

Origins of the Current Problems of Korean Residents in Japan

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In brief, this report can be said to be a critique of the theory of “nationality” as seen through the Korean minority in Japan. First, let us establish that the theory of nationality is a concept and attitude originating in modern Western Europe signifying that a group of people living in an area of national sovereignty is understood to share features such as race and language, tradition and culture. Thus, the starting point of this paper is that the concept of nationality does not apply to Korean residents in Japan.

Korean residents in Japan are a group of people who were born into the Korean community network under Imperial Japan's broad-based multi-ethnic order, and found their home in this situation. After the disintegration of the Japanese Empire and the establishment of post-World War II sovereign states in East Asia, e.g. North Korea (DPRK), South Korea (Republic of Korea) and Japan, the existence of Korean residents in Japan was difficult to place within the new political framework. Korean residents in Japan after World War II became victims of misplaced concepts of “nationality” and ethnicity, facing segregation and exclusion for this reason. For this reason, the title of this paper refers to the origin of the *problem* of Koreans residents in Japan, and not the origin of Koreans residents in Japan.

In general, the origin of the problem of the Korean minority in Japan might be attributed to the problem of war-time mobilization known as “forced internment.” For example, Kyoji Asada, known for his studies about colonies of Japan, pointed out the cruelty of “forced internment” in his book, saying, “The number of Koreans in Japan is now 688,000 (at the end of 1990). The overwhelming majority among these are the second generation or the third generation of the “forcibly interned” people” [Asada 1994: 28].

“Forced internment” means compulsory or semi-compulsory war-time mobilization of colonial people which escalated in severity according to the aggravation of the war, going from “recruitment” (1939–41) to “governmental mediation” (1942–43) and then to “drafting” (1944–45) its victims amounting to 667,000, according to the documents of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The cruel labor environment of these victims has been a well documented fact and the memory still now remains, forming an unresolvable animosity between Japan and North-South Korea. Nevertheless, the “overwhelming majority” of present day Koreans in Japan are descendants of settlers to Japan in the 1930's. Consequently, even if well-intended, viewing “forced internment” as “the origin of the problem of the Korean minority in Japan”

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must be said to be a common misconception.

Rather, the problem is that there is a grave disparity between two matters. One is that it is an evident fact that Koreans in Japan had already rooted themselves in Japanese society in the 1930s, becoming members of this society. The other is that, despite this fact, the post-war Japanese government excluded them from human rights regulations in the New Constitution by wrongfully recognizing them as totally foreign people. This disparity must be called into question all the more in the context of today's Japan, where the cold war has ended and internationalization has begun, and the concept of the "monoethnic state" on which previous policies were based is greatly being shaken. In this small treatise, I would like to regard this disparity between fact and policy as the origin of the post-war problem of the Korean minority in Japan, and review the process leading to it.

1. Formation of the Korean Community in Japan

Colony Domination and Labor Transfer

The first wave of Korean migration to Japan was nothing but a result of the large-scale social change in Korean society itself triggered by the "investigation of land" (1910–18) after the annexation of Korea in 1910. Above all, this "investigation of land" is said to have been such a complete reformation as scarcely has a precedent in colonial rule by Western powers. Many peasants lost their customary connection with their lands and were compelled to migrate as urban low-wage laborers, pioneers, or primitive peasants in the frontier regions.

In the 1910s, Koreans who lost their land migrated mainly into the northeastern regions of China, but after 1917 when Japan flourished through the military demand of World War, their passage to Japan increased. This population flow into Japan was basically an example of "labor transfer", in terms that it had the character of "structural enforcement" which commonly occurs in the integration process of traditional society into a capitalistic world system. But Japan had just completed its industrial revolution mainly through the cotton industry around the time of the annexation, and was deeply dependent upon the international labor-division system established in the nineteenth century for most of the production machinery. This means that Japan itself was still a peripheral existence at least economically at this stage of history.

Due to the withdrawal of the European powers from Asia as the result of World War I, the demand for light industrial products most of which were cotton based products from Japan took a great leap. At the same time, it cut off the import of capital goods from the great powers upon which Japan had been dependent and directed Japan to produce machinery for themselves. That is, the crack in the international labor-division system as the result of World War I compelled Japan to overcome its status as a peripheral country which had been

integrated in world system for “the import of capital goods and the export of light industrial products.”

From World War I to the following recession (1920), Japan’s dramatic heavy-industrialization was thus carried out and it caused a massive flow of population into great cities and the industrial belts on their outskirts. It is well shown in the population movement that the Korean minority in Japan had first formed and developed along with that industrialization.

The rapid rise of capitalism naturally brings about distortion or imbalance to society. One result was “The Rice Riot” of 1918, which was caused by the shortage of food to the increasing urban population and the rise of rice prices. It was also within this backdrop of such imbalanced development that the “Plan to Increase Rice Crops” was promoted, aimed at the positive encouragement of rice farming for Japan and the particularization of the Korean economy toward rice production. The downfall of farmers and decrease in the rural population are common results of colonial management in modern times, but it is said that their scale and speed could not find precedent before World War II. According to the calculations by Kazuo Hori, the population leaving rural areas during the ten years from 1920–1930 of the “Plan to Increase Rice Crops” promotion in Korea was 770,000, and nearly 400,000 people of them flew abroad. During this period the number of Koreans in Japan increased from about 30,000 in 1920 to 300,000 [Hori 1995: 117].

On the assumption that the period of the “Plan to Increase Rice Crops” formed the second term of Koreans’ migration to Japan, the third period was in the 1930s when Korea’s industrialization developed mainly in Northern Korea. It is well known that with Japan’s industrialization just after World War I, Korean industrialization in the 1930s also advanced in connection with the development of Japanese capitalism corresponding to the disintegration of world markets triggered by the Great Depression in 1929. It is still now an important discussion point to evaluate this industrialization which might be called the formation of colonial capitalism (or peripheral capitalism), but it cannot be argued that this period had the most drastic change of the structure of Korean society in colonial days. During this period in Korea, the ratio between agriculture and industry occupying production, classified by industry, (gross production) was reversed from 63.1% to 24.1% in 1932 to 38.3% to 41.9% in 1940, and the number of laborers in the mining and manufacturing sectors also increased during the same period from 130,000 to 830,000. The outflow of the rural population along with the drastic change of industrial structure was also rapid. Again according to the calculation by Kazuo Hori, in the same period as many as 2,710,000 migrated flew out of rural areas, with 1,500,000 people emigrating abroad, mainly to Japan.

Osaka and Cheju-do: Two Societies Connected by “Kimigayo-maru”

It was since the sailing route between Osaka and Cheju-do was set up in February 1923 that the migration of Koreans to Osaka showed a steep rise. The number of the Korean Minority in Osaka (KMO), which had been scarcely over 10,000 in 1922, rose up to hit the 100,000 mark as early as ten years later in 1932, reached 200,000 in 1935, and 300,000 in 1940. The ratio of KMO among the total Korean minority population in Japan (KMJ) was, hitting a peak of 33% in 1934, around 30% in the 1930s, and making a fair difference from Tokyo's figure of 10%.

Osaka, which attracted many Koreans in this way, was one of the cities most dynamically developed in the world after World War I. Kaoru Sugihara and Kingo Tamai, who studied lives in the slums of Osaka in the Taisho Era, describes Osaka in those days in the following way:

In 1925 (Taisho 14), Osaka was one of main large cities in the world with the population of 2,110,000 — the sixth in the world, Tokyo being the seventh with a population of 2,000,000 population according to the data of “Osaka City Statistics” — and was the largest industrial city in Asia holding not only the traditional center of commerce and finance in the central area but also large industrial complexes of cotton or machinery in the peripheral area, especially along the Yodo-River to Osaka Port [Sugihara and Tamai 1996: 9–10].

Indeed, the position which Osaka held in the rapid industrialization of Japan after World War I was quite large. Moreover, what is characteristic of Osaka is also the constitution of the migrant population, being 3.4% which was over that of Kobe known as a traditionally international city. It is needless to say that most of the population from outside Japan was Korean. The ratio of Korean people (77,000) in Osaka city in 1930 was 3.1%, a ratio very close to that of total foreigners. Moreover, this ratio went on growing afterwards, from 5.4% in 1935 to 7.3% in 1940, and to our surprise over the 10% level in 1942. In addition to these Koreans, Osaka received the discriminated “buraku” people from its vicinity and people from remote Okinawa. Indeed, Osaka developed and expanded as such a multi-ethnic city, supported by these lower-class people of different cultures.

The place known as the Koreans' dwelling district was the newly industrialized area in the eastern part of Osaka, the center of which was Higashinari-Ward which was incorporated into Osaka by the expansion of the city area in 1925. About one-third of Koreans in Osaka were concentrated especially in Higashinari-Ward; about 13% (nearly 40,000) of the ward population was Korean by 1935 and the ratio hit about 25% (more than 90,000) in 1941. Ikuno-Ward, which is known as the largest Koreans' dwelling district in Japan after the Second World War (where still today, one person of four is Korean), is the ward separated

from Higashinari-Ward in 1943.

Representative occupations (and social status) of Korean migrants to Japan were miners, workmen, factory-employees, and students, but what was peculiar to Osaka compared with other regions was that there were many factory-employees who were engaged in medium to small companies in the chemical (mainly rubber) and machinery sectors. Needless to say, factory-employees have a higher settlement propensity than mere workmen who are engaged in the construction of infrastructure such as roads, ports, or rivers. That is, as far as Osaka is concerned, we can say that the concentration in particular areas was accompanied by settlement.

I have already mentioned that the inclination for the KMJ to settle in the 1930s could be seen in all of Japan as well as in Osaka; and as Sugihara suggests, of those KMJ in the 1930s the core settlement and concentration consisted of KMJ from Cheju-do who mainly inhabited the district of Higashinari-Ward in Osaka. The area of Korea which has sent the largest number of KMJ has consistently been Kyongsangnamdo, but the largest ratio of KMO are from Cheju-do. However, under the control of Japanese Imperialism, Cheju-do was administratively a part of Chollanamdo and so its statistics are only fragmentary. Nevertheless, the ratio of migrants from Cheju-do among the total KMO can be assumed to have been 30%–40% in the 1920s and 20%–30% in the 1930s, alongside those with those from Kyongsando.

In any case, Cheju-do was one of the largest sources of supply for labor demands in medium or small-sized industrial belts in the Eastern districts of Osaka in the 1920s and 1930s. What provided the great impetus for migration from Cheju-do was the start of steamship service directly between Osaka and Cheju-do, which was even said at that time to be a “Transportation Revolution between Osaka and Cheju-do.” This was started by the of “Kimigayo-Maru” service (by Amagasaki Steamship Company) in February 1923, followed next year by the participation of the Korean Postal-Line, and the number of migrants from Cheju-do to Osaka in 1924 was 14,278, which was four times the 3,502 of 1922. The sea route service was additionally participated in by the Kagoshima Postal-Line or by the Korean proper East Asia Passage Association, and a harsh price competition ensued. As a result, the Cheju-Osaka sea route became the least expensive and the most convenient line of all lines from Cheju-do to other regions in Japan.

The migration from Cheju-do to Osaka showed a great expansion in those ten and some years from 1923, the year when the Cheju-Osaka steamship service started, to around 1933. From 1923 to 1933, the population of the whole of Korea increased about 15% but that of Cheju-do decreased no less than 10%. During the same period, Korean migrants to Osaka increased from about 3,500 (1922) to nearly 30,000 and the number of people from Cheju-do in Japan increased from 10,000 to 50,000, and finally in 1933, an astonishing one-fourth of

the islands' population was in Japan.

Incidentally, during the mid-1930s when migration began to be restricted by authority, was also the period when settlement and the concentration of KMO occurred. To restrict migration might also have played a major role in promoting the settlement of KMO. In any case, in this period, strong communities of KMO from Cheju-do were formed and prepared the core function of post-war KMJ society. Of course, migration from Cheju-do did not stop at this time. The number of migrants from Cheju-do suddenly decreased from the level of less than 30,000 of 1933, but in both 1935 and 1936, nearly 10,000 islanders migrated, and when including returnees, more than 20,000 crossed over. The formation of the islanders' community in Japan made it easier to go over from the island. The existence of the settlers' community in Japan provided favorable conditions for the migrants to continue their influx. That is, a thick stream of working migrants who were dependent upon informal financial organizations or help from relatives and mutual aid associations during the inactive farming season continued migrating in this period too, and they played a mediatory role in producing a life zone beyond boundaries between Japan and Korea, connecting Cheju-do society and Cheju-communities in Japan.

In any case, after all, islanders of Cheju-do were a discriminated existence in Korea as well as in Japan, and it might be said that this re-enforced their bonds in the internal community zone which crossed the border between the two countries. This community survived the hardships of the Asian-Pacific War. But the "peace" which came after that was to bring about more hardships to the community.

2. "Alienation" of KMJ

Liberalization and Severance of Life Zone

In 1945, about 1,600,000 KMJ returned to their home country in one year and several months after the defeat of Japan, but they were mainly temporary KMJ who had been taken into Japan by the "forced internment" during the war, and many KMJ who had come over to Japan in the 1930s and rooted themselves in Japan remained in this land.

Such situations as regards KMJ's return and settlement after the war could be seen in Osaka as well. In Osaka, with its peak population of 410,000 in 1942, the KMO population was 300,000–400,000 in the 1940s, but the registered number of KMO by "Foreign People Registration Act" from 1948 to 1951 were continually around 100,000, which means that 70–75% of KMO returned from Osaka too. However, concerning Ikuno-Ward where KMO from Cheju-do settled, the settlement ratio of KMO was exceedingly high (about 40%), and they were to occupy the core position in KMJ society continually after the war.

Then, GHQ's repatriation plan of KMJ was so to say a one-way measure and strictly

forbade KMJ's re-migration to Japan. However, this measure, in result, brought about the severance of the life zone which had been formed in connection of Cheju-do and Osaka. And this severance proceeded to become decisive as GHQ's posture toward KMJ grew more severe at the change of its basic occupation policy in the background of deepening confrontation between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union at a world-wide scale.

From the beginning, the fundamental policy of the GHQ toward KMJ was, as was shown in "basic orders of the first period" to MacArthur (November 1945), to treat the KMJ fundamentally as "liberated people" but permit to treat them as an "enemy" when necessary. And moreover, the meaning of their limited status as "liberated people" was none other than to give them a one-way ticket to their home country. Throughout the occupation period, the KMJ were regarded as an "enemy" by the GHQ, it being more than simply Japanese, and it may be said that they were the existence applied to with the change of the occupation policy, which is known as "reverse course", always prior to Japanese.

In any case, the situational transition after the war made the KMJ's settlement in Japanese society which can be traced back to pre-war days more steadfast. It was not that the U.S. government did not anticipate this. In the document entitled "Korea: Return of KMJ" planned by the U.S. State Department in July 1945, they looked upon "Koreans who continue to stay in Japan since July 7, 1937," when the Lukow-kiao Incident broke out, as "habitual residents", and argued about the presupposition that many of the KMJ would continue to stay in Japan during post-war days, mentioning the possibility of their nationality choice. Nevertheless, as I will mention later in detail, such a belonging-centered way of thinking was never to be adopted in the occupation policy of the GHQ.

In April 1952 when Japan recovered her independence with the enforcement of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the government of Japan announced in the form of a notification by the chief of Civil Affairs Bureau in the Department of Justice that people from the former colonies would uniformly lose their Japanese nationality without any room for choice. The only way for KMJ to acquire Japanese nationality again was the way of "naturalization," which was at the selective discretion of Justice Minister. It was substantially the thing which enforced the KMJ to deny their Korean identity and required them to behave more Japanese-like than the Japanese themselves, which was nothing for the KMJ who had experienced the nightmare of colonial rule.

Deprivation of Voting Rights

Under the Japan's colonial domination, Korean people were supposed to have Japanese nationality whether they liked it or not. But of course their legal position was not equal to that of the Japanese. Throughout the colonial period, although they were supposed to be Japanese on the basis of nationality, Koreans were doubly discriminated on a legal basis. One was that

colonial Korea itself was under the autocratic governance of a governor under a “separate jurisdiction” outside the reach of the Japanese Constitution. And the other was their treatment in the family register system, divided into the “internal family register” and “external family register”. If the “separate jurisdiction” was discrimination concerning “region”, the “family register” allowed discrimination as a person and the family.

However, the increase of Korean migrants to Japan, that is, the historical formation of the KMJ inevitably caused a sort of twist in the discrimination structure which was fixed in both region and individual in the same empire. And the problem issued from this twist was that of Koreans’ voting rights in Japan. In the regulations about suffrage and eligibility of Japan’s Diet (Lower House) in the colonial period, there were no requirements concerning the status of the family register, and so there was no legal ground to deny the KMJ’s suffrage except offer the same conditions as for other Japanese, when Koreans migrated into Japan as subjects of the empire by annexation. In fact, through the process of Diet discussions around 1920 it was confirmed that KMJ had also voting rights. In addition, after the enforcement of the Universal Suffrage Law in 1925 the number of KMJ constituency expanded greatly and KMJ became an existence to be reckoned with for Japan’s political parties and labor organizations.

KMJ’s exercise of their suffrage is engraved in history as one episode which attaches glory to Japan’s “Taishoh-Era Democracy,” which is symbolized by party politics and universal suffrage. And the “alienation” of the KMJ in post-war Japan was started with deprivation of this very suffrage.

In post-war Japan, the occupation and rule by the Allies was conducted in the form of indirect government, different from the direct government in Germany or Korea, so there remained some room for the Japanese government to exert its own initiative in the formation and implementation of policies under the occupation. Needless to say, the intervention of the GHQ civil affairs bureau in the process of drafting the New Constitution which concerned the fundamentals of post-war reforms, signified Japan’s very restricted voluntary implementation of policies. But in the first stage of occupation it was not that there was no case where the Japanese government accomplished its will in its own way anticipating the coming problem. The amendment of the election law for the Lower House which included the cessation of KMJ’s suffrage was also one of such examples of Japan deciding independent of GHQ’s intervention.

It was under the Shidehara administration (established in October) which succeeded the Higashikuni administration that the reform of the Diet was truly started, which had been skeletonized by a nation-wide supporting election during the war. GHQ’s strong will about the democratization of Japan or the establishment of human rights had already been shown at this stage, as we can see in the “Human Rights Order” on October 4. In this situation

the response of the Ministry of Home Affairs was quick, which comprised the core for the reform of the election system. As early as October 23, “The outline of the amendment of the election system for the Lower House” was decided at the cabinet meeting, which included the reduction of age for suffrage and eligibility and women’s suffrage. At this stage, suffrage of the KMJ and Taiwanese was admitted as before.

This first outline of the amendment which admitted the KMJ’s suffrage was faced with opposing opinions from political or public-peace-keeping viewpoints that attacks to the Emperor system might be intensified if they admitted suffrage to KMJ. But the Ministry of Home Affairs took up the position that the KMJ would maintain Japan’s nationality until the conclusion of the peace treaty, although half-agreeing to such oppositions, and thought that its deprivation would legally be impossible considering the situation. In order to solve this dilemma of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the bureaucrats of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau who were professionals of legal interpretation designed a strategy. According to recently discovered documents, the Cabinet Legislation Bureau thought that they should treat the people from old colonies as people in “the intermediate state” between Japanese and foreigners although they could hold Japanese nationality until the conclusion of the peace treaty. They assumedly persuaded the Ministry of Home Affairs to “stop the exercise of suffrage until the establishment of their state by the peace treaty,” although the legal principle admitted the suffrage of the KMJ and Taiwanese.

And newly on November 13, about one month after the first “outline”, the “new outline bill of amendment” was decided in the cabinet meeting, which was revised to include the “family domicile clause” that “stops for the time being the suffrage and eligibility of those who do not apply to the family domicile act.” This clause was included into the new election law for the Lower House which was enacted on December 15. Needless to say, “those who do not apply to the family domicile act” referred to the KMJ and Taiwanese who did not have the “internal family domicile” in spite of their Japanese nationality in colonial days.

When people from former colonies were situated at “intermediate status” between Japanese and foreigners, the criterion for this intermediate existence was the “family domicile”. This “family domicile clause” formed an important standard to restrain the KMJ’s rights, who were still Japanese by nationality under the occupation. At the same time, this was a grave step toward the “forfeiture of nationality” of the KMJ.

Forfeiture of Japanese Nationality

The New Constitution which was enacted as a comprehensive compilation of the first-stage occupational reforms put the Diet based upon universal suffrage at the supreme position of national sovereignty, and decisively promoted the shift to Japanese nationality, that is, the shift from the ruled to the ruler. But the core guarantee of this ruling subject is nothing

but suffrage, and the KMJ were beforehand disqualified for this in spite of their Japanese nationality.

And it was also symbolic that the previously mentioned “Foreigners Registration Order” was enacted as the last Imperial ordinance scarcely before the enforcement of the New Constitution (May 1947). This registration order put KMJ who were “Japanese” under the foreigners control system through the “deeming regulation.” It was so to say the second measure to “alienate” KMJ.

GHQ which did not put importance to the KMJ problem at the starting stage of occupational ruling gave a tacit approval to Japanese government slipping “family domicile clause” into the new election law. At least it might be said that GHQ was all the time at the passive position in applying the discrimination logic based upon the way of thinking of “intermediate position” on the Japanese side to KMJ. But at this stage of test-enforcement of the New Constitution, GHQ seemingly began to take advantage of this logic about KMJ on the Japanese side for the purpose of controlling KMJ. For the GHQ too, KMJ were no more one member of ruling national people whose will could be ascertained through the Diet.

However, it was not that the Japanese government had decisively determined at this time the direction of the aforementioned “notification” by the chief of Civil Affairs Bureau in the Department of Justice to deprive the KMJ indiscriminately of their nationality. As is often quoted, at the stage of the December 1949 Parliamentary Foreign Vice-Minister Kawamura stated his prospect that “By and large the KMJ would get their choice”, mentioning the problem of the KMJ’s nationality in the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Lower House. According to Kunihiro Matsumoto who examined this problem by the published internal document of the Foreign Ministry, nearly until this stage of the Diet’s reply the Japanese government “had consistently supposed the KMJ’s choice (of nationality)” and “in this case it had wished the return of non-Japanese KMJ or the government’s right to send them back.”

The Japanese government supposed that the KMJ’s nationality problem would be one of the most crucial and inevitable problems in concluding the peace treaty. But in that case the largest interest of the Japanese government was the problem of remaining Japanese in old colonies or warzones, especially in Korea, and so the government was unable to accomplish the exclusion logic as to the KMJ in quest of the U.S.A’s aid concerned compatriots in Korea, although looking down upon the KMJ as a nuisance.

However, this direction of the “choice of nationality and right to send them back” made a complete about-face after the outbreak of Korean War. About this time the repatriation of Japanese in Korea had almost been completed and the Japanese government found that there was no nationality regulation in the concept of the peace treaty on the American side, then changed its policy toward depriving the KMJ of their Japanese nationality indiscriminately. Eventually the Japanese government accomplished its will in fixing the KMJ’s nationality

as well as in slipping the “family domicile clause” into the election law, both without any intervention of the United States.

It must be said that the attitude which the Japanese government took in treating the KMJ or in dealing with their nationality problem was supported by the national consciousness of the Japanese in general, who were experiencing the shock of defeat. Indeed, the “democratization in a burnt field” (post-war reforms) might have greatly changed the consciousness of the Japanese people by implanting modern values such as individual freedom or democracy. However, their way of seeing Asia or seeing Koreans was not questioned in the occupational period, and rather crept into their subconsciousness. In this period many Japanese were seized by the concept of “national re-birth” which was composed of the genuine Japanese race. It might be said that the sense of the “monoethnic state” attained its climax in this period, when the dream of “The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” had stumbled. What underlied the “alienation” of the KMJ was the aspiration of the “genuine nation” which captured the defeated Japanese, and the GHQ which got into the depth of cold war resulting in tacitly admitting the KMJ policy of the Japanese government, based upon such a national consciousness.

Moreover, when these Koreans who were now considered foreigners attempted to return to Japan it was considered illegal immigration, and Omura Immigration Center, symbol of the regulation and expulsion of illegal immigrants, re-emerged as “a new border whose existence depends on the discrimination, incarceration, and expulsion of the ‘alien’ and the ‘other’” [Morris-Suzuki 2005].

Alienation and North and South Korea

The problem was that at the time, the Japanese attitude of favoring a “monoethnic state” was also prevalent among the Koreans. For Koreans, the alienation of the Korean minority in Japan signified for mainland Koreans a “return to the original situation” before annexation. For them, regardless of the legal intent and method of forfeiting Koreans of Japanese citizenship, the result would be only a matter of course [Kim and Kim 1994: 1]. Rather, in South Korea right after liberation (Republic of Korea after the republic was established on August 1948), the “return to the original situation” was a direct expression of ethnic liberation, and various movements supporting the return of their fellow countrypeople were carried out on a large scale. For the people of Korea which had begun to build their new state, it was believed that “KMJ are a barometer of the liberated ethnicity, and as such, living examples of the forefront of Korean nationalism” [Hyeong 2006: 180]. However, it was not uncommon for second-generation KMJ who heeded the call of their homeland to suffer from linguistic discrimination and harassment. The tendency to exclude the “other” in the desire to identify with a homogeneous monoethnicity was also clearly evident in the nationalism of the

oppressed party.

As mentioned earlier, the primary condition for being forfeited of Japanese citizenship was the system of the “family register.” During colonialization, Koreans were considered Japanese nationals; however, on the family registration, Koreans were discriminated as “external family registrants” (after the 1923 Korean family registration law, they were listed as “Korean registrants”), and change of status among “external family registrants” and “internal family registrants” and “Korean registrants” was not allowed except in cases where marriage or adoption were involved. In addition, Korean registrant status continued even after liberation from Japanese annexation and under U.S. administration (September 1945–August 1948), and in May 1948, according to the temporary regulation on nationality and the establishment of the Republic of Korea (December, 1948), under the new Korean nationality law based on the patrilinear tradition, the status was still valid [Kim G. and Kim Y. 1994; Kim Y. 2002: 142].

Under the nationality law established in 1949, the aim was to maintain a monoethnic state through the Confucian patrilinear tradition [Cheon 2003: 254]. In other words, this system operated as a core system for creating—under the flag of the Republic of Korea—the Korean national identity which was unable to be fulfilled during the Korean Empire (1897–1910) due to Japanese colonialism. In the Korean-Japanese talks which began in October 1951, Korea made it clear that it intended for KMJ to remain citizens of the Republic of Korea [Yoshizawa 2005: 39].

However, Asia during the early 1950’s was at the height of its anti-imperialist ethnic revolution, catalyzed by the Chinese Revolution, and many KMJ resisted the U.S.-Japan-Korean war via the Japanese Communist Party’s military policy (February 1951, Fourth JCP National Conference). The policy can be said to have appealed to the KMJ, among whom the idea of a permanent revolution beyond the construct of the state was popular. By the mid-1950s, the East Asian uprisings settled, and the notion of peaceful cohabitation and ethnic independence prevailed. The problem of Asian independence was being seen as an issue of establishing independent nation states, and in August 1954, the foreign ministries of Japan, South and North Korea discuss the necessity of securing rights for Korean residents in Japan, and decide to consider them belonging to Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In May 1955 the following year, the Korean Minority in Japan United Commission was established.

Known as the “change in direction,” the KMJ movement regrouped itself and strove toward the idea of the “monoethnic state” which was then the norm. The new ethnic identity thus born refuted all political involvement with Japanese society as “intervention in the internal affairs of another country,” and made clear their status as citizens of another country. In other words, just as the Japanese government had alienated the KMJ as “foreigners” despite their resident status, the KMJ themselves willingly positioned themselves as “foreigners.” This “remote nationalism” however, combined with the eliminating stance of the Japanese

government, eventually led to almost 100,000 KMJ originating in the southern regions of the Korean peninsula to be exiled to North Korea.¹ This mass migration which began in December 1959 is the most tragic culmination of the “nationalization”/“alienation” process in Korea and Japan between the Second World War and the 1950s.

3. Globalism and Nationalism

The era of globalization beginning in the end of the 1980s was for Japan and Korea a time of change, following the time of nationalization of the 1950s. In the end of the 1980's, Japanese society rapidly became multi-ethnic; this changed the Japanese people's outlook toward foreigners, and even the “Emigration/Immigration Policy Control Policy” (2000) stipulates the “creation of a society where Japanese and foreigners may coexist smoothly.” The Japanese view of Asia has also changed since the 1990s, “reparation” and “apology” being discussed openly. This new tendency hit its peak among the people of Japan when the Prime Minister of the time professed in what is known as the Murayama Address (1995), “acute regret” at the colonization and invasion of Asia.

This phenomenon is also seen in Korean society. As aforementioned, the Korean nationality law strongly stressed patrilinear inheritance of language and culture in order to maintain an ethnically homogeneous state. It is difficult for foreign nationals to acquire Korean nationality, requiring more than five years residence in Korea, and even “dignity of character” and “financial independence” being criteria required by law. In the nationality processing guideline, it is also stipulated by law that an interview and written test are administered in order to test understanding and knowledge of Korean culture, and general “aptitude as Korean citizens.”

This ethnocentrism disallowing any foreign element from becoming part of the nation naturally also excluded the second and third generation KMJs as well as the Koreans living in China, who lacked sufficient “aptitude as Korean citizens.” However, even in this stubbornly monoethnic nation, globalism brought changes in the concept of national identity; and in some respects, these changes occurred more rapidly than in Japan. In the industrial training system implemented since 1991 and the work permit system (2004), the number of migrant workers rapidly increased, and the number of foreigners living in Korea rose from 50,000 in 1990 to almost one million. The patrilinear nationality law, which encouraged monoethnicism and was a breeding ground for discrimination against foreigners, was improved in 1997 to include both patrilinear and matrilinear inheritance of nationality. In addition, in 2006, 13% of all marriages in Korea were international marriages, and in rural areas lacking in eligible

¹ On this strange relationship between Japan and North Korea, see [Morris-Suzuki 2007], a detailed and extensive collection of sources and accounts.

local women, this figure was over 30%. Many civic and church organizations, as well as local efforts have been actively supporting foreigner's rights and multicultural coexistence, and in August 2005, Korea stepped ahead of Japan in passing a new law allowing foreign long-time residents to take part in regional elections. Presently, 6,726 foreigners over 18 with more than three years of permanent resident status are allowed to vote. Long-term efforts began toward protecting the human rights of foreigners in Korea, and in April 2007, the "foreigner treatment law" was passed in order to aid the integration of foreigners into society and protect the human rights of foreigners in Korea.

Today, Koreans find themselves confused as to how to deal with the increasing number of foreigners on a day-to-day basis with the influx of immigrant workers and foreign brides, but their concept of the "other" is undergoing steady change. Categorization and exclusion through the state and nationality, as well as adherence to maintaining a linguistically, geneologically, ethnically and culturally homogeneous society are crashing down. It is also possible that this new wave may open new possibilities in the society of KMJ, who have been forced to choose between Japan and their homeland as two homogeneous cultures neither in which they could feel wholly welcome.

In Japan on the other hand, there has been a resurgence of nationalism and a rebuilding of the national identity since the late 1990s. The rise of globalism breathes new life into nationalism, and national memories and national identities are brought anew to the forefront as a result of the tug-of-war.

The KMJ are being caught in the middle of this tug-of-war. In 2001, the number of permanent residents in Japan with family registration belonging to Korea has fallen for the first time below 5 million. Every year, over 10,000 KMJ have been choosing to naturalize and apply for Japanese citizenship since 1995, and it has been predicted that by the middle of the 21st century, nearly the entire population with Korean minority status will have disappeared from Japan. Reasons for this "avalanche of naturalization" are varied, including the reformed legislation allowing patrilinear and matrilinear inheritance of nationality (1985),² as well as the terrible financial and human rights conditions in North Korea, which once offered much hope; however, there is no doubt that the new movement of nationalism and pressure toward "nationalization" are also strong factors.

Of course, there is no fear that Japan will revert to purging and homogenizing elements that do not adhere to its old notions of the "pure Japanese national". Conditions for naturalization have grown more lenient, and it is also possible to acquire Japanese citizenship while maintaining one's cultural background, name, and ethnic elements. Since 2001, there has been a new move to include KMJ who have been in Japan since the war and hold "special

² The number of Korean-nationality births in Japan was 9,363 in 1984; in 1985, the number halved to 4,838.

permanent resident status” by application (according to the Japanese nationality acquisition policy), by making them an extension of Japanese citizens. In recent years, there has even been a “nationalization movement”[Sakanaka 2003], led primarily by retired immigration officers encouraging KMJ to apply for Japanese citizenship, and many Koreans are happy to comply. On the other hand, basic rights such as regional voting rights and the right to take part in governmental employment, which allow a citizen to be active as part of society, have begun to be disputed since entering the 21st century, and matters of nationality have been at a standstill if not regressing, as if hitting a brick wall.³

Of course, from the process of history, it can be said that the acquisition of Japanese citizenship is only a matter of course for the KMJ. However, without addressing the one-sided method of resolving nationality problems according to the “1952 notification”, to encourage nationalization without amending the people’s limited rights as foreigners only signifies that nationality and citizenship will pose a new level of problems and categorization.

In any case, it may be that no other minority population has been pulled in different directions pertaining to nationality and ethnicity. Whether this direction is Korea or Japan is another question, but we the Korean minority in Japan have been subject to pressure from both nations to conform to the majority, according to self-righteous state attitudes on the concept of nationality. Until the 1980s, we were singularly pressured to return to our homeland Korea under the “remote nationalism” movement. Now, we are facing renewed pressure to naturalize under a new wave of Japanese nationalism. As a minority population living in Japan, what is required of us now is to continue to resist becoming victims of segregation and grouping as a result of varying notions of citizenships and nationality.

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³ In July 2000, the Kōmei and Conservative parties of the coalition government submitted the “permanent resident alien regional voting rights act” to the Diet, but members of the Liberal Democratic Party as well as journalists and academics opposed, and the situation remained at a standstill just as the bill was about to be passed.

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