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ETHNIC KOREANS IN JAPAN:
PEER OR PARIAH

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Abstract

In Japan, there are currently over 600,000 ethnic Koreans, or *Zainichi* Koreans, permanently residing, making up the largest foreign minority group. The focus of this research is the exploration of experienced and perceived discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans permanently residing in Japan. It has dealt with: 1) current forms of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans, 2) the Japanese government's role in alleviating discrimination, 3) various ways in which *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination in their daily lives in relation to their self-identities.

This case study was carried out through systematic, open-ended interviews with members of both the Korean and Japanese communities. Moreover, secondary materials collected in Sweden and Japan were used as a means to create a base from which to conduct the study. The result of the research has shown that, although the previous decade has seen many improvements, discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans exists still today both a legal and social level. Furthermore, the Japanese government has been reluctant to take the steps necessary to end discrimination and bring about equality. Interviews with *Zainichi* Koreans reveal that there are discrepancies in the level of experienced discrimination based on personal identity, with those identifying with North Korea experiencing the most discrimination.

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Part I Introduction

1. Background and Related theory

1.1. An overview

In Japan, there are currently over 600,000 ethnic Koreans, or *Zainichi* Koreans, permanently residing, making up the largest foreign minority group. Many are second, third and even fourth generation Koreans born and raised in Japan, whose ancestors came willingly or were forced into labor between 1910 and 1945. Following World War II, these *Zainichi* Koreans were stripped of their Japanese nationality to encourage their return home. While many did return to the Korean peninsula, many others remained in Japan and were required to register as foreigners under the 1947 Alien Registration Law.¹ As citizenship in Japan is determined by blood rather than place of birth, today many second and third generation *Zainichi* Koreans remain virtually stateless.

Despite speaking fluent Japanese, adapting the Japanese culture and some even adopting Japanese names, they face an uphill battle against discrimination in ‘homogeneous’ Japan. The homogeneous ideal has been so engrained that even today many Japanese believe that only ethnic Japanese can speak Japanese fluently and non-Japanese exceptions to this rule are perceived as ‘threatening exceptions.’² For over a century such discrimination has been common practice, even accepted and occasionally encouraged on a national level. To many, the distinction between a Korean with a Japanese passport and one without was lost.³

However, since the 1980s, the Korean community has begun slowly making progress in the battle against discrimination with the abolition of mandatory fingerprinting for ‘foreigners’ as well as a relaxation to naturalization requirements.⁴ A major setback occurred when, in 2002, North Korea acknowledged the kidnapping of Japanese citizens over 25 years earlier as well as announcing its intent to restart its nuclear program. Following these announcements, reports of discrimination and even physical abuse of ethnic Koreans by Japanese rose dramatically.

The century-old problem has again resurfaced, demanding the attention of Asia-watchers and policy makers around the world. In light of the swift increase of reported

¹ Taylor, Veronica (2002) “Nationality Law” in Buckley, S. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*. London: Routledge. p. 347

² Hudson, Mark K. (1999) *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. p. 2-3

³ Refsing, Kirsten (2003) “In Japan, but not of Japan” in Mackerras, Colin (ed.) *Ethnicity in Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon. p. 57

⁴ Strausz, Michael (2003) “Political Opportunities and *Zainichi* Korean Social Movements” Paper for presentation at UCLA Graduate Symposium on Japanese Studies

discrimination, it has become necessary to examine the existing forms of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan today. These current forms of discrimination must be analyzed in both a historical and contemporary context. Furthermore, the role of the Japanese government in the elimination of discrimination ought to be closely scrutinized. That is to say, what has the Japanese government done to alleviate discrimination? In order to accurately answer these questions, one must take a look at the lives of ordinary *Zainichi* Koreans to see if or in what way they experience discrimination. By focusing on these issues, it is possible to get a clearer picture of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans today.

1.2. *Theories of discrimination*

Simply defined, discrimination is ‘treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit.’⁵ In dealing with this definition of discrimination, one must further clarify the concept of ‘class or category’ as pertaining to the concept of social stratification. That is, the hierarchical arrangement of society in which one group or several groups of people more or less inherit social status based on birth. Biological differences, such as ethnicity, become important to social stratification as they are reinforced in respect to dress, food, occupation, or residence.⁶ With respect to *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan, a distinction has been made based on Korean culture versus Japanese culture. Koreans who may display various Korean characteristics or traditions are reduced to one sub-culture. Despite often being portrayed as homogeneous and egalitarian, a closer examination of Japan and its subcultures reveals a different picture. As most subcultures in Japan are ranked in terms of access to resources such as economic privilege, political power, prestige, and knowledge, Japan can more accurately be identified as a multi-stratified society.⁷

Discrimination based on ethnicity comes in a variety of forms ranging from organized (or legal discrimination) to veiled discrimination to outright violent discrimination. Organized discrimination refers to governmental policies excluding a group of people from rights enjoyed by others. Conversely, the concept of discrimination can denote a lack of legal action to prevent or deter unequal treatment.⁸ Veiled discrimination can come in the form of housing discrimination or other, less evident means used by one group to exclude members of

⁵ Your Dictionary.com, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/d/d0263200.html>

⁶ Gupta, Dipankar (1991) “Hierarchy and Difference: An Introduction” in Gupta, D. (ed.) *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 3

⁷ Sugimoto, Yoshio (2003) *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press. p. 6

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195

another.⁹ Often violence against foreigners, or those perceived to be foreigners, is increased by personal issues and the offender's satisfaction with his or her own life. Those trapped between the realms of tradition and modernity have increasingly used violence against foreigners and the socially weak in particular as an output for their frustrations.¹⁰

Moreover, discrimination can be both actual as well as perceived. Frequently among people who identify with a particular group that has historically experienced discrimination there is a greater tendency to perceive experienced discrimination.¹¹ That is not to say that the group involved does not actually experience discrimination to some extent. Rather, according to this theory, those groups who have experienced discrimination in the past may become more sensitive to discrimination and inequality. When difficulties arise, such as being passed over for a job or promotion, members of such groups will be more likely to see it as a direct result of discrimination whereas members of a traditionally non-discriminated group may simply blame bad fortune. It is for this reason that we must take a closer look at the issue of identity in tandem with that of discrimination.

1.3. *Theories of identity*

As mentioned above, it is nearly impossible to separate the concept of identity from that of discrimination. Not only is a person or group defined by the outside world based on their identity but personal lives and impressions are also formed by identity. What, then, is identity? The concept of 'social identity' refers to the use of perceived groups and institutions as a means to locate oneself in society.¹² According to Jeffrey Weeks, "Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality."¹³ This sense of social identity or belonging is complex as, based on the postmodern approach identities are fluid and dependent. That is to say, multiple identities exist within one person and are changeable, overlying, and occasionally conflicting.¹⁴ In the

⁹ Sugimoto, p. 196

¹⁰ Möhwald, Ulrich (2000) "Trends in Value Change in Contemporary Japan" in Eades, Gill, & Benu (eds.) *Globalization and Social Change in Contemporary Japan*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press. p. 71

¹¹ Harris, M. et al. (2004) "I think they discriminated against me" *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, Vol. 12, Issue 1-2. Blackwell Publishing. p. 59

¹² Bradley, Harriet (1997) *Fractured Identities: Changing patterns of inequality*. Cambridge. p.24-5

¹³ Weeks, Jeffrey (1990) "The Value of Difference" in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.) *Identity, Community, Cultural Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. p. 88-100

¹⁴ Lindberg, Anna (2001) *Experience and Identity: A historical account of class, caste and gender among the cashew workers of Kerala, 1930-2000*. Malmö. p. 45-6

course of one person's life he or she may acquire any number of identities such as child, adult, student, or worker.

Furthermore, within this postmodernist concept, identity can be viewed as either essentialist or non-essentialist. The essentialist position holds that identity is fixed and not subject to outside forces but is founded on biological qualities or other set realities such as shared histories or pre-determined relationships. On the contrary, the non-essentialist view takes into consideration history and cultural effects on identity formation.¹⁵ It is difficult to separate completely essentialist views and non-essentialist views when observing identity formation. For instance, one cannot separate ethnicity from the influences of society thereby creating an identity formed entirely by biological qualities. Ethnic minority groups are often subject to various forms of stereotypical or racial representations of them in society, all of which play a role in their identity formation.¹⁶ It is for this reason that many scholars follow the non-essentialist view of identity formation which goes beyond racial or physical boundaries and places importance on culture and shared history as definers of a person's identity.

As mentioned above, although belonging to the same ethnic group, *Zainichi* Koreans have taken on a number of identities. Although all share the basic identity of 'Zainichi Korean' not all have internalized this identity uniformly. Some identify with the Japanese, others as *Chosen*, yet others have the dual identity of 'Japanese-Korean'. As we will see in the following chapters, these diverse identities play a major role in how *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination in Japan.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

2.1. Research objectives

Although unequal treatment of foreigners in Japan, including *Zainichi* Koreans, has been commonplace for roughly a century, it has only recently been brought into the limelight. Indeed, the past decade alone has seen several excellent studies on Koreans living in Japan.¹⁷ Furthermore, a variety of articles have been written on the subject in the post-2002 period. However, written for Japanese mass media and journals under the pretext of fair and open interviews with members of the *Zainichi* community, many of these articles are often biased

¹⁵ Woodward, Kathryn (1997) "Concepts of Identity and Difference" in Woodward, Kathryn (ed.) *Identity and Difference*. London. p. 8-50

¹⁶ Song, Miri (2003) *Choosing Ethnic Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 20

¹⁷ See: Fukuoka, Yasunori (2000) *Life of Young Koreans in Japan* (Translated by Tom Gill) Melbourne: Trans-Pacific; See also: Ryang, S. (1999) *Koreans in Japan: Critical voices from the margin*. London: Routledge.

and negative portrayals of *Zainichi* Koreans as the embodiment of North Korea in Japan.¹⁸ In addition, portrayals of *Zainichi* Koreans as ‘drug launderers’ and the pollution of Japanese society have also become commonplace.¹⁹

The aim of this research is to examine the issue of discrimination against minorities in Japan. I will focus on ethnic Koreans in Japan post-2002, the challenges they face in a ‘homogeneous’ society, and the government’s role in lessening such challenges. The research questions to be answered are:

1) What current forms of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans exist today? In addition, what has the Japanese government done to alleviate discrimination? Focus will be placed on the present situation in Japan. The issue of discrimination will be examined as seen through policy-making and the general public.

2) In addition to the above research questions another question will be put forth: In what way do *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination in their daily lives? Here one must also take into consideration the issue of identity. That is to say, does an ethnic Korean who identifies most with North Korea experience more discrimination or feel more discriminated against than one who identifies with Japan? Therefore, the issue of discrimination must be examined in tandem with the concept of self-identity.

2.2. *Design of a non-experimental study*

By design, this research is aimed at creating a general yet accurate portrayal of discrimination faced by *Zainichi* Koreans. It is for this reason that I have selected a single case study method. Furthermore, as I have several sub-units of research to be tied together under one main topic I have chosen an ‘embedded case study.’ In this research, the sub-units are the issue of the Japanese government’s role in discrimination practices and identity issues of ethnic Koreans living in Japan. These sub-units will be joined together under the main topic of discrimination towards ethnic Koreans in Japan.

Although many existing materials have been utilized during the research process, this study is primarily a result of fieldwork carried out in Tokyo, Japan. While in Japan, the main mode of research was semi-structured ‘life world’ interviews with *Zainichi* Koreans as well as

¹⁸ Lee, Su-o (2003) “Inside Japan’s North Korean Community” an interview in *Japan Echo: Insight and Analysis from the Japanese Media*, Vol. 30, No. 2.

¹⁹ Okabe, Masashi (2003) “North Korea’s Japanese Connection” *Japan Echo: Insight and Analysis from the Japanese Media*, Vol. 30, No. 5.

ethnic Japanese. By definition, the purpose of a semi-structured interview is ‘to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena’.²⁰ In this case, the interviewees’ life experiences have been used to examine how *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan experience discrimination. In these semi-structured interviews, two lists of eight to ten questions were drawn up prior to the meetings. One list held questions relevant for ethnic Japanese people while the other was formatted for *Zainichi* Korean interviewees.²¹ The interviews were structured around, but not restricted to these questions. The results were rather conversational interviews in which I was able to glean additional information from spontaneous questions. Qualitative data were gathered through a total of twelve people of various backgrounds, ages, ideologies, and ethnicities. Although several interviewees were able to speak English, all interviews save two were conducted in Japanese. When possible, interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated when necessary.

My advisor in Tokyo, Mr. Tonomura, was an invaluable source during my fieldwork period. It was through him that I was able to get my foot in the door. I was introduced by him to several *Zainichi* Koreans as well as ethnic Japanese people working for the equality of, not only *Zainichi* Koreans, but of all minority groups in Japan. In addition, through a second advisor, Professor Hotei, I was introduced to several students at Waseda University, both Japanese and Korean, who were able to arrange further meetings with friends and acquaintances. It was this ‘snowball effect’ which allowed me to gather information from a larger cross-section of the *Zainichi* Korean population.

In my nine interview sessions, I had interviewed twelve people of different ages, backgrounds and ideologies. Among the interviewed were students and adults, those who consider themselves ‘Korean’ and those who consider themselves ‘Japanese’, those who had naturalized and those who had not, and finally, *Zainichi* Koreans as well as Japanese people. With such a varied sample, it is inevitable that their life experiences and perceptions differ. As previously mentioned, the issue of identity is inseparable from that of how a group experiences discrimination.

²⁰ Kvale, Steinar (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage Publications. p. 5-6

²¹ See Appendix 1

2.3. *Reliability and validity*

When discussing reliability and validity a variety of issues arise. Not only does ‘reliability’ deal with the reliability of the source, i.e., the interviewee, but also that of the interviewer, transcriptions, and analysis of the information, each of which can affect the consistency of the research results.²² Reliability, as pertaining to this research, is undoubtedly an important aspect. As the main source of information for this research comes from interviews, it is particularly important to take care in the formulation of interview questions. Leading questions can inadvertently shape the responses, skewing the collected data.²³ Although I took care in formulating neutral questions, spontaneous questions and wording may have unintentionally molded interviewees’ responses.²⁴

Another important hazard to reliability comes in the unavoidable language barrier. Although I have spent several years in Japan and have acquired adequate conversational skills, in a research setting it is essential to understand precisely both the words and nuance of what the interviewee is saying. As none of the interviewees in this study were fluent English speakers and my Japanese is far from fluent, this is an issue which was impossible to avoid. In order to lessen the room for error, I recorded each interview when permitted so that I was able to listen and transcribe carefully at my leisure or obtain help from an outside source. Yet, due to technical difficulties or unavoidable outside noise, not all of the interviews could be transcribed fully.

The final issue of reliability for this study rests on the interviewees. Although I have no reason to believe that any of my interviewees were dishonest with me, there must always remain a grain of doubt. As a lowly Master’s student from Sweden, I most likely presented myself as an un-intimidating interviewer from which it would not be necessary to stretch or hide the truth. In fact, with many of my interviews, those with university students in particular, our interviews took on a relaxed, friendly atmosphere ideal for frank, honest responses.

Broadly defined, validity relates to the degree to which a method examines what it is intended to examine.²⁵ For reasons named above, this study was conducted using a single embedded case study with semi-structured interviews. This allowed me to examine closely the various ways in which *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination. Furthermore, existing

²² Kvale, p. 235

²³ Ibid., p. 158

²⁴ See Appendix 1

²⁵ Kvale, p. 238

research has been utilized in order to view concrete examples of how the Japanese government has been dealing with issue of discrimination.

2.4. *Ethical considerations*

In any research project there are a certain ethical codes that must be followed to assure its success. When dealing with an interview format, the researcher must think carefully about his or her ethical obligation to the interviewee.²⁶ In the present study, care has been taken to inform each interviewee of the overall purpose of the investigation. In addition to the brief introduction of myself and my research proposal heading the interview question handout, in almost all cases a short conversation regarding my background and overall goal preceded the interview. In addition, each interviewee was guaranteed anonymity in exchange for open and honest participation. In all cases the interviewee agreed beforehand to being recorded.

2.5. *Content overview*

This paper is divided into four parts: introduction, current circumstances, empirical research, and analysis/conclusions. Thus far in the introduction I have introduced the issue of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans and given a brief summary of relevant background and the 2002 conflict with North Korea. Relevant theoretical concepts have been dealt with and I have listed the research aims of this thesis. Also an account of methodology used, interviews, potential problems and ethical considerations have been provided.

The second part will look at formal discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans, both past and present. In addition, it examines issues faced post-2002.

Part three will delve into the empirical information gathered during my research. This section will focus on informal discrimination faced by interviewees as well as their personal reflections.

The final part will be an analysis of information gathered during the research process and concluding remarks.

Part II A Timeline of Discrimination

3. Formal discrimination in Japan- past and present

3.1. *Koreans in the colonial period*

Of Japan's 600,000 strong *Zainichi* Korean population, a majority are the result of the colonial period from 1910 to 1945. During the 35-year-long occupation, the number of

²⁶ Kvale, p. 111-116

Koreans in Japan skyrocketed as Koreans entered Japan either willingly in hopes of economic security or forcibly for labor. The Japanese government employed a campaign of assimilation which, although providing Koreans with many rights, attempted to strip them of their Korean identities.²⁷

During this period, Koreans were forced to take Japanese nationality. Although by no means equal to ethnic Japanese, those residing in Japan enjoyed freedom to some extent. Male Koreans living in Japan were granted suffrage and entitled to work in the public sector.²⁸ However, while Koreans were granted Japanese nationality, their rights as Japanese citizens were limited. At the beginning of Japan's rule, a reorganization of the Korean household registry system was initiated. Under this system all Koreans, regardless of place of residence had their household registry in Korea.²⁹ Based on this system, Koreans were easily identified as foreigners and thus subject to discrimination at all levels.

Perhaps one of the most well-known forms of formal discrimination during the colonial period is the implementation of the *kominkai* system in the late 1930s. This system was designed to thoroughly assimilate Koreans on the Korean peninsula as well as in Japan in all aspects of life in order to strengthen loyalty to the Japanese emperor.³⁰ Under the *kominkai* system, the Korean language was outlawed and Japanese forced upon Koreans, both in Japan and on the Korean peninsula. In addition, not only were Koreans forced to take on Japanese names but, while they were previously allowed to follow the traditional Korean method of household registry they were now required to follow the Japanese system.³¹ This is important as, in the Korean household registry system more than one name could be included but in the Japanese system all household members were required to register under one name- that of the head of the household. Traditionally, Korean women maintained their maiden names after marriage due to a limited number of Korean surnames and a strong social taboo against incest. Under the new Japanese system women were forced to adopt the surname of the head of the household.

The *Kominkai* system is just one example of how the Japanese government attempted to assimilate yet separate Koreans from Japanese. The forced acquisition of Japanese names was rationalized on one Home Ministry's document as being necessary because it would have

²⁷ De Vos, G. & Lee, Changsoo (1981) "The Colonial Experience, 1910-1945" in Lee & De Vos (eds.) *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*. University of California Press. p. 42

²⁸ Ibid., p. 51

²⁹ Ibid., p. 51

³⁰ Kashiwazaki, Chikako (1999) "The politics of legal status" in Ryang S. (ed.) *Koreans in Japan: Critical voices from the margin*. London: Routledge. p. 19

³¹ Ibid., p. 20

been unseemly to have people with Korean names in the emperor's military.³² In this manner, Koreans were made virtually indistinguishable from Japanese. However, due to the separate household registries, i.e. Korean's registries remained on the Korean peninsula; Koreans were differentiated from Japanese in a significant way. During World War II, it was Koreans who were forced into the mines, hard-labor, and even prostitution. After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the attempted assimilation of Korea abruptly halted. However, unequal treatment of *Zainichi* Koreans persisted.

3.2. *Post-WWII to present*

Following World War II, the circumstances of Koreans in Japan went from bad to worse. While most of the two million Koreans in Japan repatriated to the Korean peninsula, estimates say that approximately 590,000 Koreans remained in Japan in 1948.³³ During Allied occupation (1945-1952), Korean residents in Japan technically retained Japanese nationality though Allied Powers regarded them as liberated. The Japanese government used this ambiguous status to further discriminate against Koreans. In criminal matters, such as being tried for war crimes or disorder, Koreans were treated as Japanese nationals, giving Japan authority. In other matters, such as war remuneration and pension, Koreans were treated as foreigners, thus denying due payment.³⁴

Allied Powers did little to come to the aid of Koreans. Under the 1947 Alien Registration Law enacted after the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952, Koreans were stripped of Japanese nationality and reduced to alien status.³⁵ All Koreans regardless of how long they had been in Japan, were required to be fingerprinted and register with their local government as aliens. Along with this new 'alien' status came the constant threat of forced repatriation to Korea for 'undesirable' foreigners. Furthermore, all rights granted to Japanese citizens such as suffrage or holding public office were revoked. Koreans, however, were not excluded from pay taxes or many of the other duties of citizens.

In the decades following the war, Koreans in Japan remained in the margins of society, making their living through Korean barbeque restaurants and *pachinko* parlors. Due to Japan's 'citizen by blood' regulations, even those Koreans born in Japan were not granted citizenship or the accompanying rights. In fact, until recently even a child of mixed ethnicity was not

³² Ibid., p. 20

³³ Kashiwazaki, p. 20

³⁴ Taylor, p. 347

³⁵ Ibid., p. 347

granted Japanese citizenship if the mother was Japanese as the system was based on the father's lineage.³⁶

Not until 1965 when Japan normalized relations with the RoK, or South Korea, were *Zainichi* Koreans affiliated with the south allowed to attain permanent resident status. Those affiliated with North Korea were denied permanent residence and remained virtually stateless until 1981.³⁷ Without a permanent residence status, traveling abroad is extremely difficult and the threat of deportation is a constant. Not until the UN intervened in 1979 prompting revision of various Japanese regulations were *Zainichi* Koreans eligible to receive social welfare or access to public housing. Yet, the Japanese government's view of *Zainichi* Koreans as 'visiting foreigners' was made clear when, in both 1980 and 1987 Ministry reports to the UN, they were omitted as an ethnic minority. A series of protests by *Zainichi* Koreans and their supporters throughout the 1980s demanded an end to the fingerprinting regulation for alien registration.³⁸ While the fingerprinting practice was eventually abolished, *Zainichi* Koreans over the age of 16 are still required to carry an alien registration card with them at all times or risk punishment.

3.3. *Government in motion*

A common criticism of the Japanese government among *Zainichi* advocates, such as the Research-Action Institute for the Koreans in Japan (RAIK), is that until now it has approached the minority issue with an arsenal of laws meant to control foreigners rather than protect their human rights. Concessions have been made grudgingly primarily as the result of pressure from the international community or large-scale movements by the minority population which tend to bring the issue into the media spotlight. However, even then such movements do not always result in victory for minority groups.

Despite a series of lawsuits during the 1990s, Koreans who have been born and raised in Japan and who pay Japanese taxes were denied the right to vote by the Supreme Court. However, it was ruled that it is not unconstitutional for suffrage to be granted to long-term permanent residents. By failing to take a stand on the issue, the Supreme Court passed responsibility to the national Diet. Although the issue became a national debate, the media quickly moved on and the issue was again shelved. To complicate matters further, as the Diet

³⁶ Chung, Erin A. (2000) "Korean Voluntary Associations in Japanese Civil Society" in Japanese Policy Research Institute working papers, Paper number 69.

³⁷ Neary, Ian (2002) *The State and Politics in Japan*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 210

³⁸ Abe, H., Shindo, M., & Kawato, S. (1990) *The Government and Politics of Japan* (Translated by J. White) Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press. p. 221

is formed in national elections, *Zainichi* Koreans who have been denied suffrage remain unable to vote for those who have the power and desire to aid their cause.

Likewise, despite widespread protest by both Koreans in Japan and by the international community, the Japanese government has yet to acknowledge *Zainichi* Koreans' role in World War II and therefore have denied them benefits from the Pension Act, the Law for the Assistance of Families of Those Wounded or Killed in War, and the Law for Special Assistance to Wounded Veterans.³⁹ These rebuffs are based on the condition of current citizenship. This means that, although a Korean fought for Japan as a Japanese citizen, because that citizenship was revoked neither he nor his family is eligible to collect compensation unless re-naturalized.

Another criticism of the Japanese government by RAIK and other activists contends that the government has failed to live up to its duty to the minority population through an outright lack of support. An often cited example is the lack of minority education. There are currently very few school systems in Japan which offer classes or touch upon minority issues. Activists claim that, not only does this perpetuate social discrimination through ignorance on the part of the Japanese, but *Zainichi* Koreans are denied the right allotted to them under the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children of a minority group should not be denied access to their own culture and language.⁴⁰ For those parents who feel that an ethnic education is important for their child, there are ethnic North and South Korean schools not affiliated with the national school system. Yet diplomas received at Korean High Schools are not recognized at national universities in contrast to 16 other "international" high schools which receive accreditation. Additionally, as of March, 2003 Japan altered the tax break system to disqualify donations to schools attended by North and South Koreans as well Chinese, and Brazilians from receiving tax deductions. This is a particularly difficult situation as these schools are not eligible for public funding and rely almost completely on private donations. Donations to other "international" schools, however, are eligible for tax deductions.⁴¹ While *Zainichi* activists say that this is a clear violation of their right to ethnic education, the Japanese government counters by claiming that the education provided at these 'Korean schools' is not equivalent to that provided at Japanese schools and therefore cannot be accepted.

³⁹ Abe, Shindo, & Kawato, p. 221

⁴⁰ Arita, Eriko "Japanese discrimination against Korean and other ethnic schools" *Japan Focus*

⁴¹ International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, (July 3, 2003) 'Prevention of Discrimination: Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/%28Symbol%29/E.CN.4.Sub.2.2003.NGO.7.En>

According to The Japan Christian Center, the most dangerous aspect of the Japanese government's fight against discrimination of *Zainichi* Koreans is their indifference such as in their failure to enforce anti-discriminatory laws regarding employment and housing. They assert that for many *Zainichi* Koreans who chose to use their Korean name, finding housing or employment can often be a problem. Even when hired, it is not uncommon for employers to 'suggest' that the employee use a Japanese pseudonym when on duty. Qualified educators with permanent residence can only work in public schools as "full time lecturers" instead of "teachers." Furthermore, a vast majority of physical assaults on *Zainichi* Koreans or their facilities go unpunished. Between August and December, 1998, 57 incidents of harassment against Korean schools and students were reported. Of those 57 only 6 were pursued by the police and none resulted in an arrest.⁴² In response to pressures of the international community, the Japanese government formed a Ministry of Justice. Created to handle human rights issues, the Ministry of Justice by its own account has taken "concrete measures" to eliminate discrimination. In July 2000, the Ministry of Justice reported that 10 Regional Legal Affairs Bureaus delivered fliers and "enlightening goods" at 15 locations. These "enlightening goods" included "enlightening tissues, pencils, pens, flower bulbs, wet tissues, and rulers" urging people "Let's eliminate discrimination and prejudice against foreigners."⁴³ Yet, many question the effectiveness of this campaign on the elimination of discrimination and prejudice against foreigners in Japan, including *Zainichi* Koreans.

This is not to say that Japan has made no progress in the area of minority rights. On the contrary, cities with large minority communities, such as Kawasaki and Osaka, have been groundbreakers in the area of equal rights. Kawasaki was the first city to allow someone of permanent resident status to hold a local public office. Currently, approximately 80% of Japan's municipalities accept permanent residents to work in the public sector.⁴⁴ In July 2004 a well-known *Zainichi* Korean was elected to the upper chambers of the Diet.⁴⁵ Although the candidate had acquired Japanese citizenship, this is groundbreaking as he is the first *Zainichi* Korean to be elected to a national seat. These slight changes in the Japanese government's position regarding *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups tend to mirror that of the society. As society becomes more accepting of minority groups, so must the government

⁴² Masataka, O. & McIntosh, D. (eds.) "Joint NGO Report Regarding Rights of Japan's Korean Minority for Consideration of the First & Second Periodic Report Submitted by the Japanese Government in Accordance with Article 9 of the ICERD" Tokyo:Research-Action Institute for the Koreans in Japan. February 2001, p. 8

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Pamphlet from Unit 52, Japan Christian Center (2004) *A Livable Society for Foreigners is also Livable for Japanese People* (Gaikikyo)

⁴⁵ *Mindan* Newspaper, July 14, 2004

adopt a more open stance. It is for this reason that one cannot examine discrimination merely in context of governmental policy but must also take a look at discrimination in a societal context.

Part III Growing up Korean in Japan

4. A Case Study in Identity's Role in Experiencing Discrimination

4.1. Introduction

In addition to formal discrimination, often minority groups such as *Zainichi* Koreans are frequently subject to more discrete forms of discrimination brought on by society. Often these forms of discrimination are experienced at a personal level, though they may also be shared within the minority community. In order to get a closer look at the different ways in which *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination in their daily lives, a small cross-section of the *Zainichi* community in Tokyo was interviewed. In total, eight *Zainichi* Koreans of differing age, sex, and economic, political, and historical backgrounds were included in the interview sample. All but one of the interviewees were born and raised in Japan. The final interviewee was born in South Korea but raised in Japan from the age of three. At this point, I would like to examine and compare the results of each interview in order to get a clear picture of discrimination in Japan today.

4.2. Interviews

4.2.1. Identity

Of all the questions asked, it appears that the question “Who would you say you identity with most: Japan, South Korea, or North Korea?” was the most difficult to answer. This question was created to assess each interviewee’s identity, thereby establishing a point of reference. A majority of the interviewees had to take a moment to consider their own feelings before answering. This demonstrates how difficult the concept of identity is in regard to life experience. One university student, ‘A’, who had naturalized with her entire family, described her battle between Korean and Japanese identities. ‘A’ recalled that throughout her junior high school years she struggled with the overwhelming question of “Where do I belong?” After years of soul-searching, she has concluded that she is “...neither Japanese nor Korean. Most of all [she is] Japanese-Korean.”

Others expressed struggling with similar conflicting feelings of identity only to come to different conclusions. For some the influence of the Japanese society in which they were

raised has proven to be stronger than that of their family origins. One young woman, ‘C’, stated that she definitely identifies with Japan and her way of thinking is much more “Japanese” than “Korean”. Another interviewee, ‘D’, agreed that, although she has a deep interest in Korean culture and language, she feels the strongest ties with Japan and Japanese culture. Indeed ‘D’ does have a strong connection to the *Zainichi* Korean culture as she grew up in a community known for its large minority population. In addition, though she routinely uses the Japanese reading of her Korean name, the name remains obviously foreign separating her from Japanese society. It is interesting to note that, despite strongly identifying with Japan and the Japanese way of life, neither of these two interviewees has any intention of naturalizing. As ‘C’ put it “The fact that I have Korean citizenship and I am in Japan...it’s fine just the way it is I think.”

At time when much of the world sees North Korea in a negative light, it may be surprising to hear that there are many *Zainichi* Koreans who choose to identify the North as their homeland. In reality, the North Korean supporting *Zainichi* Korean population in Japan remains strong. A full one half of my eight interviews with *Zainichi* Koreans in Tokyo claimed that they identify most with North Korea or, more specifically, *Chosen*.⁴⁶ For two of these interviewees, ‘G’ and ‘H,’ this seemed only natural as they were raised in homes which continue to carry out many traditional Korean ceremonies such as *Jesa*, an annual ceremony to honor ancestors. In addition, both had attended North Korean supported schools until entering university. For the remaining two interviewees, ‘E’ and ‘F,’ the path to self-identity was not so obvious. Both interviewees had attended Japanese schools and used their Japanese aliases until entering university. For them, this admission of their ‘*Chosen* name’ was the first and most difficult step in their coming to terms as *Chosenjin* in Japan.

As a result of the first question, it is possible to divide the eight *Zainichi* interviewees into three distinct categories:

1. ‘Japanese-Korean’ *Zainichi* Koreans, i.e., interviewees ‘A’ and ‘B’
2. ‘Japanese’ *Zainichi* Koreans, i.e., interviewees ‘C’ and ‘D’
3. ‘*Chosen*’ *Zainichi* Koreans, i.e., interviewees ‘E’, ‘F,’ ‘G,’ and ‘H’

From this point on, when necessary the interviewees will be referred to by category number and letter for the sake of clarity.

Regardless of which personal identity each *Zainichi* Korean holds--Japanese, Japanese-Korean, *Chosenjin*--very often there is just one identity of relevance. To many Japanese, both

⁴⁶ The Japanese word referring to the Korean peninsula as a whole

in the government and in society, “*Zainichi* Korean” equals “foreigner” regardless of place of birth, length of stay, or self-identity. However, as we will see in the next section, regardless of society’s views of *Zainichi* Koreans, it is often the personal identity which forms the awareness or experiences of discrimination.

4.2.2. *Discrimination in daily life*

As discussed in the previous chapter, discrimination can take on a variety of forms from formal discrimination at a governmental level to social discrimination at an individual level. While both forms can have a dramatic impact on an individual’s life, it is often social discrimination which can be the most invasive. Social prejudices provide a constant reminder that the individual is different and, in some cases, not welcome. The eight interviewees were asked, “Have you experienced discrimination in daily life or in employment or educational settings? If so, what?” The responses I received were remarkably varied.

Of the eight interviewees, all four members of categories 1 and 2 denied ever experiencing discrimination. Three of those four denied knowing anyone who has. However, one student later recalled that, although it was “no big deal” he was once told to “go back to Korea.” Despite never having experienced discrimination, each of the four interviewees agreed that there remains a problem of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan. When asked their ideas as to why they had thus far escaped discrimination, each had a different theory. ‘A’ credited her parents’ decision to naturalize her entire family, while ‘C’ claimed that, although maintaining South Korean nationality, because she uses exclusively her Japanese alias she has avoided discrimination. On the contrary, ‘B’ believed strongly that the fact that he uses his Korean name and does not attempt to hide his “Korean-ness” makes Japanese people less likely to discriminate against him. The final interviewee, ‘D,’ who goes by the Japanese reading of her Korean name, had no comment.

Incidentally, it was ‘D’ who recalled various instances of discrimination aimed at her predominantly *Zainichi* community. Having grown up in a district of Tokyo known for having a high concentration of *Zainichi* Koreans as well as other minorities, she described a time not so long ago when, despite being in a Korean community and being Korean-owned, the Korean language could not be found on shops’ signs or posters for fear of discrimination. Very few Koreans used Korean names outside of the home. When entering that same community today, one can find signs, books, leaflets and posters printed in Korean. Furthermore, Korean can be heard in the streets, though primarily by older members of the community.

In stark contrast to the interviewees in categories 1 and 2, those in category 3 expressed a strong feeling of being discriminated against. In addition to formal discrimination listed in chapter two, such as being forced to carry the alien registration card or having trouble entering a Japanese university after graduating from a Korean high school, each gave examples of individual experiences. One first-year university student, 'G,' told of often being forced by local station attendants to pay adult prices to ride the train despite being still in elementary school. Each expressed frustration at the ignorance of Japanese people regarding the *Zainichi* situation in Japan. One woman, 'F,' mentioned several times her annoyance at being told repeatedly that her "Japanese is very good...especially for a Korean!" Another man, 'E,' felt strongly against pressure for *Zainichi* Koreans to use a Japanese alias when applying for employment or housing: "It is not a nice thing to feel like you have to use an alias. It is wrong. For instance, what if someone tried to pressure you into calling yourself Kimura? You wouldn't do it, would you? It wouldn't feel nice. Well, why should Koreans feel such pressure to use an alias? It's the same thing and it's just not right!" More concretely, each of the four interviewees told of numerous broken windows and bigoted graffiti appearing in their communities, particularly following the 2002 kidnapping announcement by Kim Jong Il.

Regardless of each of the eight interviewee's personal experiences with discrimination, the opinion that discrimination remains an issue for *Zainichi* Koreans was unanimous. As mentioned above, improvements have been made in the fight against discrimination and steps have been taken to lessen inequality. Nonetheless, also noted was the conspicuous lack of effort on the part of the Japanese government unless pressured by international rights groups or minority movements. We shall take a look at the opinions of *Zainichi* Koreans on the government's role in the fight against discrimination.

4.2.3. *The Japanese government's responsibilities*

With such varied identities and personal experiences with discrimination as seen above it was surprising to see that each *Zainichi* Korean interviewed had very strong and uniform feelings about what the Japanese government's responsibilities towards minority groups should be. Furthermore, each interviewee, regardless of the degree of experienced discrimination, felt that the government continues to fall short of these responsibilities. I asked each of the interviewees, "What should the Japanese government's responsibility towards *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups be?"

The question drew a number of responses. Among these, the need for better education about the *Zainichi* situation was cited by all but one interviewee. Each stressed being frustrated by the lack of information resulting in widespread ignorance of the history and circumstances of *Zainichi* Koreans. This desire for a raised awareness does not apply only to Japanese people but also to the interviewees themselves. As ‘C’ stated, she did not know there was discrimination until she took a course at the university. She felt that such courses should have been mandatory for all students at an earlier age. Furthermore, two interviewees felt that the government has a responsibility to help, not hinder, minority education according to International Human Rights Laws.

In conjunction with this need for further education, interviewees also said that the Japanese government needs to own up to their colonial past. This includes admitting discrimination, past and present, and making war reparations where applicable. According to ‘E,’ once the government acknowledges *Zainichi* Koreans as a minority in Japan and acknowledges why they are in Japan to begin with, “that awareness will quickly lead to reform.”

One final opinion on the responsibilities of the Japanese government was unanimous: as *Zainichi* Koreans are treated as citizens when it comes to paying taxes, so should they be given the right to vote. The issue of suffrage was mentioned repeatedly as both a basic right and as the key to eliminating discrimination altogether. Many believed that “after [the government] gives the right to vote, society will be changed little by little.”

As a follow up question, I asked each interviewee, “How are [Japanese government officials] handling those responsibilities?” Again, the interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that, although things have improved over the past few decades, the government’s reluctance to change is apparent. ‘C’ felt that the government is “only working for show. They want to show Europe and the United States how fair and equal everything in Japan is but they don’t really do anything.” Others echoed this sentiment by saying that “until now, the government has not been doing anything,” and “they don’t follow the International Human Right’s laws.” It is clear that there is a strong feeling of resentment against the Japanese government on the part of the eight *Zainichi* Koreans interviewed.

Despite the negative feelings against the Japanese government, there were expressions of hope for the future. I asked some of the interviewees if they felt that equality is something that can be achieved in the near future and the replies were overwhelmingly positive. These beliefs were based on the idea that change will not come from the top down but rather will begin within the society. Interviewees were confident that not “all Japanese people are bad.

There are good ones and when the good ones replace the bad ones in office now, then things will change” and “Now the idea that discrimination is bad is out there and I think most people feel that way.” ‘A’ mentioned the explosion of *Zainichi* entertainment figures in the media as proof that society’s is beginning to accept minorities. Indeed, at the time of my fieldwork there was a popular drama centered around a *Zainichi* Korean heroine. Through this drama her challenges with employment and inter-ethnic love were highlighted. Perhaps the Japanese society’s current stereotypes will be altered and a new awareness of the challenges faced by *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan will bring change.

5. A Japanese View of Discrimination

5.1. Introduction

When looking at the issue of discrimination, it is important collect information from a variety of sources. As this study is dealing with discrimination of Koreans by Japanese people, it is only fair that time should be devoted to interviews of both *Zainichi* Koreans as well as Japanese. In order to get a more accurate picture of the climate in Japan at present, the researcher must examine both sides of the issue to some extent. As stated above, theories show that members of a particular group who have been historically discriminated against have a greater tendency to perceive discrimination. In order to attempt to find the truth, members of both the ‘discriminated’ and the ‘discriminating’ groups must have an opportunity to be heard. Therefore, while in Tokyo as well as after returning to Sweden, four ethnic Japanese were interviewed. In addition, *Zainichi* Korean interviewees ‘A’ and ‘D’ were accompanied by a Japanese friend. In both cases, the friends’ interjections were often as interesting and helpful as the interviewees’. Furthermore, a number of informal inquiries were conducted throughout the fieldwork period.

5.2. Interviews

5.2.1. Awareness

As a majority of the *Zainichi* Koreans interviewed expressed frustration at the lack of knowledge regarding minorities in Japan, I asked each Japanese interviewee “How much do you know about *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan and where did you get your information?” Admittedly, my sample of Japanese interviewees was slightly skewed as two of the interviewees, ‘W’ and ‘X,’ volunteer at the Foreigners in Japan Education and Life Consultation Center in Tokyo. A third, ‘Y,’ was met at a meeting regarding the history of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans and had studied the situation for some time in

graduate school. The final interviewee, 'Z,' had no formal background dealing with *Zainichi* Koreans.

The two volunteers for the Foreigners in Japan Education and Life Consultation Center were extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of discrimination in Japan pertaining to, not only *Zainichi* Koreans but all minority groups. In fact, the center is the product of a 1978 educational movement against the Japanese Ministry of Education's previous practice of excluding *Zainichi* Korean students from yearly notices to parents of children who ought to begin school at the start of the semester. In addition, as part of their job they frequently run informational campaigns aimed at raising awareness in the community as well as in the government. A number of Korean families are members of the Center and many children attend Korean language classes offered.

The graduate student, 'Y,' admitted that she had no knowledge of the problem until the 2002 kidnapping issue between North Korea and Japan put *Zainichi* Koreans in the spotlight and she became interested. Yet, she continued, "Most people don't know or aren't interested." 'Z' said she had lived near a well-known 'Korean' district while attending university and had read several articles and even attended a university lecture about discrimination but confessed that she had very little understanding of how life is for *Zainichi* Koreans. To be fair, interviewees 'Y' and 'Z' have had very few interactions with *Zainichi* Koreans beyond everyday conversation. However, two of the *Zainichi* Korean university students interviewed were accompanied by friends who understood very little about what being *Zainichi* Korean means for their friend. In both cases, the Japanese student was shocked to learn that her friend actually holds a South Korean passport despite being born in Japan. For one of the Japanese students, a self-proclaimed "Korea-nut," it was "unbelievable" that her *Zainichi* friend is forced to carry an alien registration card at all times because she "seems much more Japanese than Korean."

Although four of the six Japanese claimed to know very little of *Zainichi* Korean's lives in Japan, when asked "Do you feel that *Zainichi* Koreans have been and/or are currently discriminated against by Japanese society and/or by the government?" the answer was 'yes' in all cases. 'Y' said that although she was sure that discrimination was still present in such aspects of *Zainichi* life such as in job searching and equal opportunities, she could not give more specific examples. 'Z' had more concrete ideas of how *Zainichi* Korean are discriminated against such as students from North Korean schools not being allowed to enter national universities without taking a "pre-entrance exam exam" or being denied from joining

the National Baseball Tournament. She also mentioned unequal opportunities while job hunting yet felt that it is more of an issue with older companies than new.

The volunteers at the Center for Foreigners in Japan agreed emphatically that *Zainichi* Koreans have been and continue to be victims of discrimination. They had several concrete examples of social discrimination ranging from nasty telephone-calls to Korean schools to schoolyard bullying. However, the volunteers made a point to stress that discrimination in Japan is a problem which is by no means limited to *Zainichi* Koreans. As an example, they told of one police box in Kawasaki which put a sign on its bulletin board saying “If you see a foreigner, call the police.”

5.2.2. *The government and Zainichi Koreans*

As each Japanese interviewee acknowledged that they believed discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups is present in today’s Japan, they were then asked, “What should the Japanese government’s responsibility towards *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups be?” Three of the four interviewees’ first response was that the Japanese government needs to own up to its history. More specifically, they must admit their wrongs against Koreans and other foreigners during World War II. Furthermore, all three felt that it was essential for the Japanese government to give due compensation to those foreigners who were injured while fighting for Japan as well as those who were brought to Japan forcibly for labor.

In addition, all four of the interviewees felt that the Ministry of Education ought to increase education about *Zainichi* issues in Japan. According to all the interviewees, there is currently little to no minority curriculum available in the lower levels of education. As ‘Z’ put it, “It’s not something we can know about unless we look it up ourselves.” Although not formal interviewees, the two friends of the *Zainichi* interviewees reinforced this point by asserting that they had never learned anything of discrimination or minorities in Japan. Furthermore, they said that because they had been told repeatedly that Japan is a homogeneous country, they believed that minorities were not really an issue.

Finally, all four interviewees stressed that the Japanese government must make or change laws in order to eliminate discrimination. While ‘Y’ and ‘Z’ did not elaborate on this idea of making laws, they felt that it is very important because, “if the government doesn’t change then neither will the people.” ‘W’ and ‘X’ believed that a big step would be for the government to grant suffrage. They felt that it is unfair that even though *Zainichi* Koreans “were born here, raised here, and will die here...they are treated the same as someone who

came here yesterday for a vacation.” They also emphasized that although several cities in Japan, namely Kawasaki, Yokohama, and Osaka, have changed laws to allow foreigners to work in local public offices they remain prohibited from holding a national public office. They are looking forward to the day when one *Zainichi* Korean, who has been fighting in court for over ten years, will be allowed to run for national public office.

My next question, “How are they (the Japanese government) handling those responsibilities?” was asked as a follow up to the previous question regarding the Japanese government’s responsibility towards minorities. Here again all four interviewees were in agreement that the government has not made enough of an effort to help foreigners. They reiterated that there remain laws in need of changing and they have done very little to insure equal opportunities for minorities in Japan.

Finally, just as in the *Zainichi* Korean interviews, each Japanese interviewee was asked to give their opinions as to what the future holds for *Zainichi* Koreans. Again, the outlook was overwhelmingly positive. ‘Z’ said that she felt that equality will be possible in the near future because, “the new generations don’t mind-*Zainichi* or not-so it will change over time.” This sentiment was echoed by one of the volunteer workers who said that, as parents are beginning to teach their children better, “[society] is changing, little by little.” ‘Y’ agreed that, although it will be difficult, the situation can be fixed in the future.

Part IV Analysis and Conclusions

6. Discrimination in the 21st Century

6.1. Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to examine current forms of discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan as well as the Japanese government’s role in the elimination of any discrimination present. Furthermore, the various ways in which *Zainichi* Koreans experience discrimination in their daily lives with reference to identity was looked at through a number of interviews. While this has been a limited study due to restricted resources and time, it is possible to make a conclusion based on examination of pre-existing resources as well as new information gathered in the interviews.

6.2. Current forms of discrimination

It has become clear that, although the extent of discrimination against minority groups in Japan has lessened in recent years, it has not yet been eliminated. Perhaps the most glaring

example of continued discrimination is the lack of voting rights for those *Zainichi* Koreans who have resided in Japan all their lives and have no intention of leaving. Due to Japanese voting laws, only those holding Japanese citizenship are allowed to vote. Furthermore, as Japanese law bases citizenship on bloodline, many have been and continue to be excluded from the electoral process by this stipulation. While naturalized foreigners are granted the right to vote, the Japanese government has by no means made the road to naturalization easy with its many rules and regulations. The issue of naturalization is complicated by personal feelings. As *Zainichi* interviewee 'E' put it, "Some say I could avoid discrimination if I naturalize and become Japanese. But why would I want to become a part of a society who has routinely discriminated against me and my ancestors without a trace of remorse?"

In addition to a lack of suffrage, at a governmental level minorities in Japan are further discriminated against simply by their lack of recognition. Not only does the Japanese government continue to fail to acknowledge their right to wartime compensation but also pensions and even their minority status despite numerous admonitions from international organizations. The failure or unwillingness of the Japanese government to recognize *Zainichi* Koreans as a minority group has affected Koreans not only at a legal level but at a social level as well. As long as the Japanese government ignores *Zainichi* Koreans, offenses such as job and housing discrimination are also overlooked. Despite the 1979 revisions prompted by the UN, the availability of public housing for *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan remains a problem.⁴⁷

6.3. *Zainichi experiences of discrimination*

In eight interview sessions, twelve people of different ages, backgrounds and ideologies were interviewed. Among them were students and adults, those who consider themselves 'Korean' and those who consider themselves 'Japanese', those who had naturalized and those who had not, and finally, *Zainichi* Koreans as well as Japanese people. With such a varied sample, it is inevitable that their life experiences and perceptions differ dramatically. One point that each interviewee agreed upon, however, was that discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan persists, albeit at a less severe level than even a decade ago.

Among the various forms of discrimination mentioned, both social and legal, two were singled out by almost every interviewee regardless of affiliation or ethnicity: being denied suffrage and the dissuasion of education regarding *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups. Indeed, the issue of lack of minority education was emphasized by supplementary

⁴⁷ Neary, Ian (2002) *The State and Politics in Japan*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 210

responses given by Japanese friends accompanying two of my interviewees. Beyond these two categories, the interviewees' disagreed to the degree and forms of discrimination present in Japan today. This disagreement appears not to be random but rather based on the interviewee's identity. For this reason I would like to break my interviewees into four groups: *Zainichi* Koreans identifying with *Chosen*, Japan, and South Korea/Japan, respectively, and ethnic Japanese. As previously discussed it is difficult to separate identity from discrimination. Not only can one's identity have an impact on actual discrimination but also on their perception of discrimination. Those who identify themselves with a group or groups which have been historically discriminated against often feel the most persecuted. Therefore, although each interviewee agrees that discrimination persists, the extent to which it is experienced is widely varied based on personal identity.

6.3.1. *Chosen Zainichi Koreans: Interviewees 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H'*

Clearly the group of interviewees with the highest perception of discrimination was *Zainichi* Koreans who affiliate themselves with North Korea or *Chosen* as a whole. This group felt strongly that discrimination was live and thriving in Japan at both a social level as well as a governmental level. Examples of physical abuse of *Zainichi* Korean youngsters, property damage, work and school discrimination, and an overall feeling of being unaccepted was common among all four interviewees of this group. Personal examples of experienced discrimination ranged from verbal abuse to vandalism. The two men told of 'being punished' for attending North Korean high schools. Such 'punishments' were brought about through means of having to pay extra for train fare and having to attend two high schools simultaneously in order to enter university. In a more broad sense, all four felt that the apathy towards discrimination against minority groups was a contributing factor and a form of discrimination in itself.

6.3.2. *Japan identifying Zainichi Koreans: Interviewees 'C' and 'D'*

In stark contrast to the *Chosen* identifying *Zainichi* Koreans above, the two interviewed *Zainichi* Koreans who identified with Japan could not name an instance of experienced discrimination other than the broad issues of suffrage and lack of minority education. However, although not being able to recall discrimination in their own lives, both assert that discrimination remains in Japan to a small degree. They acknowledge that the *Zainichi* Koreans who probably experience the most discrimination are those who attend Korean

schools or openly affiliate themselves with Korea. Again, these opinions reinforce the link between identity and experienced discrimination.

6.3.3. *Zainichi Koreans in between: Interviewees 'A' and 'B'*

The final group of *Zainichi* Koreans interviewed was those who consider themselves to be 'Japanese-Korean.' Similar to Japan-identifying *Zainichi* Koreans, these two interviewees could also not recall an instance of experiencing discrimination at a personal level although they believed it exists to some extent. Notably, both interviewees had a theory as to why they had been exempted from discrimination thus far. While one attributed his discrimination-free life to his openness about being Korean, the other credited her parents' decision to naturalize and her use of a Japanese alias as the reason for not having experienced discrimination.

6.3.4. *Ethnic Japanese*

While naturally the four ethnic Japanese interviewed have not been subject to ethnic discrimination in Japan, their feedback was valuable as a means to offset the interviews of the *Zainichi* Koreans. While their knowledge of the *Zainichi* situation varied from little to well-studied, each agreed that discrimination remains a problem. Along with the lack of suffrage and education available, the government's lack of acknowledgment and compensation for wartime services was named by all four. In addition, the publicized abuse of North Korean high school students was mentioned on several occasions.

6.4. *The Japanese government's role in the war against discrimination*

As mentioned previously, the government's role in fighting discrimination is important in more than one aspect. Any government has the responsibility to create and maintain an equal environment for its people. The Japanese government, however, has thus far failed to recognize the *Zainichi* community as a minority community, thereby also failing to recognize needed modifications in order to assure equality. While the Japanese government has taken several measures towards equality such as the elimination of fingerprinting and the relaxation of naturalization laws, these concessions were made grudgingly only after *Zainichi* Koreans and other supporters staged protests harmful to Japan's international reputation.

The overwhelming opinion is that the Japanese government has not done enough to eliminate discrimination against *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups. Frustration at the lack of support towards minority education, eliminating housing and employment

discrimination, and granting suffrage was universal among all interviewees regardless of where their identity or ethnicity lay.

A need for more governmental regulations to protect minority groups as well as promote equality among all permanent residents in Japan was also cited time and again. Such changes in regulations include allowing minorities to vote as well as run in local and national elections. Finally, the desire for the government to take responsibility for its colonial past and to own up the consequences was stressed. By taking responsibility for its role in the persisting discrimination, the government can help in the elimination of inequality.

7. Conclusion

Through the above research it has been made clear that discrimination continues to exist in Japan. While it is not directed solely towards *Zainichi* Koreans, their case is unique among minority groups in Japan. Despite their formal position as ‘foreigners,’ a majority of *Zainichi* Koreans were born in Japan and identify most with Japanese culture. While it is undeniable that the degree of discrimination has lessened, particularly in the past two decades, it is equally undeniable that the issue is far from resolved. *Zainichi* Koreans discriminated against at a social level with abuse, both verbal as well as physical at times. They continue to be subject to discrimination in the work place as well. The reluctance of the Japanese government to step in and take control of the situation is apparent as, since the end of the Second World War never have they conceded a right to *Zainichi* Koreans unless pressured from abroad or from the *Zainichi* community.

While the situation in Japan has much room for improvement, equality is not far off. *Zainichi* Koreans are continuing to make progress in the struggle for equality. Despite being denied the right to vote or run for national office, there have been several *Zainichi* Koreans elected to local office in the past decade alone. Along with the increasing influence on local politics, such victories bring media exposure. As more and more *Zainichi* Koreans make their way into the system, community knowledge about the problem of discrimination will also increase, and with knowledge comes change. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Japan will see *Zainichi* Koreans in the upper levels of government over the next decade or so and with power comes change.

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Appendix 1: List of interview questions Interview questions (for Japanese)

Self-intro & Purpose of thesis

ルンド大学のケリー・キャメロンと申します。アジアン・スターデイズと言うコースで勉強しています。「日本における在日コリアンと差別」について論文を書こうと思っています。その中でも特に、私の書きたいことは差別と2002年の北朝鮮の拉致問題、原子炉問題との関係です。また、日本の政府が日本と日本人のコリアンへの差別にどのようにたいおうするかについて知りたいと思っています。

• May I record this conversation?

ろくおんしてもいいですか。

• Your name, address, etc. will not be revealed. This data will be used for research purposes only. Is this OK?

名前や住所などのパーソナル・データは一切こうかいしません。このデータは研究のためだけに使います。いいでしょうか。

1. 1. Have you ever met a *Zainichi* Korean before? If so, please describe the occasion.
在日コリアンの方に会ったことがありますか？会ったことがある場合、どんな時にあったか説明して下さい。
2. How much do you know about *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan and where did you get your information?
在日コリアンについてはどのくらい知ってますか？どこで聞いたことがありますか。
3. Do you feel that *Zainichi* Koreans have been and/or are currently discriminated against by Japanese society and/or by the government?
在日コリアンの人達が日本の社会や政府に今まで差別されていた、また今も差別されていると思いますか。
4. In 2002, North Korea admitted to kidnapping Japanese civilians. This became a hot topic of discussion in Japan. What was your reaction? How about the reactions of the people around you?
2002年に北朝鮮が日本人を拉致したことをようにんしました。それは日本の中で大ニュースになりました。——さんはどう考えましたか。また、まわりの人達はどう考えましたか。
5. What should the Japanese government's responsibility towards *Zainichi* Koreans and other minority groups be? How are they handling those responsibilities?
日本の政府は在日コリアンやしょうす民族にどんなせきにんを持つべきだと思いますか。日本の政府のたいおうをどう思いますか。

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the situation for *Zainichi* Koreans?
在日コリアンへの差別をなくすために、どんなていあんがありますか。
7. Is there anything you would like to add?
ほかに何かありますか。
8. Who would you suggest I talk to next?
もっと沢山のの人に話を聞きたいんですが、どなたか紹介してもらえませんか。

Interview Questions (for *Zainichi* Koreans)

Self-intro & Purpose of thesis

ルンド大学のケリー・キャメロンと申します。アジアン・スターディーズと言うコースで勉強しています。「日本における在日コリアンと差別」について論文を書こうと思っています。その中でも特に、私の書きたいことは差別と2002年の北朝鮮の拉致問題、原子炉問題との関係です。また、日本の政府が日本と日本人のコリアンへの差別にどのようにたいおうするかについて知りたいと思っています。

• May I record this conversation?

ろくおんしてもいいですか。

• Your name, address, etc. will not be revealed. This data will be used for research purposes only. Is this OK?

名前や住所などのパーソナル・データは一切こうかいしません。このデータは研究のためだけに使います。いいでしょうか。

1. How long has your family been in Japan?

家族はどのくらい日本にいますか。

2. Background info. (e.g. job, education, place of birth, citizenship, etc.)

仕事・どこの学校で勉強した・生まれた場所・どこの市民権を持っている

3. Who would you say you identify with most: Japan/South Korea/North Korea? (e.g. when introducing yourself, do you use a Korean or Japanese name? When people ask about your nationality/ethnicity what do you say?)

——さんのbackgroundは日本・韓国・北朝鮮の中でどちらと一番つながっていると思いますか。(例えば、自己紹介する時日本の名前かコリアン名前を使いますか。さらに、自分の民族性は何だと思いますか。)

4. Have you experienced discrimination in daily life or in employment/educational settings? If so, what?

毎日の生活でしょく差別や教育差別に会ったことがありますか？そして、どんなことでしたか。

5. In 2002, North Korea admitted to kidnapping Japanese civilians. This became a hot topic of discussion in Japan. What was your reaction? How about the reactions of the people around you?

2002年に北朝鮮が日本人を拉致したことをようにんしました。それは日本の中で大ニュースになりました。——さんはどう考えましたか。また、周りの人たちはどう考えましたか。

6. Has your life been affected in any way since the admission? If so, how?
2002年に北朝鮮が日本人を拉致したことをようにんした時から、——
さんの生活は変わりましたか？変わったのなら、どんなふうに変わりまし
たか。
7. What should the Japanese government's responsibility towards *Zainichi* Koreans
and other minority groups be? How are they handling those responsibilities?
日本の政府は在日コリアンやしょうすみんぞくにどんなせきにんを持つべ
きだと思いませんか。日本の政府のたいおうをどう思いませんか。
8. What suggestions do you have for improving the situation for *Zainichi* Koreans?
在日コリアンへの差別をなくすために、どんなていあんがありますか。
9. Is there anything you would like to add?
ほかに何かありますか。
10. Who would you suggest I talk to next?
もっと沢山の人に話を聞きたいんですが、どなたか紹介してもらえませ
んか。