



# The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus

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## Legal Categories, Demographic Change and Japan's Korean Residents in the Long Twentieth Century

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Although many Japanese—right-wing nationalists and politicians in particular—hold that Japan is a nation comprised of a single racial/ethnic people, a number of significant ethnic minority groups reside within its territory (Lie 2001). Throughout the twentieth century, the largest such group has been Zainichi Koreans. [1] Classified as Japanese nationals (imperial subjects) under colonial rule, they have legally been placed in the category of foreign residents (zairyu gaikokujin) to constitute a population of Korean residents in postwar Japan. Currently, Zainichi Koreans account for approximately three quarters of all Korean residents.[2] This study examines demographic changes and identity formations among the Korean residents in general, and the Zainichi Koreans in particular, in light of changing Japanese legal approaches to nationality/citizenship.

Several studies have shown that the identity of Zainichi Koreans has become increasingly complex and diverse since the 1980s (e.g., Fukuoka 1993; Inokuchi 1996; Tae-young Kim 1999); however, only a few studies have connected the issues of legal categorization and demographic change to identity formation and ethnic politics (Tae-young Kim 2005). This study examines the legal frameworks and demographics of Zainichi Koreans from the beginning of Japan's colonization of Korea in the early twentieth century to the present. It argues that Zainichi Koreans are an ethnic formation that emerged historically in relation to the Japanese state's socio-political and legal policies in general, and its immigration and naturalization policies and practices in particular.

The categories of "Korean residents in Japan" and "Zainichi Koreans" are legal and socio-historical constructs. Since the 1980s, the category of Korean residents in Japan has increasingly come to include not only Zainichi Koreans, whose historical origins lay in Japanese colonialism, but also "newcomers" from South Korea. In recent decades, many Zainichi Koreans have become naturalized Japanese (i.e., Japanese citizens). Both in legal terms and in popular consciousness, those naturalized cease to be included in the ranks of Zainichi Koreans, even though some continue to identify themselves as ethnic Koreans.

### Colonialism and the Asia-Pacific War, 1910-1945

In 1905, Japan established a protectorate over Korea, and in 1910, Japan "annexed" (heigo) the country by force, in effect colonizing Korea. In 1909, on the eve of colonization, only 790 Koreans were reported to be living in Japan. During the early years of Japan's colonization of Korea, the number of Koreans migrating to Japan increased steadily—more than 30,000 Koreans lived in Japan by 1920, almost 300,000 by 1930, and approximately 626,000 by 1935 by conservative count (Morita 1996; see also Table 1).[3]

During these years, migration took place primarily for economic reasons. The colonial policy of land confiscation and forced delivery of rice to Japan both impoverished the Korean countryside and resulted in food shortages in the early 1920s. Jobs and opportunities—in reality, low paying jobs—were available in the colonial center, as the Japanese economy boomed after World War I (1914-1918), attracting many Koreans to Japan (see, for example, Weiner 1989). In addition, some Koreans went there for education or to establish businesses.

Between the late 1930s and 1945, Korean migration to the Japanese colonial center rapidly increased. In 1940, the population of Koreans living in Japan exceeded 1 million. Japan faced an increasing labor shortage as a result of drafting Japanese males for the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945), including the war with China. Beginning in 1939, large numbers of Koreans were brought to mainland Japan to work in mines and factories under Japan's wartime forced labor program. Between 590,000 and 720,000 Koreans were taken to Japan as forced laborers by 1945 (a number which does not include those brought to other places such as Sakhalin and the Southern Pacific islands, or the large numbers of Koreans who settled in Manchukuo). The number of Koreans in Japan grew to approximately 2 million by the time of Japan's surrender in 1945 (Morita 1996; see Table 1).

Although Koreans were colonized, assimilated, and oppressed, as imperial subjects (shinmin) they held Japanese nationality/citizenship (kokuseki). Koreans in Japan thus constituted a large ethnic minority group within mainland Japan. While experiencing severe exploitation and discrimination, some managed to save money in order to start businesses. Korean males living on the Japanese mainland had voting rights, as did Japanese males, and several were elected as representatives to local (village, town, and city) assemblies; one Korean male from a Tokyo district was even elected to the Japanese Diet (Matsuda 1995). [4]

### The Allied Occupation, Korean War, and the North-South Division, 1945-1952

At the beginning of the Allied occupation of Japan, the treatment of Koreans living in Japan, including the question of their nationality/citizenship, became a pressing political, legal, and social issue for both the Allied occupation authorities (mainly the United States) and the Japanese government. There were two intertwined issues: the repatriation of Koreans from the Japanese archipelago to the Korean peninsula and the legal status of Koreans remaining in Japan, specifically, their nationality/citizenship.

A massive wave of repatriation of Koreans living in Japan took place within a very short period of time. In November 1945, a government survey reported almost 1,156,000 Koreans remaining in Japan, or nearly 1,000,000 less than before Japan's defeat, indicating that a huge repatriation had taken place within two months; in March 1946, another survey found that the number of Koreans remaining in Japan had been reduced to 647,000 (Morita 1996, p. 103). The repatriates presumed that they were returning to a Korea liberated from Japanese colonialism in the hope of making a better life.

Although the Japanese government promoted this early phase of repatriation, Koreans in Japan were its driving force. Numerous local Korean organizations were formed immediately after Japan's surrender, and they came together in Choren (Zainippon Chosenjin Renmei, the League of Koreans Residing in Japan) in October 1945. Choren worked hard to facilitate repatriation by negotiating with the Japanese government, drawing up lists of repatriates, issuing certifications, and arranging transportation and accommodations. At this time, the border between Korea and Japan was not strictly enforced, and some Koreans went home simply by chartering small boats (Morita 1996; Wagner 1951; Morris-Suzuki 2006).

The Allied occupation officially launched a repatriation project in March 1946; by this time, however, the number of Koreans remaining in Japan who wished to repatriate had fallen sharply, as news filtered in about the desperate situation in Korea. The number of people who repatriated to Korea and then reentered Japan increased, and this was treated as "illegal" entry—even though these people held Japanese nationality/citizenship. More than 19,000 Koreans were arrested for illegal entry between April and December 1946. The repatriation project undertaken by the Allied occupation ended in 1950 in part because of the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), and in part because of the decline in the number of people willing to repatriate. An official count of repatriates by the

Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare totaled approximately 1,015,000 (in addition, nearly 48,000 were deported for illegal reentry) between 1945 and 1950 (Morita 1996, p. 83 & p. 112).

The rising tension on the Korean peninsula between the two political regimes of the South and the North and the Korean War deeply influenced the social and political formations of Koreans remaining in Japan. In 1946, those discontented with the Choren leadership formed Mindan (Zainippon Chosenjin Kyoryumindan, Korean Residents Union in Japan),<sup>[5]</sup> which took a stronger (Korean) nationalist stance than Choren. Following the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) in 1948, Mindan affiliated with South Korea. Choren (which was forced to disband in 1949) and its descendant organizations were heavily influenced by the Japan Communist Party, and supported North Korea.

During these years of Allied occupation, though not depriving Koreans remaining in Japan of Japanese nationality/citizenship, both the Allied occupation and the Japanese government began to treat them as foreigners. In particular, in its supplemental clause, the Alien Registration Law, enacted in 1947, pronounced that Koreans were to be regarded as foreigners for the time being in the application of the law.<sup>[6]</sup> The number of Koreans registered was 529,907 (Morita 1996). In registering them, the government put the term Chosen (Korea as a geographic region) in their nationality/citizenship columns (see also Kashiwazaki 2000; Inokuchi 2000). After the establishment of the ROK, the government allowed some to change their nationality/citizenship registration to ROK (Kankoku), but insisted that this did not affect their legal status because of the non-existence of diplomatic relations between Japan and ROK (Ryang 1997).

In 1952, Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty ending the U.S.-led allied occupation, and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty binding Japan within the orbit of American military power and Cold War diplomacy. Neither North Korea nor South Korea was among the signatories of the treaty (Tae-gi Kim, 1997; Takasaki, 1996). After the signing of the Peace Treaty, Koreans residing in Japan were deprived of Japanese nationality/citizenship and the civil rights associated with it, and barred from holding dual citizenship. They were legally categorized as foreign residents (zairyu gaikokujin), specifically as "Korean residents." They were also subject to forced deportation under strict rules (see Inokuchi 2000). These treatments applied equally to their descendants—second and third generations and beyond who were born in Japan—since Japanese nationality/citizenship basically followed (and still follows) the Jus sanguinis principle (and, until 1985, the paternal line principle).

In 1952, the number of Korean residents was slightly more than 535,000. The Japanese government refused to recognize them as nationals/citizens of either South or North Korea, having no formal diplomatic relations with either country. In a sense, it treated Korean residents as "stateless" people.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### **The Repatriation Project to North Korea and its Failure, 1952-1964**

The Korean War and the subsequent division of North and South created serious conflicts and antagonism among Korean residents, whose population reached 600,000 in 1957 (see Table 2). The majority of Korean residents supported North Korea in the 1950s, even though most were originally from regions of South Korea. To many, North Korea appeared to enjoy greater legitimacy than the U.S.-occupied South Korea and Kim Il-sung was esteemed for his role in the anti-Japanese resistance.

The North Korean-affiliated organization Soren (Zainippon Chosenjin Sorengokai, General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), established in 1955, was the direct successor of the disbanded Choren. It maintained grassroots community networks and revived the Korean minzoku (folk) school system (Inokuchi 2000). North Korea took the position that Koreans in Japan were its overseas citizens (zaigai komin). After intense disputes, Soren established independence from the Japan Communist Party's direction and fully affiliated with North Korea. It simultaneously withdrew from political activities within the Japanese society. This position of Koreans in Japan as overseas citizens of North Korea had a double edge, however. The social and political conditions of Korean residents involved living in a nation that did not grant them the rights of citizens or permanent residents (worse, it kept them as stateless). On the one hand, declaring themselves "overseas citizens of North Korea" gave them a sense of place, a discourse claiming legal protection. On the other hand, this gave the Japanese government and society a convenient reason to deny them equal treatment with Japanese citizens.

In 1959, at a time when Japan had no diplomatic relations with either South or North Korea, mediated by the International Red Cross, the Japanese government promoted a program encouraging the repatriation of Korean residents to North Korea. During the next four years, more than 80,000 Korean residents repatriated to North Korea (also, 6,000 Japanese, who were the spouses or children of the repatriating Korean residents, emigrated to the North). Around that time, the Japanese economy was in a slump and many Korean residents were unemployed; conversely, North Korea had a labor shortage as a result of its rapid industrialization, and the DPRK engaged in a campaign boasting of its achievements and welcoming repatriates. The DPRK also sought to strengthen diplomatic and economic relations with Japan by jointly carrying out the project (Park 2005). The Japanese government officially supported the project on "humanitarian grounds," though it was primarily motivated by the desire to get rid of Korean residents (see Morris-Suzuki 2005). Soon word began to filter back about how difficult life in North Korea was, and the number of those who repatriated to North Korea plummeted after four years, though the program continued until 1984 (Yang 1996).<sup>[8]</sup>

The population of Korean residents in Japan, which declined to 568,000 in 1961 as a result of repatriation to North Korea, began to increase again, reaching approximately 584,000 in 1965 (Morita 1996, p. 103; see Table 2). With strong signs of the failure of the North Korean repatriation project, the status of Zainichi—"residing-in-Japan" as foreigners—began to appear to be a permanent condition, or, at least, one that would extend over a long period of time. In this sense, the repatriation project's failure contributed to the emergence of Zainichi identity and its special meaning as an ethnic minority formation in Japan. Another event that significantly contributed to the development of Zainichi identity was the opening of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea.

#### **Japan, South Korea, and Identity Politics among Zainichi Koreans, 1965-1980**

In 1965, South Korea and Japan concluded a Normalization Treaty, thereby establishing diplomatic relations. This changed the legal status of Korean residents and had a significant effect on their political and identity. The status of Treaty Permanent Residency (TPR) (kyotei-eiju) was created, and Korean residents who registered as South Koreans by 1971 could apply for that status, which was granted only to applicants and their existing children (the two governments agreed to discuss the legal status of future generations 25 years later). Japan refused, in short, to grant unconditional permanent resident status, not to speak of citizenship, to Korean residents (Takasaki 1996).

Within the group of Korean residents, the TPR status also created controversy. One source of contention was the term eiju (permanent residency), given strong sentiment against residing in Japan permanently and thus not returning to Korea. (Indeed, the treaty still left room for the repatriation of Korean residents to South Korea, as it included an article regarding the amount of money and possessions that repatriates could bring to Korea.) Another contentious point was that TPR status required declaring their nationality/citizenship as that of South Korea. In short, they were forced to make a political decision to support South Korea in exchange for TPR, in effect abandoning the idea of unification of Korea (see also Yang 1996, pp. 18-19).

However problematic, in subsequent years, many Korean residents switched their allegiance from North to South in order to obtain the TPR, a stable legal status that reduced the possibility of forced deportation. There were further advantages. Since the majority came from the southern part of the Korean peninsula, the switch allowed them to visit families and relatives who still lived there. By 1974, 55% of Korean residents in Japan had registered as South Koreans and obtained the TPR, and the membership of Soren declined (Yang 1996). The population of Korean residents in Japan reached 641,000 in 1970 and 665,000 in 1980 (Y. Kim 1996, p. 176).

The opening of diplomatic relations not only allowed Koreans residing in Japan to visit South Korea, it also made it possible for South Koreans to visit Japan.

Gradually, a stream of "newcomers" from South Korea entered Japan (the TPR status did not apply to them) to study, marry, and work. Some of them chose to reside in Japan permanently, becoming legally (and socially and culturally) a part of the Korean resident population in Japan. While the number of newcomer South Koreans was small, they would eventually become a significant factor. The Japanese public (and some critics) regarded newcomer South Koreans as indistinguishable from Zainichi Koreans who resided in Japan as a legacy of colonialism. However, the two groups have historically different experiences including the timing and the reasons for their coming to reside in Japan.

In addition to these two categories of Korean residents, who were legally classified as foreigner/non-Japanese, there were Korean residents who became naturalized Japanese citizens. In 1952, 232 became naturalized Japanese citizens,[9] and the number gradually grew (see Table 3). By 1959, more than 16,400 Korean residents had naturalized. The cumulative number rose to 47,000 by the end of 1969, and 93,386 by the end of 1979 (see Table 3). Japanese official statistics do not specifically follow up on naturalized Japanese citizens of Korean origins, who are simply classified as Japanese. While many who naturalized wished to hide their ethnic origins, the lack of demographic data for this group (and others who naturalize) helps perpetuate the myth of Japanese homogeneity.

### **Institutional Changes in the 1980s and the 1991 Japan-South Korea Memorandum**

During the 1980s, changes took place in Japan's immigration, nationality/citizenship, and family registration policies, which impacted upon foreign residents in Japan in general, and Korean residents, including Zainichi Koreans, in particular. In the late 1970s, in response to international pressure, the Japanese government accepted a small number of Indochinese refugees. This set the stage for changes in policy toward foreign residents, including the amendment of a number of domestic laws. In 1980, following the Japanese government's ratification of the United Nation's International Covenants on Human Rights, foreign nationals/citizens, including Korean residents for the first time became eligible to live in public housing.

Likewise, in 1982, following ratification of the Refugee Convention, for the first time, Korean residents became eligible for the National Pension Plan and the Child-Support Allowance. More importantly, a new Immigration Control Law took effect, and Zainichi Koreans who had not registered as South Koreans and thus did not have TPR status (many of them affiliated with Soren/North Korea) were able to apply and be automatically accepted for General Permanent Residency (GPR) (ippan-eiju). Zainichi Koreans with GPR status were treated almost the same as those who had TPR status, the most significant difference being the terms relevant to deportation. While TPR-holders could be deported after a seven-year prison term, GPR-holders could be deported after only a one-year term of imprisonment. By 1986, more than 265,000 Zainichi Koreans held GPR status (Tanaka 1995; Y. Kim 1996).

Another important change took place in 1985, with the Japanese government ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which required the amendment of Japan's Nationality Law. Prior to this amendment, the nationality/citizenship of the children of international couples in Japan, including Japanese-Korean couples, was based on the father's citizenship (following the paternal line principle). By this amendment, all children of international couples were automatically became eligible for Japanese nationality/citizenship. Specifically, they were categorized as Japanese at birth and between age 20 and 22 they could choose the citizenship of either parent (Yang 1996). As a result of this amendment, the number of newborn babies registered as Koreans declined significantly (from 9,363 births in 1984 to 4,838 in 1985; see also Y. Kim 1996), as many were now registered as Japanese. The amendment also allowed children of Japanese-Korean couples under the age of 20 to acquire Japanese nationality/citizenship if they applied within the first three years of its enactment. As a result, approximately 16,000 Korean residents obtained Japanese citizenship between 1985 and 1987 (Tanaka 1995, p. 169).

Along with changes in the Nationality Law, the Family Registration Law was also revised in 1985. Prior to the mid-1980s, the family registration system had placed high hurdles before those who wanted to naturalize. In particular, a naturalized person was required to use a Japanese style family name. However, changes in the law made it possible for naturalized Japanese citizens to use their original family names in their family registration. In practice, however, a problem remained (and still remains): immigration officials and legal administrative scribes often assumed and suggested, explicitly or not, that resident Koreans use a Japanese-style name on their naturalization applications. If Korean residents followed their suggestion, which they often did because of uncertainty about the immigration process, they lost their original names upon their successful naturalization prior to family registration (Chung n.d. a).[10]

The issue of name is a source of longstanding conflict between Zainichi Koreans and the Japanese government.[11] In fact, before 1985, a group of naturalized Japanese citizens of Korean origin—identifying themselves as "Koreans with Japanese nationality/citizenship," not "Korean-Japanese"—had demanded the right to use their Korean-style family names as their official/family registration names. Previous lawsuits to recover their Korean family names had all failed. Soon after the amendment of the Family Registration Law, however, in 1987, one challenger won a lawsuit to recover his Korean-style name. Eventually, all who filed suit recovered their Korean-style names (Chung n.d.). In the late 1980s, the Japanese government removed another psychological hurdle to naturalization by abolishing the regulatory requirement to fingerprint all ten fingers of newly naturalized Japanese.[12] Overall, through the 1990s, the government simplified the administrative process and softened its high-handed attitude toward Korean residents who sought to naturalize, although the process remains cumbersome and uncomfortable for some (see also Asakawa 2003).[13]

In 1991, at a time when relations between North and South Korea had changed profoundly for the better, Japan and South Korea issued the Japan-South Korea Memorandum, revisiting a number of issues that were in discussion during the writing of the South Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty of 1965. Following the 1991 Memorandum, all Zainichi Koreans, whether having TPR or GPR status, were automatically granted the status of Special Permanent Resident (SPR) (tokubetsu-eiju), one that would be maintained for future generations. This meant that they were finally de jure permanent residents and were no longer subject to forced deportation (except in very limited cases of illegal activities).

The 1991 Memorandum included more proactive positions on several outstanding issues. Zainichi Koreans became eligible to hold jobs as public school teachers (although only for "lecturer" [koshi] positions, whose job security was/is not the same as that of regular teachers); Korean ethnic education (minzoku kyōiku) was also legitimated as a possible extracurricular activity in schools; and future consideration was to be given to extending the right to vote in local elections to Zainichi Koreans.

There remained, however, important limitations on the civil rights of Zainichi Koreans (K. Kim 1995). For example, they were still barred from holding governmental administrative positions at national and local levels, including public schools. Indeed, many issues of overt and covert discrimination against Zainichi Koreans remain untouched. The Memorandum of 1991 was, however, a milestone, as it was the first Japanese government document addressing Zainichi Koreans as legitimate constituents of Japanese society (Yang 1996). In 1991, the population of Koreans residing in Japan was 693,000, the largest number in the past four decades. However, from that moment, the population of Korean residents began to decline.

### **Recent Demographic Changes**

The population of Korean residents has been in decline in recent years, the number falling to just under 614,000 in 2003 (Tae-young Kim 2005). This demographic change has coincided with a steep decline in the percentage of Korean residents among the entire foreign resident population in Japan, as the number of foreign workers from various countries has increased, not to mention the increase in undocumented foreign workers. In 1978, the 659,000 Korean residents constituted 85.9% of the foreign resident population. In 1991, the percentage was 56.9% and by 2003 it had dropped to 32% (see Table 4). Although still the largest group among foreigners residing in Japan, their social and political position has changed in relationship both to the Japanese population and the population of foreign residents. This inevitably affects their identity and politics (Yang 1996; Tae-young Kim 2005).

Governmental statistics do not disclose the precise number of Zainichi Koreans. However, because most Zainichi Koreans have obtained SPR status, the

number of SPRs is a useful approximation of their number. In 1992, the number of individuals with SPR status was 585,000, constituting 85% of the Korean residents; in 2002, it was 485,000 and 78%, and in 2003 more than 471,000 and 77% (Tae-young Kim 2005).

Another way to look at this trend is by noting that the percentage of newcomer South Koreans in the population of Korean residents has grown steadily since the early 1990s, as South Korea liberalized the overseas travel of its citizens in 1988 (Ryang 2000). In 2003, they accounted for approximately 23% of Korean residents. In other words, the legal classification of Korean residents presently has two axes—SPR status and South Korean nationality (or citizenship). In practice there are three groups: Zainichi Koreans registered as South Koreans (with SPR status; many holding South Korean nationality), other Zainichi Koreans (with SPR status; the majority of them are Soren/North Korea-affiliated)—both being pre-1945 displaced Koreans and their descendants—and newcomer South Koreans (not eligible for SPR status; they are South Korean citizens).

To estimate the population of each group runs some risk, since no governmental data precisely specifying it is available. According to Mindan, in 2002, South Korea-registered Korean residents, including both Zainichi Koreans and newcomers, accounted for 411,000 (Mindan n.d.), which was 66% of the 625,000 Korean residents. The remaining 34% provided a rough approximation of Soren/North Korea-affiliated Zainichi Koreans (though some may have preferred not to affiliate with either South or North).[14] In 2002, those with SPR status (i.e., Zainichi Koreans) numbered 485,000, constituting 78% of Korean residents. The remaining 22% were quite likely newcomers from South Korea, who migrated since 1965. This leaves us to figure that, as of 2002, approximately 44% of Korean residents were Zainichi Koreans registered as South Koreans.

What are the causes of the decline in the Zainichi Korean population specifically, and the population of Korean residents in general? The most significant cause is the increase in the number of those becoming naturalized Japanese citizens. Since the mid-1990s, the number of Korean residents who have become naturalized Japanese citizens has increased markedly, with about 10,000 new naturalized citizens annually (Tae-young Kim 2005). The increase in naturalization is a product both of increased numbers of applicants on the Korean resident side and the reduction of barriers to naturalization on the Japanese government side. Social, economic, and cultural factors also come into play. The first- and second-generation Zainichi Koreans had a strong attachment to Korea and hence a reluctance to naturalize; however, the third, fourth, and fifth generations have grown up with Japanese cultural and social arrangements, and find it easy to make pragmatic decisions about their nationality/citizenship.

In addition, according to the data presented by Mindan, since 1993, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births among Korean residents. In 2003, the number of deaths (4,526) was twice as many as the number of births (2,206). This phenomenon is the natural result both of an aging population and declining birthrates which probably roughly approximate Japanese demographic trends. But it is also a function of the high rates of international marriage since the offspring of these marriages have been classified as Japanese since 1985. Since 1975, more than half of the marriages of Korean residents were to Japanese (international marriages), and since 1988, more than 80% of Korean residents married Japanese (Yang 1996; see also Y. Kim 1996). (One can speculate that a significant part of these high rates of international marriage involve naturalized Japanese of Korean origins; it also seems that in recent years Korean-Japanese international marriage has simply become ubiquitous and accepted by many Japanese families.)

While both the population of Korean residents and that of Zainichi Koreans have been in decline, one component of this population has constantly added new members in the past several decades. Between 1952 and 2003, more than 275,000 Korean residents became naturalized Japanese citizens (Tae-young Kim 2005). While some members of this group have begun to reclaim Korean ethnic identity, very little research has been conducted on them, and there is a paucity of governmental data on the issues they face after naturalization. While many wish to hide their Korean origins in order to avoid social stigma and discrimination, others now appear eager to reclaim their Korean roots.

It is time to transform the image and identity of the dominant society that continues to buy into the myth of Japan as a monoethnic nation. Research should examine numerous hybrid elements of the Japanese people, culture, and history, their relations to Korea in particular, as well as to other peoples and cultures within and beyond Japan. Education should begin to explain it. What Zainichi Koreans have struggled for is not the freedom to be Zainichi Koreans, but “the freedom now enjoyed by certain other groups to determine their identity as they may wish” (Eagleton 1990, p. 30). All the people living in Japan, majority or minority, Zainichi Koreans or naturalized Japanese citizens of Korean origins (or any national origins), should be able to enjoy that freedom.

## Conclusion

The post-war Japanese state viewed Koreans residing in Japan as potential threats to public order/security and as economic and welfare liabilities. This view gradually changed from the mid-1970s (Onuma 1986). Since the late 1970s and 1980s, Zainichi Koreans have fought to be treated fairly. Since the 1980s, Zainichi Koreans have gradually won expanded civil rights, both legally and institutionally. An important landmark was the creation of SPR status in 1991, while hurdles in obtaining Japanese citizenship have lowered. These changes have not involved redress for the historical injustices committed against Koreans and other Asians, however, as the Japanese state has ignored or suppressed claims arising from its legacy of colonialism and wars, including several that directly pertain to Koreans. These claims include sustained official apology and compensation from the state for the comfort women and for Korean forced laborers.

The issues of identity and politics surrounding Zainichi Koreans have been historically, legally, politically, and socio-culturally fraught. The present article has sought to provide a legal and demographic framework for assessing the numbers and official categories of the Korean resident population and naturalized Japanese citizens of Korean origins. Previous research has slighted the changing of legal status and demographic change. The framework can and should be further developed to examine the social, economic, and political conditions of Zainichi Koreans, newcomer Koreans, and naturalized Japanese of Korean origins.

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Table 1: [Koreans in Japan, 1905-1947](#)

Table 2: [Korean Residents in Japan, 1952-2003](#)

Table 3: [Naturalization of Korean Residents, 1952-2003](#)

Table 4: [Foreign Residents and Korean Residents, 1959-2003](#)

## Notes

[1] The term Zainichi literally means “residing in Japan.” This study defines Zainichi Koreans as those Koreans who lived in Japan before 1945 (and their

descendants) as a result of Japanese colonization.

[2] As discussed below, today the legal category of "Korean residents in Japan" includes newcomers from South Korea, who migrated after 1965.

[3] These numbers are the conservative count of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Japanese national censuses showed significantly larger numbers: 40,755 in 1920 and 419,009 in 1930 respectively. In any case, from 1920 to 1930, the population grew tenfold.

[4] In the early 1940s, as the Asia-Pacific War intensified, in order to mobilize Koreans more effectively, the Japanese government considered granting Koreans in colonized Korea voting rights, but did not do so.

[5] The full name of Mindan was changed to Zainippon Daikanminkoku Kyoryumindan in 1948, and to Zainippon Daikanminkoku Mindan in 1994.

[6] The law was an imperial edict put into effect one day before Japan's new constitution came into force. Although treating Koreans in Japan, who were still Japanese citizens, as alien was against the new constitution, the Allied occupation force strongly enforced the law. For further discussion, see Onuma (1986), pp. 40-56.

[7] Throughout the 1950s, the Japanese government stalled negotiations for the normalization of relations with South Korea, primarily because of its reluctance to deal with the legacy of colonialism (Takasaki 1996).

[8] The Japanese government ended its support in 1967.

[9] Many of the first naturalized Japanese citizens of Korean origins were Japanese government employees (Y. Kim 1990).

[10] The process of naturalization usually begins with consultation with officers at the regional Legal Affairs Bureau (Homukyoku), a government office, and the officers may discourage an application by naturalization seekers whom they consider inappropriate to become Japanese. Likewise the legal administrative scriveners, whom applicants hire to prepare their applications, may suggest the use of Japanese-style names. For example, if an applicant wishes to designate his/her family name as Kim, they may suggest a change to a Japanese-style name such as Kanayama. Also, the application forms present fill-in examples of names in Japanese-style and there are some restrictions upon the kanji Chinese characters used in Japan) that can be used in family names. For further discussion, see Chung (n.d. b).

[11] The subtext, apparently, goes back to the forced change of Korean names to Japanese ones under Japanese colonial policy.

[12] This fingerprinting was not a legally defined requirement, but it has been enforced as a regulatory practice. The practice originated in the state's attempt to control the Korean resident population in the 1950s, as it saw them as a threat to Japan's social order and security.

[13] The rate of unsuccessful naturalization (those who applied for naturalization but were rejected) has decreased significantly since the mid-1980s (Asakawa 2003).

[14] The authors suspect that the number of Soren/North Korea-affiliated Zainichi Koreans has declined significantly since 2002. After the disclosure of the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korea, political support for North Korea has weakened even among them. Some local Soren organizations have publicly denounced North Korea's act. Note that Japan does not officially recognize those Soren/North Korea-affiliated Zainichi Koreans as North Korean citizens on the ground that it has not formally recognized the country. Meanwhile, North Korea claims all Zainichi Koreans, including those with South Korean citizenship/nationality, as its citizens.

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