stay here [Sakhalin]." The interesting point is that there are polarized opinions on suicide. While many stayees imagine that living without children and having nothing to do would lead to such a tragedy, some stayees who have a strong desire to migrate see such tragedies as being caused by "natural" factors instead of social ones. This is the same view expressed by returnees. For example, the typical explanation was that those returnees committing suicide were seriously ill and found it hard to live, so they felt they had to commit suicide. Those stayees (and many returnees) did not want to judge return migration itself negatively. However, I found that it was not easy for stayees to hide their surprise at the reality that some elderly returnees had killed themselves in what was considered a good place to live. Stayees then imagine and articulate that life on Sakhalin must be better.

Based on their observations of returnees' behaviors, stayees also refuse to believe the good life in South Korea. Stayees often criticized the mobile ways of living of returnees,

¹⁵⁵ Before I conducted fieldwork on Sakhalin, some South Korean mass media reported on suicide among Sakhalin Korean returnees but did not describe the causes. This section focuses on how suicides among returnees in South Korea are imagined and understood by stayees on Sakhalin.

asking, “Why do returnees come back to Sakhalin?” For example, Katya told others: “They always say ‘Everything is there [South Korea].’ But why do they often come back here [Sakhalin] and buy lots of things to take to South Korea?” In similar ways, hearing returnees’ concerns about overweight luggage (when they leave Sakhalin), stayees often said: “Why do they spend money buying so many things from here? They went to South Korea because they have everything there, right?” In commenting that South Korea is not really better than Sakhalin, stayees resisted the humiliating tenor of returnees’ discourse on “nothingness” and responded to a sense of the new material differences between stayees and returnees. In doing so, stayees assert that the quality of life on Sakhalin is “richer,” a sentiment that is expressed in tangible ways which are inflected by older Sakhalin Koreans’ sense of belonging.

5.1.7. Stayees’ response: ecological regionalism and “nice” Russians

Gina is not eligible for return migration due to her and her husband’s ages. Some of her friends and acquaintances have migrated to South Korea, and Gina frequently tell her friends that she wants to move back to South Korea. One day, during a lunch with her older sister and me, she expressed her frustration, saying:

Everybody says South Korea is good. But does South Korea have those mountains that Sakhalin has? Are there fiddleheads (K. *kosari*) like here? I ask them [returnees], ‘Are there oceans and seaweed there?’

Such boasting about the better quality of the food and natural environment on Sakhalin can be seen as the stayees’ form of nationalism, which I call ecological regionalism. This term reflects the concept of “geographic or ecological nationalism” that Caldwell proposes (2011). Caldwell suggests that in Russia at the symbolic and actual levels, activities involving participating in and living with the natural environment are considered meaningful and part of a good life. This good life embedded in the Russian ecological environment also serves as a distinctive feature of the Russian nation (2011:4). This point is useful in comprehending why Sakhalin Korean stayees articulated the ecological richness of the land on Sakhalin. I employ the word ‘regionalism’ rather than ‘nationalism’ since the stayees’ emphasis on rich nature is grounded in a regionally defined space rather than a national space. For example, when stayees talked about return migration, the topic tended to turn to

the natural richness of Sakhalin. Kolya told me: “There are no jobs on Sakhalin, but look at the land here! It is full [of natural resources]. We are walking on money!” Within a context where stayees react to the undervaluation of those who inhabit Sakhalin, many stayees insist on emphasizing the rich and plentiful natural resources on Sakhalin.

Moreover, Gina’s emotional reaction reflects the notion that the perceived better quality of the local ecology makes a better quality of life possible. Again, this is echoed by the concept of geographic nationalism, where nature is considered as a “space in which personal, social and national health is emphasized and most readily realized” (Caldwell 2011: 12). For example, I observed how older Sakhalin Koreans would put their hands on their chests and inhaled deeply, saying, “In the ocean and mountains of Sakhalin, [the soul] really rests.”¹⁵⁶ The local ocean and land provide fresh and clean air that makes Sakhalin Koreans feel deeply rested, and on Sakhalin they can also eat fresh, nutritious food, including vegetables, meat, and fish. In particular, older Sakhalin Koreans placed a high value on such sensory qualities as juiciness,¹⁵⁷ tenderness,¹⁵⁸ and rich aromas,¹⁵⁹ all of which were considered natural flavors that were good for personal well-being. Such cherished qualities in foods were, they thought, not available in South Korea, based on the comments of returnees and their own experiences of visiting and working in South Korea after 1990. Stayees articulated Sakhalin’s better quality of life, which is produced by the ecological richness of the region.

In addition to ecological regionalism, while less remarked upon, stayees claimed that living on Sakhalin is not bad, saying, “Russians are nice people” (or “Russians are *sun[h]ada*” in Korean, which meant having a mild and gentle personality).¹⁶⁰ For example, one elderly woman told me: “I think the life here suits my personality. I am an ‘easygoing’ person, and it is similar to Russians here, so living here is better. Russians are nice people.

¹⁵⁶ They do not explicitly say what rests, but I could sense that they meant their “soul” (R. *dusha*) rests (Pesman 2000).

¹⁵⁷ For example, on Sakhalin, when older Sakhalin Koreans ate the local tomatoes and cucumbers, they told each other how much *sok* (“juice” in Russian) those vegetables contained. For them, juiciness was tasty.

¹⁵⁸ Tenderness is specifically preferred when it comes to meat. Older Sakhalin Koreans often said the meat in South Korea was not good because it had few fatty parts. In addition, they tended to put oil in side dishes, making them softer and much more tender in texture.

¹⁵⁹ Sakhalin Korean people often told me and commented each other that the vegetables (mostly leafy vegetables) sold in South Korea did not smell at all, while those on Sakhalin had a deep and rich aroma.

¹⁶⁰ The term ‘Russians’ in this context mostly indicates the local Slavic Sakhalinski people. However, it is not limited to people in specific areas and ethno-national groups. It includes people in the Soviet Union (and Russia) with whom older Sakhalin Koreans have lived.

They are *sun[h]ada*. They are also kind, helping each other a lot.” Some other returnees also expressed similar thoughts when reflecting that life on Sakhalin is not bad.

The evaluation of Russian people as “nice” is evident in daily conversations among older Sakhalin Koreans in their representations of Sakhalin Koreans’ and Russians’ typical characteristics. Their views on the most common characteristics of Russian people are as follows: “Russians are *sun[h]ada*. They say whatever they want to say and fight each other, but the next morning, they greet each other as if nothing happened.” This representation of the nature of Russian factors into the evaluation of Sakhalin Koreans’ character. For example, within the context of depicting Russians as meek, older Sakhalin Koreans emphasize Koreans’ bad tempers: “Once Koreans fight, they never talk or meet each other. Koreans have bad ‘tempers’ (K. *sŏnggil*).” Sakhalin Koreans are considered short-tempered; they also hold grudges against people with whom they fight, which is often expressed with the Russian term *khuligan* (“hooligan”). Older Sakhalin Koreans thus say that it is easier to get on with Russians in everyday life than with Sakhalin Koreans. The perceived nature of Russian personalities was employed in stayees’ evaluations of life on Sakhalin. At a time when a “good” life on Sakhalin was widely positioned as an impossibility, stayees reflected on and evaluated the “not bad” life on Sakhalin on the basis of living with the social bodies of “nice” Russians.

Considering the various emotional reactions among stayees, I maintain that stayees focus on two key objects and their qualities—ecological richness and the good characteristics of Russians—that play a key role in the evaluation of Sakhalin as better than South Korea. However, I did not hear any accounts of political nationalism from the stayees, such as: “I am Russian,” or “Because Russia is my home.” This is because, for older Sakhalin Koreans, the history of the land of Russia (and the Soviet Union) is not their own history. I argue that stayees’ reactions are shaped by their resistance to being undervalued by the discourse of nothingness, and such resistance also reflects their sense of belonging to the space of Sakhalin. Their sense of regional belonging is invoked in the responses to undervaluation, but their complex political sense of belonging is emphasized in the processes of claim making, which I explore in the following sections.

5.2. Contested victimhood: Negotiation of deservedness, and claim-making

The sense stayees have of exclusion and unfairness leads to other actions. Stayees make efforts to be recognized and to be subjects of South Korean and Japanese government inclusion; they negotiate how and why they deserve to migrate to South Korea. I consider these processes as ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate a sense of personhood by qualifying themselves as certain kinds of political beings. The following sections discuss their subject-making practices, as well as the roles of the nation-states as I draw on the scholarship of citizenship.

In the current global era, when multifaceted inclusion and a sense of belonging across state borders have emerged, scholars have examined citizenship with a focus on actual experiences of citizenship and subject-making practices with particular structural powers and regimes (Ong 1999, 2003). Ethnographic studies of citizenship have especially shed light on practices of citizens through practices of claim making among those who struggle for inclusion. For example, when demanding protection, material assistance, and access to services, subjects utilize diverse means, such as invoking biologically wounded bodies (Petryna 2004, 2011), disabled bodies (Phillips 2011), and the contributions of labor (Holsten 2009), in both transnational and domestic contexts. These perspectives provide an analytical lens for examining how political and moral subjectivities are (re)configured through claim-making practices made in various times and locations.

The contemporary approach to citizenship, with a focus on cultural and ethical aspects, is a response to and critique of past scholarly emphasis on legal and rights-based status, which largely rested on Marshall's (1950) view of citizenship (Lazar and Nujiten 2013). Dividing citizenship into three rights—political, civil, and social rights—Marshall (1950) discusses how the distribution of these rights evolves in capitalist societies. Several limitations of this division have since been pointed out.¹⁶¹ The recent debate on citizenship, however, revisits Marshall's concept considering the importance of social citizenship, both in theoretical discussions and in ordinary people's lives. I follow Yalçın-Heckmann's (2011) approach, which proposes that social citizenship can be employed as a useful analytical lens.

¹⁶¹ One of the critiques of Marshall's framework concerns the limitations of his evolutionary scheme (in which social, civil, and political rights are distributed in order), in addition to his functionalist perspective.

The concept of social citizenship is useful for two reasons. First, the practices of older Sakhalin Koreans around citizenship are situated in contemporary global contexts in which what people claim from states is social citizenship; this includes entitlements and rights of housing, education, welfare support, and employment (Yalçın-Heckmann 2011). Second, I focus on social citizenship because, as Yalçın-Heckmann argues, local understandings and practices of social citizenship are citizens' responses to such processes as post-colonialism, post-socialism, and transnationalism. The concept of social citizenship thus shows that subjects' historical experiences of inclusion and exclusion affect contemporary contested practices of social citizenship and rights, as well as the notion of belonging, in which legitimate bodies are newly defined by institutions (2011:434–435). My discussion rests on this idea, but especially follows one key debate. Recent scholarship on citizenship has demonstrated that ethnicity and nationalism no longer serve as a basis for claim-making in a global era. An examination of social citizenship, however, helps us to understand how practices around citizenship within diverse global transformations “compete and sometimes replace other practices of citizenship on the basis of ethnicity, nationality or cultural ties” (2011:433). Drawing on this discussion, I examine how the practices of social citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans are related to ethnic, national, and political belongings.

This analysis also resonates with scholarship on subjectivities and personhood in times of neoliberalism, and especially within post-socialist and post-colonial transitions (Kideckel 2009; Kwon 2010; Kołodziejczyk and Şandru 2012). Inspired by Chari and Verdery (2009), who call for a broader critique of global transformations that would combine perspectives on post-colonial and post-socialist changes, these works suggest advocate examining how new forms of empires and biopolitical power accumulate capital, govern subjects, and shape spaces and knowledge as a way of revealing complex re-compositions of power.

In the following sections, I aim to analyze what kinds of sources and meanings are mobilized and produced as older Sakhalin Korean stayees negotiate inclusion and their sense of deserving to return. I also discuss how historical contexts and past citizenship become significant sources for the claim-making and negotiations of stayees around their so-called “deservedness” (Willen 2012).

5.2.1. Who deserves to be cared for?

Among stayees, there are two groups with differing attitudes toward becoming stayees and toward a sense of unfairness around entitlements to return: (1) elderly people who have migration entitlements but stay on Sakhalin (“first-generation” subjects); and (2) middle-aged people without the entitlement due to their age. While the former group thinks that remaining on Sakhalin is partly a result of their own decisions, the latter group feels a strong sense of exclusion and attributes this to government decisions. This means that middle-aged stayees dedicate significant time to seeking meaning around their exclusion, as well as to criticizing the Japanese and South Korean governments for the constraints around return eligibility. In this section, I focus on middle-aged stayees and examine how they draw on diverse meanings and symbols to actively engage in the negotiation of who really deserves to return.

First, common parenthood is invoked as a substantive reason that middle-aged stayees deserve to be recognized by the nation-states involved and that they deserve return entitlement. For example, Misha told me: “I really don’t know why my older sister can go to South Korea while I can’t. My father came to Sakhalin as a forced laborer and my mother followed him. We are siblings born from the same parents. However, for whatever reason, I can’t go to South Korea.” Misha’s irritation and resentment showed that it was impossible for him to find a convincing explanation for the boundary that return entitlement created between him and his sister. Many middle-aged stayees suggested that instead of *birth year (age)*, *generation* should be used to determine eligibility of return. Facing inequality between siblings, younger middle-aged stayees asserted their deservedness due to a kin relation identified through shared parents.

Second, stayees also weigh who really deserves return by evoking a differentiation among Sakhalin Koreans. As discussed in chapter 2, in moral terms among older Sakhalin Koreans, lone males, including forced laborers, are considered persons to be pitied. In weighing deservedness, some middle-aged stayees asserted that the forced laborers who had to move to Sakhalin against their will in the late 1930s and early 1940s, when mass mobilization was implemented in Korea under Japan’s imperial regime, are the only true legitimate subjects to return. Within this logic, so-called entrepreneurs and other workers were differentiated in that they “chose” to migrate to Sakhalin. Moreover, the emphasis on

forced laborers was entangled with another differentiation based on Cold War geopolitics. For example, one middle-aged woman told her friends: “Why do people from North Korea move to South Korea? People like us, the children of forced laborers from South Korea, should [be entitled to] go back to South Korea, right?” I suggest that such differentiation between forced laborers and other workers and between South Korea and North Korea is the result of a colonial past and the spatial effects of the Cold War. Such differentiation is key to the negotiations of stayees over who is deserving of return and who is deserving of state recognition and protection.

Third, within the politics of differentiation, the deceased are also considered to be subjects of exclusion. This interpretation also aids in middle-aged stayees’ justification of their—the living descendants’—right to be included. For example, Sveta told me: “Those people who can see and visit South Korea are much happier than those, like my parents who died before the door to South Korea was opened.” Another middle-aged man critically insisted: “The governments are doing something for those living people, but what about the dead people? The governments do nothing for them. Since they died without compensation, we, the living children, have to be given some compensation.” I found that the stayees invoked the exclusion of the deceased (including their parents) who had never visited South Korea, and maintained that they should receive the migration entitlement given their kinship ties to “truly” legitimate subjects.

Finally, some still contend that poor people should have priority to go to South Korea. As Yana’s comments in the beginning of this section show, in the view of many stayees, return migration has produced new social inequalities. This perspective that impoverished Sakhalin Koreans should be entitled to return reflects how some see the return project simply as a matter of material aid. For example, in reference to economically successful Sakhalin Koreans who had moved to South Korea while keeping their businesses on Sakhalin, Tanya, a middle-aged widow, said to me: “Why do those rich people go to South Korea? They have everything here [on Sakhalin]. People like us find it difficult to live here and so have to go.” Similar to Tanya, some middle-aged stayees consider that wealthy people do not deserve to benefit from return entitlement in South Korea.

In commenting on degrees of fairness, aspirations for migration, and forms of exclusion, these middle-aged stayees weigh in on who really needs to be cared for and

protected by nation-states. I suggest that they are debating who the real victims are. However, these comments are contested because their voices are not recognized by the South Korean and Japanese governments. Nevertheless, stayees frequently articulate their suffering, especially based on their understanding of what citizenship meant in past Soviet times.

5.2.2. Sources for claim-making: Living as stateless subjects

Misha explained to me how exclusion and unfairness had frustrated him. He was indignant and upset, saying, “How we have suffered here! Because I was stateless. I was not able to go and move around the way I wanted to! It was like a prison.” Repeatedly I heard similar emotional accounts from older Sakhalin Koreans, particularly middle-aged men. Embodied experiences of living as stateless subjects in the late Soviet period caused unforgettable pain. This suffering is a crucial source of sentiment for making claims to the Japanese and South Korean governments for return. In other words, I suggest that the experiences of past citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans serve as a source for their claims for inclusion. Before discussing the claim-making practices of stayees, the next section considers the encounters with citizenship regimes of older Sakhalin Koreans during the Soviet era.

5.2.2.1. Constrained choices: Citizenship in the context of Cold War tensions

After the territorial sovereignty of southern Sakhalin was shifted from Japan to the USSR in 1945, the civilians left on Sakhalin found themselves to be subjects of the local Soviet civil administration of Sakhalin. From 1945 to the early 1950s, which I consider to be a liminal period (Turner 1967),¹⁶² Sakhalin Koreans had temporary residency status on Sakhalin¹⁶³; however, around the 1950s their citizenship became complicated. Soviet officials offered a simplified means of granting Soviet citizenship to “former Japanese subjects,” including Koreans. Sakhalin Koreans, however, could not acquire citizenship

¹⁶² This liminal period was a state of between and betwixt (Turner 1967), and not in a state of “disorder” or “chaos” among Sakhalin Koreans. Based on the Soviet affirmative action toward ethno-nationals (Bloch 2005; Grant 1995; Martin 2010; Slezkine 1994), institutions affirming Korean cultural practices, including Korean schools and a Korean theater group, were established during this transitional period.

¹⁶³ *Vremennoe udostoverenie i propiska* in Russian, which refers to “temporary license of registration.”

based on their previous legal status (Japanese subjects) or the region they were from (now South Korea). In addition, from 1950 to 1953, the establishment of two states on the Korean peninsula in the maelstrom of the Korean War complicated the situation for Sakhalin Koreans (Din 2012:150–153). Meanwhile, Soviet citizenship was offered: however, according to Din (2012), the number of Koreans who acquired Soviet citizenship did not increase rapidly. Many instead opted for one of the other two possible statuses: North Korean citizenship or Stateless Person.

The acquisition of North Korean citizenship among Sakhalin Koreans was affected by key political transition in North Korea from 1955 to the early 1960s. Being influenced by de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and facing power struggles among domestic factions after the Korean War, North Korea confronted political conflicts (Lankov 1999, 2002, 2004).¹⁶⁴ In particular, Kim Il-Sung saw the two factions, consisting of Soviet Koreans and Koreans closely connected with the Chinese Communist Party, as challenging his power and his nationalist orientation. Kim thus purged the members of the two factions, and proceeded with nationalist socialist state-building (Lankov 2004). After the purge, Kim Il-Sung intended to perform and establish his legitimacy for display both domestically and on the international stage. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s the North Korean government then promoted “ethnic” mobilization in Northeast Asia as promising opportunities for education and employment for Korean co-ethnics (Li 2012) (chapter 1). In addition, in 1957 North Korea and the Soviet Union signed an agreement on citizenship that banned dual citizenship (Lankov 2004:188).¹⁶⁵ North Korean government workers actively promoted acquiring North Korean citizenship among Sakhalin Koreans. The ethnic mobilization and citizenship promotion led by North Korea from the late 1950s to the early 1960s shaped deliberations over citizenship among Sakhalin Koreans. Since dual citizenship was not allowed, those Sakhalin Koreans who acquired North Korean citizenship became foreigners.

¹⁶⁴ Lankov (1999, 2002, 2004) discusses detailed contexts and processes of Kim’s purges by Kim. There were four factions in the Korean Workers’ Party in 1946: (1) the Domestic faction; (2) the Guerrilla faction (including Kim Il-Sung); (3) the Yanan faction (closely associated with the Chinese Communist Party); and (4) the Soviet faction which consisted of Soviet Koreans who were originally sent to North Korea from 1945 to 1948 by the Soviet government to work for North Korean government institutions (Lankov 2002:89).

¹⁶⁵ Lankov notes that for the Soviet Koreans this citizenship agreement brought dilemmas. They had to choose to maintain their higher status in North Korea or return to the Soviet Union. Most of the Soviet Koreans returned to the Soviet Union (2002:188).

While the promotional efforts on the part of the North Korean government did not determine the citizenship deliberations among Sakhalin Koreans, older Sakhalin Koreans told me that many Sakhalin Koreans at the time thought of North Korea as part of ‘Korea.’ Young people wished to receive education and work in North Korea and desired higher social status. Many also thought in the near future, after the two states would be reunited they could go to South Korea via North Korea. In interviews, older Sakhalin Koreans reflected on the ironic outcome: the Sakhalin Koreans who migrated to North Korea during the 1950s and the 1960s in an attempt to go to South Korea are still not able to go to South Korea while those who decided to remain on Sakhalin can visit and live in South Korea.

Other Sakhalin Koreans who did not opt for North Korean citizenship became Stateless Persons (*R. bez grazhdanstva*).¹⁶⁶ Some Sakhalin Koreans “opted” for stateless status because they did not know how to register for citizenship. These people who ‘remained’ unregistered were left with stateless status (Din 2012:152–153). Many others chose stateless status, as older Sakhalin Koreans said, with the idea that they might go to South Korea in the future. They thought that once they acquired Soviet citizenship, it would be difficult to go to South Korea.

The question of Sakhalin Koreans’ citizenship was not resolved until the Soviet citizenship law was modified in 1978 (Din 2012:159), officially recognizing three types of nationality statuses. The three types of nationality status —USSR, North Korean, and Stateless—coexisted throughout the late Soviet period. In some cases Sakhalin Koreans also sought to change their citizenship.¹⁶⁷ This situation was affected by local social conditions and by Cold War tensions in Northeast Asia. However, as Din (2012:153) suggests, Sakhalin

¹⁶⁶ In Russian, *bez* literally means “without,” and *grazhdanstvo* refers to citizenship. *Bez grazhdanstva* refers to stateless subjects. The phrase, *litso bez grazhdanstva* (stateless person) was written on the identification documents of stateless Sakhalin Koreans.

¹⁶⁷ The citizenship of Sakhalin Koreans (both those who were stateless and foreigners) was regulated under the 1938 Soviet citizenship law (Ginsburgs 1984). Kuzin (2010:154) provides a more precise description of the citizenship of children of Sakhalin Korean parents who were stateless, foreigners, or Soviet citizens. This legal framework changed little until 1978, when the citizenship law was modified. However, even after 1978, all of the Sakhalin Koreans who had a stateless status or North Korean citizenship could gain Soviet citizenship. However, some of my informants said that once they had acquired North Korean citizenship. This was hard to acquire Soviet citizenship. It was because the Soviets required them to renounce North Korean citizenship in order to get Soviet citizenship, but the North Korean government would not issue the proof of the renouncement of North Korean citizenship. Thus, for example, Kolya wrote numerous letters to Moscow requesting citizenship as part of his claim-making practice. In 1987 he was finally granted Soviet citizenship. The first thing he did was take a vacation (*otpusk*) and use his labor incentive (a travel voucher called *putëvka*) to travel to foreign countries.

Koreans themselves could not decide where they would ideally live in the future. The following section considers political subjects who had North Korean citizenship and stateless status in order to reflect on the effects that legal status had on the experiences of Sakhalin Koreans.

5.2.2.2. “We were in prison!” Spatial restrictions and untreated pain

During in-depth interviews and conversations with older Sakhalin Koreans, I did not hear reflections on citizenship (or having passports) as being significant immediately following the end of the war on Sakhalin. Instead, Sakhalin Koreans’ narratives suggested that they had only gradually recognized that their citizenship status had become “problematic.” In particular, from the late 1960s to the end of the 1970s, when the second generation of Sakhalin Koreans came of age,¹⁶⁸ Sakhalin Koreans began to sense a problem with their status.

Under the Soviet citizenship regime, those Koreans who had North Korean passports and who were Stateless Persons were subject to spatial control of their mobility. This past border regime can be understood as based on two historical and geopolitical contexts. Sakhalin was designated a special “closed zone” (*zakrytaya zona*) due to its strategic location, bordering the Pacific and with Japan as a nearby neighbor. In this region, those who did not have Soviet citizenship, including Sakhalin Koreans, were subject to special state control.

Sakhalin Koreans found their citizenship to be “problematic” when they had to select a course of study upon completion of the compulsory eight grades of schooling. From the late 1960s through the early 1980s, local and regional mobility thrived in the Soviet Union, and young people were drawn to the idea of studying and working in urban areas, seeking opportunities to travel overseas and having encounters with the West and the rest of the world (Gorusch and Koenker 2006; Yurchak 2005).¹⁶⁹ Young Sakhalin Koreans were no exception. They yearned to live in urban areas and especially cities in central Russia. In

¹⁶⁸ Subjects at age sixteen were required to have their own internal passport in the Soviet Union.

¹⁶⁹ The 1960s migration from rural areas to urban centers was not a new phenomenon. During the 1920s into the 1930s, large numbers of rural young men moved to cities to seek jobs, education, and upward mobility (Denisova 2010:54–59). While such out-migration from rural areas took place, prior to World War II, the Soviet government also promoted systematic resettlement campaigns (deportation and collectivization) by relocating various populations to Siberia and the Russian Far East.

particular, young men desiring upward mobility wanted to study *outside of* Sakhalin, which lacked diverse and higher educational institutions. However, the restrictions on the spatial mobility of stateless individuals and foreigners required complex procedures. For example, aspiring students who were stateless or foreigners first needed written confirmation that an educational institution would accept a non-Soviet citizen. If they received the confirmation, they had to get permission from the local militia to leave Sakhalin. The approval had to be issued before the university entrance exam date. However, it was not uncommon for young Sakhalin Koreans to miss required entrance exams on the mainland because their departure was not approved in time. Others gave up planning to study on the mainland.¹⁷⁰

The most problematic issue for Sakhalin Koreans was the restriction of everyday physical mobility *within* Sakhalin. This regulation was introduced by the local Sakhalin government in 1960 (Kuzin 2010:138–139). According to this regulation, they were required to get the local militia’s permission when they moved out of an administrative region (*raion*).¹⁷¹ This local border regime constantly reminded Sakhalin Koreans of their non-citizen status and made them perceive themselves as living in prison. They had to report all of their movements (within Sakhalin) in advance of any transregional travel and they had to get approval from the local militia. For example, Sergei recollected how once when he was a passenger on a bus that crossed into the next district, suddenly the police came aboard and asked: “Are there any Koreans?” (*R. Koreitsy est?*) Those Koreans who did not have permission to be in the next district got off the bus. Sergei then said to me with anger: “But when we worked for *sovkhoz* (state farms), the police never checked our movement!” Sergei also worked in a job which required truck driving, but it was impossible for him to get permission whenever crossing local borders, so he quit. Like Sergei, Yura also faced challenges to his mobility. In the Soviet era, after finishing his eighth grade education, like most Sakhalin young people, Yura continued his education in a vocational training program (most of my informants had studied electronics or mining). Since the locations of some of

¹⁷⁰ There were Sakhalin Koreans who could move to and study in urban centers. This was possible once their applications for Soviet passports were accepted (but this was not predictable); many Sakhalin Koreans told me that on Sakhalin, the local Russian people in workplaces and schools had facilitated their mobility. However, these Sakhalin Koreans emphasized that they were lucky. They considered it uncommon for Sakhalin Koreans to have studied and worked in a big city, especially Moscow.

¹⁷¹ Ironically, Sakhalin Koreans who had moved to the mainland USSR (through marriage or employment) did not experience spatial restrictions in daily life, although their mobility across regional borders required permission.

the schools were far from their houses, the students lived in dormitories. When Yura tried to go back home during the winter vacation, the police did not issue the necessary permission for him, so he had to stay in the dormitory.¹⁷² This made him so frustrated and mad that he stomped on his stateless identity papers.

Women's experiences were slightly different. In their narratives, women did not emphasize limited spatial mobility as linked to their lives following secondary school. Due to gendered expectations of upward mobility among Sakhalin Koreans, as well as due to women being allocated what were considered female occupations after completing their education, the spatial territory of Sakhalin Korean women's lives was even more narrow than that of men's. Unlike men, the women I interviewed tend to speak of memorable childhood episodes related to restrictions around mobility. For example, while picking wild plants in the mountains with their parents, one woman recollected how her family had gradually moved across the landscape. This caused a problem when the local militia found out that they had crossed invisible regional borders. The parents were required to pay a fine for their infraction. Despite such gender differences regarding mobility, as a group older Sakhalin Koreans saw themselves distinct from 'normal' Soviet citizens due to their lack of freedom of movement and formal citizenship.

In the case of elderly Sakhalin Koreans, lack of Soviet citizenship was felt keenly through their children's experiences. Elderly people expressed distress about their children; during interviews, some elderly women broke down when they recollected how their children struggled because of their statuses as being stateless or foreigner.¹⁷³ The limitations on social and spatial mobility among their children troubled them. Since elderly women were less integrated into educational and industrial domains on Soviet Sakhalin, their spatial mobility and social field of everyday activities were more constricted than those of their

¹⁷² The local militia did not always refuse permission to Sakhalin Koreans lacking Soviet citizenship. Usually, as long as Sakhalin Koreans applied in advance for permission to move, it was approved. However, the militia's approvals were not predictable, which is what frustrated Sakhalin Koreans.

¹⁷³ Many of the Sakhalin Koreans (both those who were stateless and those with foreign status) who studied in mainland Russia completed education in Irkutsk and Novosibirsk. The institutions in both cities accepted Sakhalin Koreans. Some people are proud of this while others view it in negative ways. For example, Sakhalin Koreans recounted that they had been able to study on the mainland, but in Siberia, far from the center, Moscow.

children. The elders thus faced emotional conflicts, being unsure what to do regarding their citizenship.¹⁷⁴

When I met Sakhalin Koreans in 2010, they gave emotional accounts of the ways they and their families were treated unequally in Soviet times. Older Sakhalin Koreans were bitter that their painful past would never be healed and that their youth would never come back. However, I propose another reason for these accounts, namely that pain and suffering play a key role in claiming return entitlement among stayees.

5.2.3. Public political actions: Raising and giving voices to be heard

How do stayees make claims for inclusion, and what do they really claim? I focus on two settings where the claim-making of older Sakhalin Korean stayees was evident, and examine the public efforts of, and struggles for, recognition of stayees. The first setting is the migration orientation held on Sakhalin, where older Sakhalin Koreans directly encountered the representatives of the South Korean government. Although it was arranged for would-be migrants, when I attended the orientation in 2010, stayees attended the meeting as well. Some came to see and feel what the orientation was like, but others came with a different purpose. The representatives of the government institutions involved in the return project were present.¹⁷⁵ After they had made a presentation about return migration, questions were taken from the audience. Taking out a sheet of paper, one elderly stayee woman suddenly spoke into the microphone, starting to narrate her life story as follows: “I migrated to Sakhalin following my father...” She was interrupted by a representative of the local ethnic Koreans’ association. Another elderly woman then stood up, saying, “I stay here not because I want to live here. I just can’t leave my children here. What can I do?” She continued: “I understand how South Koreans suffered from the war, but we also suffered here. I had to send my children to Soviet schools because I thought education was necessary for them.” After emphasizing how her and her children’s lives had not gone as planned, she said, “I’m

¹⁷⁴ Indeed, statelessness and North Korean citizenship became sources of conflicts among family members. For example, when young Sakhalin Koreans tried to gain Russian citizenship, their parents were against it. Thus, some young people (mostly men) changed only their own citizenship and not that of other family members (mostly parents), something that became possible after 1978, when new citizenship law came to effect.

¹⁷⁵ Representatives were present from the South Korean Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Health and Welfare, as well as the South Korean Red Cross. The South Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport was also involved in the arrangement of housing, but none of its representatives attended the orientation.

getting old and I'm not healthy now. It is hard to live with a small pension here. We can't receive the pension that other people [returnees] receive in South Korea. So I want us to be provided with compensation (K. *posang*)."

After hearing the stayees' claims, a representative of the local Sakhalin Korean association said, "Please ask questions relevant to return migration and talk in a more respectful way." Then, one of the South Korean government workers said:

We've already given the opportunity to all first-generation returnees. This [return migration] is not about individual issues but community issues. Please listen: you have not fulfilled any obligations as nationals (*kungmin*) of the Republic of Korea—education, employment, military conscription, and paying taxes. All the South Korean nationals fulfill these obligations, while you can live in South Korea without having done so. This project is not carried out by the South Korean government alone, but also by the Japanese government. If you want to say something, please say it to the assembly and not to the government. After the assembly passes a bill, the government takes action.

The audience fell silent. Another middle-aged stayee woman cried and said, "I also suffered a lot because my parents were stateless. Please don't forget that we, the second and third generations of Sakhalin Koreans, lived with suffering." The focus turned to practical questions that would-be migrants posed, such as the locations of apartments and departure dates.

I suggest that the narratives and appeals to representatives of the South Korean state made by the stayee women show that their trajectories of suffering are mobilized in their claim making. In addition, their ways of identifying themselves as children of stateless parents or as people who suffered as Koreans on Sakhalin indicate the effects of their past citizenship status. These statuses were, in turn, irrevocably shaped by the history of Japanese colonialism, as well as subsequent lives lived under the Cold War and Soviet power regime.

Other than the direct appeals to government officials made during this orientation session, I also had a chance to observe older Sakhalin Koreans' claim-making practices through a mass political meeting (Sakhalin Koreans called them *miting* in Russian) in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 2010, the 100th anniversary of Japan's annexation of Korea and the 65th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II). Some Sakhalin Koreans thought that their collective political action could be politically sensitive, and they were concerned that the event would destabilize the relationship between

Sakhalin Koreans and the local Sakhalin government. Nevertheless, a group of middle-aged stayees had decided to organize this mass political meeting; word went out via phone calls and personal networks. For example, one day during a card game, Katya spoke about the event with the other women: “What are we going to do then?” Sveta then responded: “We have to say, ‘Send us to South Korea,’ right?” I was told that it was the first time that Sakhalin Koreans had organized a mass political event. Misha, one of the core members organizing the meeting, told me: “I believe it will be the last chance. If nothing happens, I will give up.”

On August 29, approximately 2,000 Sakhalin Koreans from all over Sakhalin gathered in the local stadium. Among the participants, I saw both stayees and returnees. South Koreans, including representatives of NGOs and a member of the National Assembly, also took part in the event. Sakhalin Koreans had told me that they organized the meeting, but the form of the event was similar to that of civil demonstrations in South Korea, with speeches followed by a music concert. Before the concert began, South Korean NGO representatives appealed to Japan to take responsibility and compensate Sakhalin Koreans for forced labor, unpaid salaries, and moral harm. The representative of the local Sakhalin Koreans’ association also narrated how Sakhalin Koreans had migrated to Sakhalin and had been left on Sakhalin after the war, and how they had lived in the Soviet era. He reiterated the South Korean NGO’s appeal demanding that the Japanese government should reflect on the past and fulfill its juridical responsibility by providing compensation to Sakhalin Koreans.

Both the migration orientation session and the mass political meeting show that narratives of past suffering play a crucial role in claim-making. This suffering was not a consequence of a one-time event but of the experiences that took place over the course of peoples’ lifetimes. Older Sakhalin Koreans understood that the origin of their suffering derives from the colonial past and that it affected their lives, including by limiting choices in terms of citizenship. In this context, living as stateless subjects was a symbolic and practical source for their identification. Perhaps, considering the place of hardship as a linguistic and social practice in post-socialist contexts (Ries 1997), the narratives of suffering among older Sakhalin Koreans could be understood as their response to the post-Soviet social transition. In the case of older Sakhalin Koreans, however, it is slightly different. I argue that their past

experiences of citizenship and political membership are *the only sources* through which they can find a connection with the two nation-states (Japan and South Korea). Their past political membership is configured as part of the process of making claims for recognition and inclusion by the two nation-states.

Observing the claim-making practices of stayees, I found points of ambiguity in what they were really claiming and what was being represented. For example, banners and placards written in Russian, Korean, and Japanese stated: “Don’t forget the annexation and the past brutalities!”; “Pay unpaid salaries (forced savings of laborers)!”; “Compensate Sakhalin Koreans for damages”; and “Atone for the past colonization and seek peace!” Legal compensation was the primary demand and it had been posed to the Japanese government in Japanese courts from the 1970s to the early 1990s (chapter 1). In my interviews, however, what many stayees wanted was not the Japanese government’s political performance of taking legal responsibility and providing compensation on the basis of the demands above. Many middle-aged stayees instead wanted to be granted the right to *live* with welfare assistance in South Korea. The elderly stayees wanted to claim the same amount of material assistance that the returnees received in South Korea. Thus, there was a divergence between officially represented collective claims invoked on placards and banners and the more personal claims stayees expressed in interpersonal discourse.

Nevertheless, I suggest that it is wrong to say that stayees did not engage in collective claim-making. Through calls to acquaintances, attendance at events, and feelings of being part of a group of people who had the same demands, older Sakhalin Koreans recognized their own power in making themselves heard by the two governments. Moreover, even though not every participant was given a chance to talk at the public gathering, many felt that their claims were conveyed. Even though there was a divergence between the claim represented on placards and their actual claim, older Sakhalin Koreans exercised a collective and political consciousness through which they made claims. What is more, in the process, they were becoming political subjects. I return to a discussion of older Sakhalin Koreans’ subjectivities after considering another experience of citizenship among returnees in the next section.

5.3. The possibilities and impossibilities of special welfare subjects

I turn to examining how returnees' lives as special welfare subjects in South Korea also involve contradictory behaviors and emotions. In particular, I focus on three domains: (1) death; (2) social support; and (3) property. I consider how returnees face the limits of state protection, as well as various power relations in these domains. The following sections highlight the subject-formation of returnees to explore how citizenship provides both possibilities and impossibilities for Sakhalin Korean returnees to qualify themselves as certain kinds of political subjects.

5.3.1. "Death is work": Fear of being dealt with like garbage

Both on Sakhalin and in South Korea, after having interviewed elderly people several times, I sometimes asked: "What is your main concern now?" Many of them answered: "Death is the problem" and "Death is work." I consider these comments as reflecting the ways that older Sakhalin Koreans perceived a particular life stage. Death was considered an event that they had to *work* at and prepare for. For example, one elderly stayee woman on Sakhalin told me that she had thoroughly researched the local funeral service company and the cost of cremation. Returnees' cases are, however, slightly different. Different wishes and constraints are involved. In considering death as a key domain where returnees face limitations about their flexible transnational lives, I demonstrate how older Sakhalin Korean returnees negotiate values and meaning—not about death itself, but about how their bodies will be dealt with in the future.

Before highlighting returnees' moral discourses around death in South Korea, I discuss two types of funerals that have been practiced among Sakhalin Koreans since the post-Second World War period: burial and cremation. In the Russian Orthodox religious tradition that continued to influence funerary practice in the Soviet Union, burial was the predominant practice, although cremation was also practiced (Merridale 2003).¹⁷⁶ While

¹⁷⁶ Merridale (2000, 2003) traces the historical changes in commemoration, death rituals, and funeral practices in Russia. Merridale points out that in the context of high mortality due to civil war, famine, and diseases in the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks advocated cremation in contrast to traditional religious rituals. However, cremation did not prevail because of insufficient and poor facilities and because of moral rejection in rural areas and among older generations. In communist Romania as well, the ideology of secularism and hygiene technology promoted cremation; the situation was also influenced by the cremation practices in the cities of Western Europe. Rotar (2013) provides a comparative analysis of the ideologies and practices of cremation.

cremation is legal in Russia, many older Sakhalin Koreans with whom I talked regarded the practice of cremation as an invalid form of funeral practice in Russia. For example, this notion is reflected in Vova's account (chapter 2) of cremation with the idiom *yame*, which connotes 'unofficial' activities (in Japanese), in contrast to the official sphere. Moreover, as to my question of how they practiced cremation, some of the older Sakhalin Koreans told me that they had gone into the mountains far from residential spaces in the middle of the night in an effort to go unnoticed. They then burned the deceased body after placing it on wood piled with car tires, a way of creating the intensive heat needed for cremation.

Why did they practice this perceived 'unofficial' cremation? From older Sakhalin Koreans' narratives, I found that there were two main reasons. First, some people embraced cremation, saying that cremation is cleaner than burial. Second, others opted for cremation because ashes are mobile. For example, one middle-aged woman told me that her father's ashes had been kept in the house for several years in order to bring them to South Korea someday. Indeed, in the late 1980s, when Sakhalin Koreans were first allowed to visit South Korea, some of them transported the ashes of their parents or siblings across the state border. Moreover, other middle-aged people explained to me what they had done with relatives' ashes. For example, family members had put the ashes on a small paper boat, floating them in the sea toward home in Korea. Cremation reflected the will of the deceased, but the family's wishes were also projected onto such practices.¹⁷⁷ After World War II and during the Cold War, cremation made it possible to send souls home across state borders.

In South Korea, according to the return migration policy, Sakhalin Korean returnees are buried in National Cemetery for Overseas Koreans, which was originally intended for the burial of ethnic Korean compatriots who died under colonial rule outside Korea, such as in Manchuria and Japan. It is located in Ch'ungch'ŏng province, which is about a two-hour bus ride from Seoul and from Incheon Airport. This national cemetery is not well known in South Korean society or among Koreans overseas. Although for some Sakhalin Koreans it is considered a prestigious public memorial site, for many returnees, being buried in the site means being buried in an unrecognized space. The mortuaries of Sakhalin Korean returnees are placed in a charnel within the facility.

¹⁷⁷ A sense of belonging after death is also projected onto Sakhalin Koreans' gravestones on Sakhalin; the locations of their hometowns in Korea are inscribed on their gravestones.

Despite the fact that cremation is somewhat acceptable among older Sakhalin Koreans, I suggest that what returnees are concerned about is the ways that their bodies will be treated. Returnees fear and sometimes reject cremation in South Korea. For example, many had witnessed the processes around cremation with the death of friends or family members, and they told me that they were shocked to see that bodies were dealt with “like trash.” Unlike the solemn funeral practices in Russia, where attendees are given a lot of time and space to be immersed in their feelings, cremation in South Korea does not provide such moments.¹⁷⁸ Once bodies are cremated, the ashes are removed immediately with a dustpan, and another body is waiting to be incinerated next.¹⁷⁹ Older Sakhalin Korean returnees fear such “inhumane” procedures, in which they would be disposed of “like trash,” with little ceremony.

In addition, rumors about what happens to ashes in the long term makes returnees anxious. Many of the returnees told me that the ashes are removed from the burial site decades later and discarded elsewhere. I asked a worker of the South Korean Red Cross about this, and was told that as long as the government’s policy would not change, the ashes are preserved. While denying the rumor, the worker’s comment still implies that there is a possibility that the fate of the ashes could be affected by a policy change. The point is that as returnees imagine this unpredictability and the possibility that being cremated makes it more likely that their bodies might not be preserved in the future, they feel that their bodies are less valued.

Because of concerns about how they will be treated, some returnees think their remains should be sent to Sakhalin after death. In order to transport ashes across international borders, family members are required to declare their intention to the Russian consulate in South Korea. This practice, however, is not automatically carried out according to individual returnees’ desires. Families’ preferences and their material conditions are also important, and these factors are now more uncertain than they were during the Cold War

¹⁷⁸ Funeral practices and services became diverse in the post-Soviet context. Rouhier-Willoughby (2007) argues that the funeral is a contested domain in which continuity and change are negotiated. For example, religious organizations are more involved in death rituals and services, funeral businesses have become the norm, and the Soviet style of funeral has disappeared. Here, my focus is on how fear and anxiety are evoked in this context among returnees in South Korea.

¹⁷⁹ Although I did not observe the cremation processes, I could appreciate the returnees’ sense of surprise and fear based on my past experience attending the funeral of an undocumented Korean-Chinese worker in South Korea. It was very similar to what the returnees witnessed.

period. Thus, with return migration, although the majority of deceased bodies are buried in the national cemetery, returnees (mostly middle-aged people) cannot avoid thinking about whether this is the best option.

Rumors, discussions, and thoughts around death among returnees indicate the ways that they imagine and struggle to craft their future. For them, the form of funeral rites is less of concern than the ways their bodies might be treated not as humans, whose passing is meant to be memorialized through a particular set of rituals, but instead cast off unceremoniously, like garbage. I argue that through these processes returnees perceive that their bodies are devalued in South Korea; they also perceive the limitations of state protection.

5.3.2. “My husband got caught!” Authority in social support

In chapter 4 I highlighted the crucial role of nation-states involved in facilitating transnational ways of living and strategies among returnees, yet the states are not the sole institutions that provide welfare assistance and support in South Korea. Focusing on interactions with religious organizations, this section demonstrates how older Sakhalin Koreans learn of the limitations of state protection in the course of their every day social relationships of care and support.

On Sakhalin, one middle-aged returnee woman said to her friend: “My husband got caught!” She then explained that when her husband had been walking outside their home, a South Korean pastor approached him. Her husband could not avoid the pastor. Through casually asking about his health, the pastor realized that the returnee man had some problems with his eyes, and he took the man to the hospital. Because of the pastor bargaining with a doctor, the man received free medical treatment. Talking about this episode, the woman said: “We can’t escape it any more. We go to a church.” On Sakhalin, people also expressed this idea that returnees to South Korea might “get caught” by religious groups. For example, one would-be migrant woman spoke of her anxiety: “I heard people [returnees] all go to church in South Korea. I don’t know whether I could believe in God or not.” Although not explicitly addressing why returnees go to church, her concern implies that affiliations with religious organizations are unavoidable in South Korea because they offer social support, something the following account also reflects.

Sonia had been diagnosed with cancer in South Korea and she was advised to have an operation that required a special procedure, something not covered by the public medical assistance. Recollecting the moment, she told me: “I was not shocked at all, but my husband [Igor] and my brothers all cried a lot to hear what I had been told by the doctor. But the pastor explained my situation to the doctor, and he asked the doctor to charge only a very small amount of money to do the operation. How thankful I was!” She has been regularly going to the church where the pastor works; she has also brought gifts from Sakhalin to give to the doctor and the pastor.

Sonia and Igor have gone to church every Saturday. However, Igor said to me: “I don’t know whether I should keep going to the church or not. I try to believe, but I can’t. It is difficult. People can keep going to a church if they believe from the bottom of their hearts, right? But I can’t. But the pastor has helped us a lot, so I need to go.” While Igor faced emotional conflicts and difficulties believing in God, it seemed that Sonia embraced the religious practices more strongly. Olga also told me she has gone to church even though, as she emphasized, “I do not understand what they talk about at all, even after listening to it hundreds of times!” To my question as to why she goes to church, she answered that the church provides a free funeral service. Olga thought that the church funeral service would be more respectful of her body than the cremations arranged by non-religious institutions.

I do not suggest that all returnees are compelled to go to church. However, the examples above indicate that among returnees, other than engaging in gift giving and going to church, there are limited possibilities asking for and engaging in social support. Hence, these limited choices, emotional conflicts, and a strong sense of obligation shape and are shaped by the asymmetrical power between returnees and South Korean actors; moreover, returnees recognize that South Korean religious practitioners have authority over them.

The manners in which returnees participate in religious activities are not homogenous. Nevertheless, I learned that social support relationships between Sakhalin Korean returnees and South Koreans (and institutions) were more constrained than they would be on Sakhalin. For example, on Sakhalin, older Sakhalin Koreans have established social networks through their family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. In contrast, returnees have few such resources to manipulate the public system on which they rely in South Korea. In addition, on Sakhalin, a symbolic act of compensation for social support is

carried out not only by giving gifts, but also by providing various forms of help, or “mutual aid” (material and non-material) when others need it. However, in South Korea, other than showing gratitude, returnees have few obligations and opportunities to become a provider of support for South Koreans. The roles and capacities of returnees are undermined. The relationships around non-governmental social support are carried out within asymmetrical power relations between returnees and South Koreans instead of through a model of mutual aid. Sakhalin Korean returnees find that they have to restore to forms of social supports that are not offered by the nation-states, and for which they cannot properly reciprocate.

5.3.3. A sense of dispossession

Finally, I suggest that property is a site in which older Sakhalin Koreans encounter a sense of impossibility related to return migration. Property also compels Sakhalin Koreans to reconsider what kind of persons they are. On Sakhalin, one middle-aged stayee’s comment struck me: “Even though we are given housing in South Korea, we cannot give it to our children. If we could, I would think about return migration.” In South Korea, one returnee man also spoke about this with a sarcastic tone: “Well, everything is good here, but we cannot have this apartment. It will be given back to the state.” While such comments were more commonly articulated by men than women, both men and women recognized that returnees’ apartments belong to the South Korean government, not to returnees.

The law about ownership of property by Sakhalin Korean returnees is embedded in their status as welfare subjects based in South Korea’s National Assistance Act. According to this law and the return migration policy, once returnees possess a certain minimal disposable income, the material supports (usually partial living expenses) will be cut off, and they will also be required to pay tax; citizens’ obligations will be imposed. Although older Sakhalin Koreans invoke the indexical passive form “given” in discussing return entitlement (chapter 4), they do not, in fact, own their apartments. This fact causes returnees to express a sense of dispossession. The following sections highlight the implications of such dispossession for returnees’ subjectivity by tracing two returnees’ narratives: one on the relationship between masculinity and cards and state-owned housing; and the other on the management of personal finances in South Korea. These cases reflect returnees’ complex

and contradictory behaviors, understandings, and feelings about becoming welfare citizens among returnees.

No cars, no need to fix: Diminished masculinity?

On Sakhalin, Kolya critically assessed returnees' lives in South Korea: "It is ridiculous that they [returnees] do not have cars in South Korea! Is that really good? How can they live without cars?" I recollected Kolya's words when I visited Homeland Village where I found an empty parking lot. I raised a question about cars when I visited Yulia, whom I had talked with on Sakhalin. Although Yulia's husband was not home, I asked her what she and her husband think about not having a car in South Korea. She answered: "He loves cars so much! When looking at cars, he gets so excited that he can't sit still. But here he can't [have a car]. So that is too bad."

On Sakhalin in 2010, the streets were full of cars.¹⁸⁰ In addition, it was not rare for one household to have more than two cars. Despite the fact that both young men and women drive and that cars were regarded as must-have goods in daily life, personal cars were considered masculine objects among the elderly and middle-aged generations,¹⁸¹ just as they were during late Soviet times (Siegelbaum 2006). What is more, just after the fall of the Soviet Union, Sakhalin Korean men were widely employed in the new sphere of importing second-hand cars from Japan. Finally, even though in the past Sakhalin Korean men did not always have their own cars, since the late socialist period car repair has been one of the predominant jobs for Sakhalin Korean men. Even in 2010, some retired middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans I met were supplementing their income by repairing cars.

In contrast, in South Korea, returnee men generally do not have anything to do with cars, although legally they are allowed to purchase them. This is to a large extent because they cannot afford to buy and maintain cars in South Korea. In addition to the practical factors, I suggest that they are not able to consider possessing cars because they are concerned that owning such property would prevent them from living stable lives. Although they see life without a car as "not normal," returnee men tend to downplay critical

¹⁸⁰ Kolya explained, "The number of cars has increased, but the streets are still the same as in the past. They were designed when there were few cars. Nobody imagined everybody would have cars."

¹⁸¹ This is reflected in men's talk. They recollected their aspiration to own private cars and motorcycles in Soviet times, criticizing how these objects were available only to people of high socio-political status.

comments. They understood that making claims to the government for cars does not make sense. Cars do not carry the same value as material assistance in the ways that housing, pensions, and medical treatment do. Thus, returnee men do not articulate their sense of dispossession explicitly in terms of cars, but they feel a sense of alienation because of the lack of cars in their lives.

Other than cars, dwellings are also symbolic objects that evoke a sense that something is missing among returnee men. As discussed in the beginning of this section, returnees and stayees criticize the impossibility of inheritance. In addition to the issue with inheritance, returnees believe there is no need for men to work to fix their residence. For example, when I visited Homeland Village, a married elderly couple proudly told me that all the walls inside the flat had been newly painted by the administrative office in the apartment complex. Usually, fixing dwellings is symbolically considered a masculine domain among older Sakhalin Koreans (chapter 4). However, in South Korea, the local municipal officials provide assistance.¹⁸² Also, in contrast to the everyday life on Sakhalin where men constantly do repair work (or build something) in dwellings, apartments in South Korea rarely need repair. I neither saw nor heard of middle-aged returnee men fixing the interior of their apartments in South Korea. The sphere of returnee men's work shrinks in South Korea.

Returnee men have fewer spaces to perform repair services; however, this does not mean that men do nothing. When I visited Yulia's house, what surprised me were the devices in the house. I opened the door of the washroom and heard a strange sound and smelled something. Whenever the washroom door was opened or closed, the button of an aromatic air freshener was pushed. Also, the floor of the balcony was covered with artificial grass, on which exercise machines had been put. Yulia told me that her husband had created them from many parts that he had found in the garbage area. "He really likes to make such mechanical stuff," she said. In similar ways, in Olga's house, I saw a big mirror. I thought the couple had bought it, but Tolya (her husband) had found it in the garbage area. Even within conditions that require less masculine work, returnee men try to do something. They pick up useful things and remake items. Vova's comment indicates a consequence of mass production and consumption in South Korean society: "It is funny. South Koreans throw

¹⁸² Generally, in South Korea, apartment residents repair or update apartments by themselves, unless the damage is serious or caused accidentally.

away everything, even things that are not broken at all. I have heard that when South Koreans move to a new house, they change every piece of furniture. There are lots of useful things, though.” Given the material environment in which there are few opportunities for them to do everyday repair and creative work, returnee men try to find work related to the house.

It is hard to determine here whether returnee men have lost a sense of manhood in South Korea or not. However, it is true that men (and women) feel that not only the inheritance of houses, but also men’s roles and everyday practices (such as fixing houses and driving cars) are impossible in South Korea. Such dispossession was not felt on Sakhalin throughout late and post-Soviet times. Just as these returnees are becoming welfare subjects in South Korea, in the next section, I offer a brief description of how Olga also perceive being cast as a welfare subject and the ways she reacts to this.

Possessing wealth as trouble

Olga’s management of her financial budget shows how a symbolic practices are shaped as returnees become welfare subjects in South Korea. When I visited Olga in South Korea, she told me about one episode. Olga had kept cash in the back of a television to use for tickets to Sakhalin. However, she forgot where she had put it. Olga thought she had lost the money and gave up searching for it. However, one day, the cash was found unexpectedly. She felt lucky, as if she had won the lottery. Talking about this episode, Olga laughed a lot. I was puzzled and asked: “Why didn’t you keep the cash in your bank account?” Olga then said in a quiet voice: “You know, if we have too much money in the bank, that’s not good. Once money is given, we have to take it out.” I found that Olga perceived returnees’ possession of too much wealth as problem; returnees are meant to be welfare subjects. This perception compelled Olga to hid her cash at home, not in her bank account.

I have illustrated examples related to returnees’ behaviors and their feelings around property ownership and possession in South Korea. They confront challenging situations within which returnees become welfare subjects through various practices: they try to perpetuate the self, control their desires, care for themselves and manage their own

behaviors, and understand what it means to be special welfare subjects. The following section continues to reflect on how returnees' subjectivities are re-configured.

5.3.4. An interval: The blurred boundaries of 'capitalism' and 'socialism'

After observing and listening to the returnees' talk about their lives, and considering Olga's practice of not keeping too much money in her bank account, I could not help thinking about the ironic life trajectories among Sakhalin Koreans. The returnees' articulations and behaviors regarding property reminded me of older Sakhalin Koreans' narratives about their pasts in terms of livelihood and household economies. In the senior center on Sakhalin, I heard a conversation among elderly stayees about how they had managed wealth. For example, one woman recounted that she had earned quite a lot of money through performing personal gardening services. When the surveillance of personal property became strict (in the Khrushchev period),¹⁸³ she hid the money in the garden alongside some opium.¹⁸⁴ Later, she found that the cash had disintegrated. This episode shows how she dealt with surplus wealth during the Khrushchev period.

While elderly and middle-aged Sakhalin Koreans had different life trajectories in terms of ways of being integrated into Soviet society, overall household economies in the post-World War II period served as a domain Koreans identified themselves. As discussed in the Introduction, while young men continued to work in the mining and timber industries, Sakhalin Koreans also earned income through small business ventures such as barbershops, photo studios, ice cream shops, and farming in personal gardens.¹⁸⁵ Many of these jobs were ones that they had done since the Japanese colonial period. These types of employment were officially approved by the local government, but Sakhalin Koreans ontologically had distinguished them from government work. Indeed, this distinction was found in the elderly

¹⁸³ When I asked about life in the Khrushchev period, many Sakhalin Koreans recollected and emphasized the surveillance of property. Other than the elderly woman's stories of hiding her cash, many told me that Koreans had been, in particular, accused by the local authorities of having too many pigs. Instead of banning having pigs, the local authorities ordered Koreans not to give pigs black bread, as they maintained that it was foodstuff for people. Since black bread was the least expensive food product, Sakhalin Koreans had used it as feed for pigs. One Sakhalin Korean man recollected his painful memories about being a local administrator who had to reprimand Koreans for their behaviors.

¹⁸⁴ It is hard to say exactly what kind of "opium" she had. During Soviet times, older Sakhalin Koreans used their own poppies as a painkiller.

¹⁸⁵ Most of the elderly people (both men and women) told me that it had been impossible to sustain livelihoods only with a husband's income.

women's reflections on their past experiences. For example, the elderly women explained that during Soviet times, they were surprised to find that their incomes were higher than those of doctors and teachers, professions at the top of a social hierarchy in colonial Korea. While middle-aged people considered their parents' economic activities as marginal compared with other local Soviet citizens with employment in the industrial and public sectors, they were also proud of household economies because they brought about material wealth at a time when, as older Sakhalin Koreans recounted, there was nothing to buy. In his account of Sakhalin Koreans' economic lives, one middle-aged man jokingly commented: "We were capitalists!"

Older Sakhalin Koreans' accounts of symbolic differences grounded in household economies and economic activities on Soviet Sakhalin, along with Olga's practice of stashing cash as she was becoming a welfare subject in South Korea prompted me to wonder: "If Sakhalin Koreans were capitalists in Soviet times, are they now 'Soviet subjects' in capitalist South Korea?" While conducting the fieldwork, I pondered this question and tried to explore it further. However, I realized that such an interpretation was wrong. The ways that returnees conceive of themselves are more complicated, as I will explore in the next section.

5.3.5. Uncomfortable privilege: Indebtedness and the limits of political membership

In South Korea, I had a question: How do returnees perceive themselves in terms of being provided with state-sponsored welfare assistance in a capitalist society like South Korea? What I learned was unanticipated. The returnees felt a sense of guilt about being cared for by sponsors—the nation-states of Japan and South Korea. This is highlighted and expressed specifically within two contexts: when the returnees became aware of the reality of elderly people's lives in South Korea; and when the March 11 Earthquake and subsequent disasters occurred in Japan. In reflecting on these contexts, I demonstrate how Sakhalin Korean returnees perceive themselves as privileged bodies and negotiate a sense of belonging.

In 2011 when I conducted fieldwork in South Korea, public discourse in the Korean media focused on the poverty and insecurity of older people as a social problem. As discussed in chapter 4, due to legal, economic, and cultural factors, many South Korean

elders have few resources to access public and private welfare services. While I was in Seoul, the winter temperatures dropped to -15°C and -20°C degrees in January and February, respectively. Television programs frequently showed how elderly people lived by themselves in illegal residential spaces consisting of tiny rooms (1 to 2 m²) and without heat and a means to shower.

Sakhalin Korean returnees often told me that they had not imagined that there were so many impoverished elders in South Korea. For example, they said, “I can’t keep watching TV. How can they live like that?” and “I have never seen such elders living in that way on Sakhalin.” I also heard Olga and the other returnees say to one another: “Older South Koreans have to work forever so that they can live. They have to do hard physical work, even in their 80s.” Witnessing poor South Korean elders, they felt sorry for them. The returnees could not avoid comparing the different material arrangements of South Korean elders with their own, when they were given new houses and living expenses. The social bodies of poor South Korean elders encouraged Sakhalin Korean returnees to become aware of their privileged position.

Another situation when Sakhalin Korean returnees felt uncomfortable about being cared for by the South Korean and Japanese nations-states was when and after the earthquake shook Japan in March 2011. South Korean media showed sensational scenes: everything had been swept away by the tsunami; shaking buildings were causing panic; and fire broke out in the nuclear power plant in Fukushima. When I said my family was in Japan, the returnees expressed shock, fear, and pity. They were also worried about their families on Sakhalin. Given their experience of the past Chernobyl disaster, Sakhalin’s geographic proximity to Japan evoked quick reactions and anxiety about safety.¹⁸⁶ Returnees called to check how their children were doing. Moreover, hearing the rumors circulating on Sakhalin, some commented like, “All the rich people are getting out of Sakhalin and the only poor people are left!” The disasters in Japan turned their attention to the circumstances in Japan, as well as to those living on and leaving Sakhalin.

¹⁸⁶ One of the quick reactions on Sakhalin was, as one young mother told me, for mothers with small children to buy up as many diapers from the current stock as possible. On Sakhalin, diapers are imported from Japan and apparently local women expected that diapers produced in Japan after the 3.11 triple disasters would be contaminated with radioactivity.

More importantly, I found that Japan's disasters caused a challenging situation in which the returnees reflected on their lives. For example, returnees usually think and talk about (possible) plans of visiting Sakhalin; such 'reverse' visits are regularly arranged by the Japanese government (chapter 2).¹⁸⁷ One middle-aged returnee woman was thinking about making a temporary visit to Sakhalin, but was concerned whether her husband, a first-generation subject, would be sponsored to make a visit. She explained to me, saying, "Maybe he won't be sent this year because Japan's situation is like that. It [the Japanese government] needs to care for *its own people*, doesn't it?" In addition, I later heard that the returnees donated money that they had collected to a relief fund channeled via the Japanese consulate in South Korea. I was not able to observe this process, but considering the fact that Sakhalin Koreans did not make such donations to other neighboring countries (such as China and Mongolia) in times of disaster, their donations suggest that returnees see their relationship to Japan as special.

These examples reflect a number of issues. First, the returnees' emotional reactions can be understood not only as expressions of sympathy toward others (South Korean elders and victims of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters in Japan) but also as political processes. It is hard for returnees to avoid comparing themselves with others in these difficult situations. As a result, they feel a sense of guilt and discomfort about being cared for by the two nation-states. Sakhalin Korean returnees find that they are not (and should not be) priority subjects for receiving care from the two nation-states. In other words, returnees find that they are not legitimate citizens of either of the two political communities—Japan or South Korea. They experience a sense of incongruity as political subjects.

Second, such emotional discomfort is seen in and affects the practices of claim-making among returnees. Returnees are not totally satisfied with the return policy and material assistance. Further demands emerge after migration; for example, some want the governments to give the migration entitlement to their offspring, while others say the living expenses sponsored by the governments are not enough. Despite such demands in contrast to stayees who negotiate deservedness and make claims in public spaces, returnees do not openly and explicitly address these claims. I argue that in a situation where they are the

¹⁸⁷ Since families are separated, making it hard for adults and grandchildren living in Russia to visit older returnees in South Korea, the Japanese government, and the Red Cross arranges reverse visits, sponsoring the airfares for the "first generation" subjects once a year.

recipients of welfare support and services in South Korea, returnees perceive that claiming anything additional is morally inappropriate.

In reflecting on the discomfort of older Sakhalin Koreans around feeling privileged, I suggest that the return project in the form of a humanitarian enterprise makes returnees into beings of moral indebtedness (Fassin 2005). The ways they feel indebtedness are apparent by comparing this to Armenian refugees' practices around social support, especially housing. Baghdasaryan (2011) demonstrates that for Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan in Armenia, living in state-provided houses (like dormitories) does not grant inclusion. They long for ownership of private housing, which stems from their past lives during the Soviet period. They were able to own permanent state-housing, and at that time their children could inherit it. From their past experiences, home ownership makes them feel like full citizens and persons. In a similar vein, as I have shown in regard to older Sakhalin Koreans' moral discourse on home ownership in South Korea, returnees speak of a sense of alienation and incompleteness with respect to living in state-owned housing in South Korea. Nevertheless, returnees feel indebtedness. Returnees wonder if they are persons who really deserve to receive state-sponsored material assistance. Due to this sense of indebtedness and moral dilemma, Sakhalin Korean returnees refrain from articulating their demands, and try to "stay quiet." I contend that returnees do not sense that they are excluded; instead, they feel a sense of incongruity about their exceptional inclusion.

5.4. The politics of inclusion and subjectivity

I have tried to show that what older Sakhalin Korean stayees and returnees demand is not political membership. They also do not claim rights equal to South Korean and Japanese citizens. Rather than political and civil rights, Sakhalin Koreans feel state *protection*, and a sense of inclusion or exclusion largely signaled by a set of migration entitlements with welfare assistance; in short, they engage with a sort of "social citizenship." These social rights also evoke particular aspirations and a sense of personhood. Older Sakhalin Koreans' claim to and experience of social citizenship shows complexities of in/exclusion and their subject-formation. I argue that the contested practices of social citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans involve different processes for stayees and returnees. While stayees engage in ethnicizing and nationalizing the self, returnees come to see themselves as

exceptional beings who do not fully belong to the nation-states to which they become beholden.

Aspirations for living and claim-making practices among Sakhalin Korean stayees suggest that social citizenship does not completely undermine practices and meanings around ethnic and national belonging. Stayees claim social citizenship in South Korea by utilizing political imaginaries and interpretations of how they have been included in and excluded from various imagined communities (Anderson 1983). As Sakhalin Koreans perform acts of nationalizing and ethnicizing themselves, they struggle to make themselves “Korean victims as former Japanese colonial subjects” so as to be recognized by the two nation-states. This is similar to the ways Bulgarian Turks claim social citizenship, such as when they seek support for employment and residence in Turkey based on their ethnic-kin tie with Turkey (Parla 2011).

Compared to the situation of Bulgarian Turks, however, the Sakhalin Koreans’ case is more ambiguous. Bulgarian Turks’ claim-making practices are played out in a circumstance where the Turkish government has not granted co-ethnic groups citizenship rights since 2008. The nation of Turkey officially identifies co-ethnic subjects to be ineligible for citizenship rights. In contrast, the return program of Sakhalin Koreans is arranged for “Koreans” on Sakhalin, and this reflects that ethnicity serves as basis for citizenship rights in South Korea. However, the return program does not recognize “Koreans” born after 1945 as subject to return. The government officials and even the representatives of Sakhalin Koreans’ associations on Sakhalin do not offer clear accounts of this point to middle-aged stayees. I suggest that because of this politics of in/exclusion, older Sakhalin Koreans continue to negotiate their ethnic belonging as the only source for claim-making that mediates between older Sakhalin Koreans and the two nations, Japan and South Korea. The non-recognition of their imagined ethnic and national belonging challenges stayees’ claim to social citizenship.

Returnees’ experiences as special welfare subjects in South Korea also show how their social citizenship is entangled with ethnic and national belonging. Their subject-making can be better seen as a state of exception (Agamben 1998), in which Sakhalin Korean returnees become subjects excluded from access to certain right. However, their lives are not the “bare life,” defined by lawless space that Agamben describes in contrast to the lives of

full citizens. Sakhalin Korean returnees are officially granted citizenship in South Korea. This form of inclusion brings about complex feelings, including a sense of being fortunate, of incompleteness, and of being indebted, as Sakhalin Korean returnees realize they do not (and should not) fully belong to the two imagined nation-states.

Considering subject-formation through practices of citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans, I suggest that nation-states play crucial roles in shaping subjectivities. Gordon and Stack (2007) conceptualize citizenship beyond states and argue that citizenship should be seen as making “room for maneuver” (2007:125). However, the case of Sakhalin Koreans suggests that exceptional forms of inclusion in and exclusion from return migration, as well as older Sakhalin Koreans’ sense of personhood are refashioned by sovereign powers of nation-states. Both stayees and returnees rediscover themselves as persons through the differentiation of nation-states.

5.5. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has examined how return mobility shapes the ways in which older Sakhalin Koreans constitute personhood through practices of citizenship. I elaborated on paradoxes and contested experiences around return mobility and citizenship. I have sought to show how older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate inclusion and exclusion as they reconfigure political relations with three different nation-states.

I argued that as mobile returnees interact with immobile stayees, older Sakhalin Koreans create a new sense of political difference. Older Sakhalin Koreans imagine and feel how a life of *doing nothing* and living with state-sponsored welfare assistance in South Korea make returnees into ‘improper’ persons. Through discursive practices and differentiation, stayees are also devalued by returnees. However, they resist this differentiation by evoking regional belonging. Returnees and stayees both re-assess their lives and reflect on what constitutes a “good life.”

I also examined the ways stayees struggle to be recognized as victims by the two nation-states. They demand to be entitled to live in South Korea with state-sponsored welfare assistance. Past citizenship serves as a basis for their claims to return and to appeal for state protection. In addition, I have highlighted how returnees feel various limitations of state protection in South Korea. Sakhalin Korean returnees experience power relations and

feel a sense of incompleteness in the domains of social support, death, and property. They also feel themselves to be privileged welfare recipients with a sense of indebtedness to the nation-states of Japan and South Korea. The return project has evoked complex expressions of belonging among older Sakhalin Koreans. While these have been shaped by colonial legacies, experiences of citizenship during Soviet times, and reinterpretations of the past, Sakhalin Koreans have also engaged in reflecting on their own sense of personhood and aspirations for social citizenship.

I have built my discussion on the concepts of social citizenship to highlight how older Sakhalin Koreans “imagine, perceive, and locate the state in [their] everyday lives” (Yalçın-Heckmann 2011:435). By using this perspective, this chapter revealed that nation-states are crucial components in the sense of personhood being forged by older Sakhalin Koreans. Like kinship, citizenship provides possibilities while posing impossibilities to the re-making and transforming of selves.

Conclusions

As a result of the Permanent Return Project, from 2000 to the present about 4,000 of the total 35,000 Sakhalin Koreans migrated to South Korea. Despite the relatively small number, the lives of older Sakhalin Koreans have been complicated by the return policy, the product of post-colonial and post-Cold War changes in Northeast Asia. I consider the consequences of the return to be another case of what Falk Moore calls “diagnostic events” which help focus on ongoing contests and conflicts, as well as efforts to prevent, repress, and suppress those contests. Such diagnostic events also help me reveal how different scales of processes are juxtaposed (1987:730–735). Drawing on the idea that ethnography is current history (Falk Moore 1987), I sought to explore the ongoing transnational lives and experiences of older Sakhalin Koreans in shifting global politics, and also to analyze and understand how those political transformations intersect the domain of the everyday.

The analysis of transnational return mobility among older Sakhalin Koreans as diagnostic events has several implications for the study of transnational mobility in general, and for the study of transnational kinship and citizenship in particular. The case of older Sakhalin Koreans especially suggests that we weigh the importance of aging and life course in this scholarship.

The case of older Sakhalin Koreans demonstrates that transnational kinship is practiced by older people as it entails their fluid sense of personhood. The transnational mobility of older Sakhalin Korean women requires us to challenge a predominant way of thinking about mother-child separation due to women’s transnational migration. Issues around separation are not limited to younger, working age women and small children. In considering transnational experiences of older women who do not engage in economic activities, this dissertation expands the scope of work on gender and transnational mobility. In addition, older Sakhalin Koreans must renegotiate connections with and disconnection from friends, siblings, in-laws, dead parents, and living relatives when they engage in border-crossing. Their symbolic practices decenter stereotypes about the personhood of elderly people. The case of older Sakhalin Koreans points to how studies of transnationalism tend to overlook diverse experiences of lives spanning across geographical space. Older people are not just grandmothers and grandfathers; their relational modes of being also entail

other kin relationships. Also, not just working age people negotiate kin ties and caring across transnational space.

Moreover, the imaginaries and practices of companionship among older Sakhalin Korean women in a transnational context show that bringing life course and specific domestic arrangements into analysis deeper understandings of marriage and women's power. Older Sakhalin Korean women reflect on their married lives when they imagine a new form of companionship between elderly men and middle-aged women. Stayee women expect these women to perform the role of wives while they also imagine "unsuccessful" marriage lives of such married couples. Middle-aged women's practices of marrying elderly men might prompt us to question ideas of fixed and ideal form of marriage, and to interrogate how particular expectations and ideas of married lives are produced by people in mid- and later life. What is more, many older Sakhalin Korean women imagine that living with a female friend in an apartment in South Korea will allow returnee women to be 'free' from performing as a wife and mother. At the same time, they consider the companionship of friends as a source of trouble because the women compete for authority in the house. This example expands cross-cultural analyses of older women's authority and power. We can explore how older women's authority in domestic space develops and competes not only with the power of daughters-in-law and co-wives, but also with friends (or fictive female kin).

Personhood is also shaped by citizenship. In examining histories and practices around citizenship among older Sakhalin Koreans, we can better understand the ways welfare systems influence the everyday lives of elderly people. In thinking about how returnees become transnational welfare subjects, we can question the ways in which welfare provision shapes transnational mobility and aspiration for citizenship. While studies of migration and aging have tended to focus welfare services and care, we should engage with qualitative and in-depth analysis of how such elements affect transnational practices and subject-formation among elderly people. In addition, the "flexible" citizenship practice of Sakhalin Korean returnees challenges dominant global discourses of "the crisis of aging" and "the crisis of care" in a neoliberal era. We should critically examine how societies "problematize" aging and produce such discourses, and thereby avoid homogenizing experiences of elderly people. However, I also point out that the case of older Sakhalin Koreans does not mystify "crisis."

My analysis of older Sakhalin Koreans moves beyond a dichotomy of “crisis” or “myth,” suggesting that we pay close attention to complex regional, local, national, and transnational conditions in which welfare systems are configured and within which particular elderly peoples’ lives are played out.

Finally, the transnational practices among older Sakhalin Koreans are unique in many ways as I have shown throughout this dissertation. The everyday transnational lives of Sakhalin Koreans shift our focus from “cultural” differences between “home” and “homeland” toward the subjects’ complex ways of being-in-the-world. Thus, this study will expand understandings of return mobility and transnational mobility and personhood, more broadly.

This ethnographic study has examined how older Sakhalin Koreans evoke diverse discourses, practices, and imaginaries, but I emphasize that these are often contested, contradictory, and ambiguous. In addition, because older Sakhalin Koreans live in unpredictable circumstances, their transnational practices are not stable. I maintain that older Sakhalin Koreans find themselves in diverse challenging situations, and constantly think what they can do and how they should live. This dissertation has examined “transnational welfare citizenship,” as a key way to understand how older Sakhalin Koreans negotiate personhood. My study suggests that kinship and citizenship provide both possibilities and impossibilities for transforming selves and searching for meaning in lives lived within transnational Northeast Asia a place where the power of sovereign states is being reconfigured and reinforced, but also sometimes challenged.

This study contributes to our understanding of how personhood is configured, especially in situations of transnational mobility and citizenship. First, this ethnographic study examined a specific constellation of morality and moral subjectivities, an approach called for by recent scholarship on everyday moral experience and humanitarianism. I consider return as a moment in which older Sakhalin Koreans are required to confront and deal with radical changes. On the basis of this perspective, I have examined older Sakhalin Koreans’ morality. This is expressed not only in idioms of separation and union, but also through discourses on “abandonment,” “burden,” “completion of mothering,” “waving a flag,” “nothingness,” “living like a pig,” and “having no stress.” In addition, my examination of older Sakhalin Koreans’ particular moralities, as outcomes of a humanitarian project, will

contribute to ongoing discussions of humanitarianism. In particular, this study showed how transnational humanitarian projects produce particular moral subjectivities. The analysis of contradictory emotional experiences of Sakhalin Koreans suggests that refugees and asylum seekers are not the only ones of subject to humanitarian aid and assistance. In an effort not to reduce morality to one aspect of suffering (Robbins 2013), I analyzed some of the complex ways in which subjects are grappling with specific transformative and challenging situations.

My analysis of the politics of return also offers a broader understanding of formations of powers and subjectivities in global contexts. On one hand, I illuminated that the return project of Sakhalin Koreans is juxtaposed with imperial formations, ethno-nation-building, and legitimating state sovereignty between Japan, South Korea, and Russia. On the other hand, I showed the effects of the return policy. Unexpected return mobility of older Sakhalin Koreans involves re-interpretations of diverse past experiences of kinship and citizenship; these are significantly shaped by histories of colonialism and subsequent Cold War formations, as well as by Sakhalin Koreans collective memory of living in the Soviet Union. While there have been new efforts to combine perspectives of post-colonial and post-socialist transformations in global contexts, empirical studies still tend to examine these formations of power and relate histories separately. Through the lens of transnational lives of older Sakhalin Koreans, my study has highlighted how kinds of subjectivities and personhood are formed in transnational and global contexts where post-colonial, post-Cold War, and post-socialist processes intersect in complex ways. This examination also suggests that Sakhalin Koreans who are often considered politically, historically, and socially “marginal” are, in fact, the “center” of the reconfiguration of multiple formations of power.

In commenting on the movie, *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (1995), a *Los Angeles Times* reviewer writes of it as “a bracing reminder of the human victims in the global chess game played by superpowers.” In a chess game, according to Saussure, the value of the chess pieces is determined within the rules of the game (1983: 88). These two reflections on chess in part encapsulate how the meanings and values of the social bodies of Sakhalin Koreans have been shaped by geopolitical transformations in Northeast Asia.

Certainly, the im/mobility and citizenship of Sakhalin Koreans in the past were constrained by multiple nations-states. However, I have different questions. Did the game end? If so, when? What happened to the chess pieces? Through this study, I critically argue that “the end” is problematic. I also suggest that the negotiations of personhood among Sakhalin Koreans in their everyday lives cannot be easily understood by simply invoking a chess game, devoid of ambiguities and the dilemmas people face. Their complicated everyday moral experiences are informed by multiple layers of post-colonial, post-Cold War, and post-socialist social changes. In this ethnographic endeavor, this study examined the ongoing lives of Sakhalin Koreans, capturing at a moment when aspirations for transnational mobility compel older Sakhalin Koreans to engage in exhaustive self evaluation and reflection.

In South Korea, one elderly woman laughed and said, “It’s funny. We know what happens [to stayees] on Sakhalin more quickly than the people living on Sakhalin. The people on Sakhalin know what happens [to returnees] in South Korea more quickly than we do!” On Sakhalin, I met one woman and her parents who had lived in South Korea. While she belonged to the generation of adult children, her comment succinctly captured widespread feelings about the situation older Sakhalin Koreans find themselves in: “We already saw the new world, so we cannot pretend that we did not see that.” Older Sakhalin Koreans do not have enormous expectations of life in South Korea. Instead, they have modest hopes for future possibilities and a life “new” to them. For some people, indeed, return offers an alternative way of life. Others who wish to return, but do not (and cannot) for various reasons, may continue to aspire to return. I imagine that the return project will not expand in the near future. Regardless of whether the policy will change or not, however, and just as the women above reflect, Sakhalin Koreans understand that they cannot go back to the past when the border was closed. I presume that for years to come the lives of older Sakhalin Koreans will continue to be profoundly affected by complex feelings generated by transnational mobility.

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