

# **Resident or *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan: A Book Review of *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin* and *Lives of Young Koreans in Japan***

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日本の在日韓国・朝鮮人：  
書評—『周縁からの批判の声』と『若い在日韓国・朝鮮人の生活』  
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## **Abstract**

This article reviews two recent books: *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, edited by Sonia Ryang, (2000) and *Lives of Young Koreans in Japan*, written by Yasunori Fukuoka, (2000). These books will help interested readers to better comprehend the history, context, and current situation of resident Koreans in Japan. Resident Koreans must deal with many issues in their everyday lives, for example, deciding what name to use and when to use it; coping with bullying; overcoming discrimination when looking for a job or searching for an apartment; deciding upon a nationality; and/or trying to find a spouse from the “right” city in the “right” prefecture in the right “country. Having a better understanding of these issues will help us when working with resident Koreans in our classes and should make us more sensitive educators.

**Key words:** resident Korean, marginality, discrimination, ethnicity nationality

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## 抄 録

本稿は最近出版された2冊の本、ソニア・リャン編集の『周縁からの批判の声』と福岡安則著『若い在日韓国・朝鮮人の生活』を論評する。この2冊はこの問題に関心をもっている読者がさらに在日韓国・朝鮮人の歴史やその社会背景、そして現在の状況を理解する手がかりとなる本である。いつどの名前を名乗るか、いじめをどう克服するか、就職やアパート探しの際の差別をどう乗り越えるか、国籍の選択、いかにして正しい国の正しい県の正しい市から配偶者を選ぶか、在日韓国・朝鮮人は日々このような問題と対峙している。私たち教師がこうした諸問題をよりよく理解することは、在日韓国・朝鮮人の学生を教育する上で役立つ。またこのような問題について学ぶ事によって、私たちも細やかな心配りができる教育者となれる。

**キーワード：**在日韓国・朝鮮人、周縁、差別、民族、国籍

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Prior to coming to Osaka I was vaguely aware of some of the issues resident Koreans faced. I had heard about some of the discrimination that Koreans suffered from during Japan's colonization of Korea and read of protests in Osaka against finger printing that took place as part of the alien registration process. I had also heard that it was difficult for Koreans to find employment and that acts of discrimination were still common. I was also aware that many resident Koreans were in fact stateless. Yet my knowledge was only precursory and a great deal of it was anecdotal.

Since coming to Osaka Jogakuin College in 1994, I have worked with many resident Korean students and also with resident Korean staff and faculty. At school I see that some students use their Korean names while others use Japanese names. At graduation I see students wearing *cheongsam*, or formal Korean gowns. When I lived in Higashi Osaka with its large Korean population while commuting to school I would see Korean high school students on their way to school dressed in *jeogori* or traditional Korean dress. I was also the second reader on a master thesis dealing with issues of identity and drawing examples from resident Koreans. The above observations and other interactions heightened my interest in better understanding the situation of resident *Koreans in Japan*.

The above is why I have chosen to review two recent books: *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, edited by Sonia Ryang, (2000) and *Lives of Young Koreans in Japan*, written by Yasunori Fukuoka, (2000). See Appendices A and B for the table of contents of each book. Both books provide both a broad overview of issues faced by resident Koreans in Japan while also going into quite a bit of detail. They have helped me better comprehend the history, context, and current situation of resident Koreans in Japan.

### **Some commonalities in the books**

Both books deal with the issue of what to call Koreans in Japan whether they are first, second or third generation residents. Ryang uses the term "resident Korean" although she allowed contributors to her volume at great deal of leeway even accepting Korean Japanese in one article. Fukuoka uses the term "*Zainichi* Korean" and goes into a discussion that although many English-speaking sociologists refer to them as "Korean Japanese," this term is never used in Japanese society. He believes that the term, *Zainichi*, which means temporary resident, is symbolic since the reality is that although most Koreans in Japan are permanent residents, they are often viewed and treated as temporary by many members of Japanese society. This can be seen in those incidents where when complaining about unfair treatment, a resident Korean is told, "If you don't like it here, go back to Korea."

Other terms that one may see used to refer to resident Koreans include *Chotsenjin* (North Korea) and *Kankokujin* (South Korea). These terms are sometimes fronted by

*Zainichi* as an adjective. As Lee wrote in Ryang's volume, "The category for people of Korean descent in Japan is highly contested. The conflicting allegiances to the two Koreas, the different sense of one's place in Japan (temporary versus permanent, for example) and other concerns weigh heavily in the choice of a proper nomenclature" (Lee, 2000, p.207). The effect of politics on terminology can also be seen in the choice of titles for TV shows teaching Korean. Often *Han-gul* (the name of the script) is chosen rather than *Chosengo* or *Kankokugo*, each of which risks drawing criticism from one group since it favors another group.

The following are a list of organizations listed alphabetically that these two books deal with in some detail:

- **Chongryun** (General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), also known as *Soren* (short for *Zai-Nihon Chosenjin Sorengokai* in Japanese) was founded in May 1955 and supports the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). It is a nation-wide organization and has "built more than 150 Korean schools including nursery school, primary, middle, and high schools, a college, and a graduate school for which North Korean funds were provided" (Ryang, p.36). *Chongryun* also sponsors a credit union, insurance company, sports teams, and performing art companies.
- **KYAJ** (Korean Youth Association in Japan), also known as *Zainichi Kankoku Seinenkai* in Japanese, is a group affiliated with the Mindan and sponsors language classes, summer camps, and other programs for young Koreans in an effort to instill ethnic pride.
- **Mindan** (Korean Residents Union in Japan), short for *Zai-Nihon Daikanminkoku-mindan*, was founded in October 1948 and supports the government of the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Originally formed as an anti-communist group with no ties to South Korea and with the goal of assisting with repatriation, as the temporary partition of North and South began to look more and more permanent, *Mindan's* link with South Korea was strengthened.
- **Mintoren** (National Council for Combating Discrimination against Ethnic Peoples in Japan) was launched in 1975 to campaign for the rights of Koreans and other ethnic groups in Japan. It does not support either Seoul or Pyongyang. The name changed in 1995 to *Zainichi Korian Jinken Kyokai* (Human Rights Association for Koreans in Japan) and its management style changed from an informal networking style to one with a strong central executive. Effectively, the old *Mintoren* has split into two groups (Fukuoka, 2000, p. 272)

Fukuoka also provides information on the following groups providing support and ethnic education to Korean children:

● **Seikyu-sha** is a group within *Mintoren*. Based in Kawasaki it was founded by a South Korean Christian church that opened a day care center for both *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese children. It “serves as a venue for ethnic education for *Zainichi* children and for various activities to bring *Zainichi* and Japanese children together” (Fukuoka, 2000, p. 310). Note: Seikyu means “blue hills” and is a word that traditionally symbolizes Korea.

● **Takatsuki Mukuge Society** was founded by Lee Kyung-Jae when he graduated from high school. He felt, “we needed to make a place where Korean kids could get together and educate each other” (Fukuoka, 2000, p. 65). The Society has organized study groups to look at the history of Japan’s invasion of Korea, interviewed first generation immigrants about their experiences, put together children clubs in schools, taught classes in Korean Language and ethnic music and dance, etc. Currently over 30 years old, it has expanded the scope of its work and is now trying to protect the human rights of all foreign residents. Note: Mukuge is a flower (Rose of Sharon in English) and symbolizes Korea in the same manner that the cherry blossom or sakura is a symbol of Japan.

● **Tokebi Children’s Club** was founded in 1974 and provides ethnic education to Korean children by teaching language and culture to Korean children. Its name comes from a mythological Korean creature that is “playful, possessed of superhuman power and...[has] an impish tendency to make trouble for those in authority” (p. 74).

Whether a resident Korean is affiliated with the *Chongryu* or *Mindan* or is “independent,” the above organizations play important roles in his or her life. In addition, the children groups are important venues for helping maintain a sense of ethnic pride and maintaining language skills. The next two sections of this paper will discuss highlights from each book.

### **Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin**

Ryang has gathered a wide range of articles dealing with the everyday lives of Koreans in Japan. She has taken an interdisciplinary approach drawing from both insiders and outsiders to provide “a uniquely empathetic, yet theoretically sound, account of a previously invisible ethnic minority in Japan.” A wide range of articles are included ranging from broad overviews dealing with the history of Koreans in Japan and issues of ethnicity and nationality to critiques of Korean women authors dealing with topics ranging from sexuality to cultural identity and critical reviews of movies with Korean protagonists. In addition there are several articles dealing with education and children’s experiences both in Korean ethnic schools that existed after the war and children’s experiences with ethnic

education in Japanese public schools. "Given that education is one of the most powerful state vehicles for preparing children ideologically as national subjects, three authors inquire into the scope and nature of Japanese nationalist domination in the learning and socialization processes of resident Korean children who attend Japanese schools" (p. 9).

A few representative examples with some additional detail will help readers better understand what this book offers. In her introduction to the volume, "Resident Koreans in Japan", Ryang provides a succinct historical background that covers Japan's colonization of Korea, discusses the turmoil that followed World War II when among other things Koreans living in Japan lost their citizenship as part of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and looks at expatriate politics and internal debates that developed in the 60s, 70s and 80s between supporters of North and South Korea.

In "The politics of legal status," Chikako Kashiwazaki discusses issues of nationality and citizenship. She shows how resident Koreans' marginalization was worsened by three legal arrangements during the occupation period: 1) an immigration control system originally intended to control travelers into and out of Japan and not intended to apply to former colonial subjects, 2) the continuation of *jus sanguinis* (nationality determined by lineage) combined with a strict naturalization criteria that forced long term residents of Japan to apply for naturalization in the same manner as new comers, and 3) the loss of Japanese nationality by ex-colonial subjects which caused many to become stateless.

Koichi Iwabuchi looks at the media's treatment, or more appropriately, lack of treatment, of resident Koreans in his chapter on political correctness and self-representation by analyzing the 1993 comedy, *Tsuki wa dochini deteiru* (Where is the moon?) The film was "written, directed, and produced by resident Koreans, who attempt by means of self-representation to go beyond both invisibility and the role of victim given to them in the Japanese media" (p. 55). Since the 1960s when the Buraku Liberation League developed a denunciation strategy whereby they denounced any groups using derogatory words or depicting minority groups negatively, the media has been reluctant to portray minorities "in order to avoid possible criticism and denunciation...as a result the minority groups, including resident Koreans, have seldom been represented on television" (p. 57). Although the movie is guilty of some tokenism in that it does not pay attention to internal differences within the Korean community, and it lacks a feminist perspective with its stereotypical treatment of Filipinas as bar hostesses, it did attempt to "bring home to the Japanese audience their indifference and reluctance to learn about resident Koreans" (p. 58).

As mentioned earlier, several authors dealt with Korean writers whose subjectivities have dealt with issues of patriarchal social relations and nationalism (p. 7). Though they do not always agree in how they position themselves in terms of nation, homeland, and

family, they all have been through personal struggles as “they try to carve out niches in order to find their own writing position and a space called home and homeland” (p. 8). The authors whose works are looked at are Chong Ch’u-wol and Kim Ch’ang-saeng from Ikaino, Osaka and Yi Yang-ji and Yu Miri, two nationally acclaimed Korean authors.

In the last chapter, “Ordinary (Korean) Japanese”, John Lie reacts to what he refers to as De Vos and Lee’s simplistic view and banal generalizations where they among other topics describe Korean families in Japan as not being havens, but rather places of alienation(1981, p. 375). Lie feels that this description of Korean families could be applied to many families throughout modern society. He goes on to express his skepticism “regarding efforts to seek a simple similar, and constant sense of the self, or personal identity among Korean Japanese” (2000, p.198). He asks, “Why should we expect perhaps a million people of Korean descent in Japan to exhibit a considerable degree of a common ethnic identity?” (p. 200). He goes on to show the discontinuities and differences through the use of narratives from Korean writers in Japan. He concludes that narratives can tell us much about the lives of Koreans as a social group. “[P]ersonal narratives resist simple, reductionist, and essentialist characterizations” (p. 206).

In the next section, we will look at Fukuoka’s book which also uses narratives from 150 in-depth interviews to examine the lives of young Koreans in Japan. The narratives were developed into case studies of which he shares twenty-one as life histories.

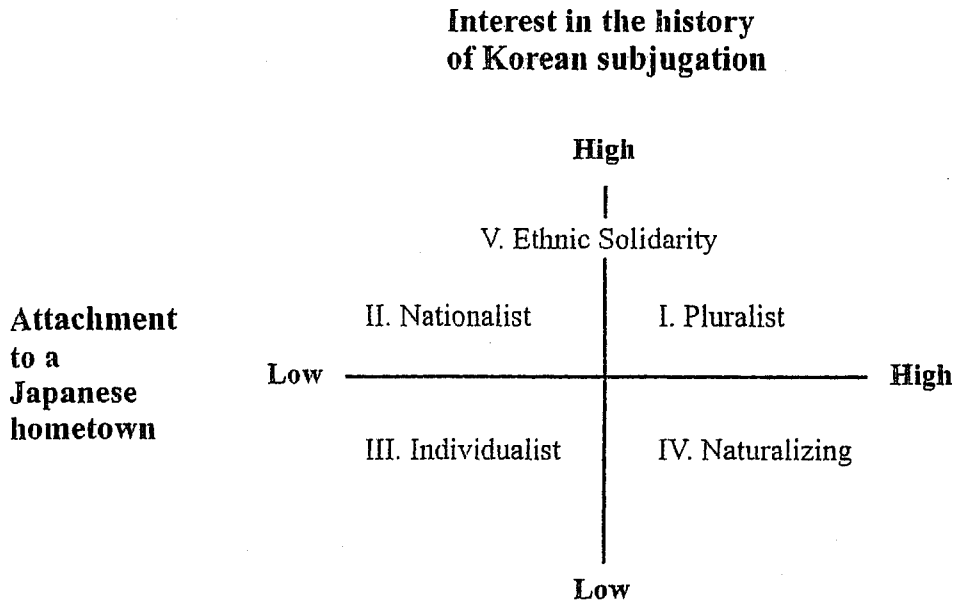
## **Lives of Young Koreans in Japans**

This book is divided into two parts; the first deals with identity formation among Japan’s Korean minority first looking at the history of Koreans in Japan before summarizing their status today. It then goes on to develop a typology of *Zainichi* identities. The second part looks at twelve narrative/live histories of *Zainichi* Koreans examining their struggles and the different paths they have taken as their identities have developed and changed.

## **Typology of Identities**

A major contribution of this book to understanding resident Koreans in Japan is Fukuoka’s treatment of *Zainichi* identities that he has developed based on his interviews. Instead of positing a “Korean” identity or even two identities depending on political views, he delves deeper to provide us with a useful typology. He has come up with four identity types that he positions on a quadrant with the axes of Interest in the history of Korean subjugation and Attachment to a Japanese hometown. See Figure one. The identity types are: Pluralist, Nationalist, Individualist, and Naturalizing. To these four he adds one more that he found common among certain young ethnic Koreans. He calls this fifth type, Ethnic Solidarity. Fukuoka then goes on to provide two cases studies illustrating each of the types.

**Figure 1**  
**Classificatory framework for the construction of identity by young *Zainichi* Koreans**



(From Fukuoka, 2000, p. 49)

**Pluralists** want to rid Japanese society of ethnic discrimination in order to create a society where everyone can live peacefully while respecting the rights of others. This identity type can be observed in members of the *Mintoren*. “Living together while representing mutual differences’ is the key phrase expressing the nature of the pluralist type” (p. 50).

**Nationalists** often are supporters of North Korea and view themselves as ‘oversea nationals’ and they have not wish to assimilate into Japanese society. In fact, they do not feel that they can get fair treatment in Japanese society and thus look to networks of mutual aid from fellow Koreans. “In principle, they use only their ethnic Korean name. In practice they will occasionally use a Japanese name simply to avoid trouble in their transactions with Japanese society” (p. 53). Many of this type are bilingual having been typically educated at *Chongryun*-affiliated institutions.

**Individualists’** main concern is to achieve personal success. They see this goal, one of upward social mobility, as the way to respond to social discrimination. Many travel abroad to study or attempt to graduate from a high-ranked Japanese university. “In personal relations they pay little attention to ethnicity or nationality, but feel a sense of liberation in relations with people who share their respect for individual achievement” (p. 54). They rarely feel any devotion to either Japan or Korea.

**Naturalizing types** want to “become Japanese.” They hope to avoid ethnic discrimination by identifying with the host people. Often they will become naturalized Japanese. They often grow up using aliases and concealing their ethnicity. They feel their country is Japan and they “see no point in making a fuss about Japan’s history of colonialism in Japan—to them, it’s all water under the bridge” (p. 55).

**Ethnic Solidarity types** fall between Pluralist and Nationalist types. Their main concern is mutual assistance among resident Koreans. Therefore, they seek to improve language skills and awareness of culture, even encouraging the use of Korean names. They value relations with anyone, resident Korean or Japanese, who will help them with their fight against racism. “Ethnic solidarity types often feel an attachment both to South Korea, as the motherland, and to Japan, as the country of residence” (p. 56).

### **Naming conventions**

Fukuoka also goes into much detail in the area of naming conventions. Many readers might think that resident Koreans in Japan have two names: their official Korean name on their alien registration card, and an unofficial Japanese name that they use in day-to-day life. In reality, it is much more complicated.

Fukuoka summarizes four trends he saw in his interview data:

1. The legal name is Korean and that is the only name used. This seems straightforward but even when someone only has one name, they often may use the Japanese reading of it while in school or when doing business. For example, Suh Young Soon is read Jo Eijun when using the Japanese reading.
2. The legal name is Korean. A Japanese alias is used consisting of a Japanese-style surname with the Japanese reading of a Korean forename. For example, Ueda Seigyoku consists of a common Japanese name, Ueda, and the Japanese reading of Sung-Ok. Ethnic Japanese would never use Seigyoku as their daughter’s name.
3. The legal name is Korean. An alias is used consisting of a Japanese-style surname and a Japanese forename. This is the most common case, though not as universal as is thought by many. In this case the Japanese name has no connection to the Korean name. An example can be taken from one of the Mintoren leaders; Suh Jung-Woo once used the alias Tatsukawa Kazuaki. (p. 31).
4. The legal name is the Korean surname plus the Korean reading of a Japanese forename. The alias is a Japanese-style surname and a Japanese forename. In these cases, the official forename uses the same characters as a familiar Japanese name.

Fukuoka feels that more and more resident Koreans are opting to name their children Japanese names and feels that this reflects the reality of permanent residence in Japan.



Yet, at the same time, he notes that there is a counter-trend as parents who went to Korean schools give their children names that “reflect their heightened ethnic awareness” (p. 32).

In addition to the above, Fukuoka also goes into detail regarding the trends of marriage among resident Koreans and the numbers of resident Koreans who are choosing to apply for Japanese citizenship.

### **Ethnicity and Nationality; Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness**

Finally, Fukuoka problematizes the concept of Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness. He challenges the idea that people can be defined by ethnicity and nationality (i.e. Mexican-American, Chinese-Canadian, etc.) instead arguing that ethnicity should be broken down into two components; blood lineage and culture. He uses these two components along with nationality to develop eight permutations of Japaneseness. See Figure Two.

Lineage in this discussion refers to the presence or absence of Japanese blood. Culture refers to the internalization of Japanese culture, for example, speaking Japanese, upholding Japanese values and customs, following a Japanese lifestyle, etc. Nationality refers to holding Japanese nationality.

The eight permutations are as follows:

- 1 . Pure-Japanese (This is a widely-held image among Japanese of what a Japanese is.)
- 2 . First-generation Japanese migrants, etc. (This group would include migrants to North or South America and Japanese women who lost their citizenship in 1952 because they were married to Koreans.)
- 3 . Japanese raised abroad (*Kikoku shijo* would possibly fall into this category.)
- 4 . Naturalized Japanese (People who have legally become Japanese. Often these people are still considered to be non-Japanese by many in Japanese society)
- 5 . Third-generation Japanese emigrants and war orphans abroad (Second and third generation Japanese emigrants or ethnic Japanese children abandoned at the end of the war and brought up by adoptive Chinese parents are included in this group.)
- 6 . *Zainichi* Koreans with Japanese upbringing (Many in this category have been brought up in Japanese-speaking households and have attended Japanese schools, but have not naturalized).
- 7 . The *Ainu* (Only some *Ainu* would fit this category as many no longer can speak the *Ainu* language today.)
- 8 . Pure non-Japanese (This category includes foreigners not as defined by Japan's Nationality Law, but as it is commonly thought of in society. Members of this category are often referred to as *Gaikokujin*.)

**Figure 2**  
**Framework of Japanese and Non-Japanese attributes (Based on Fukuoka, p.xxx)**

Types	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Lineage	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-
Culture	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-
Nationality	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-

Though he acknowledges that some may object to his classification, Fukuoka stresses that what the above shows is that Japan is not the homogeneous society that many think it is. “Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness is by no means a simple dichotomy with a distinct borderline” (p. xxxv). He warns that Japanese society’s intolerance toward difference is a major hurdle in “establishing a society where people of differing ethnicity can live together in peaceful mutual respect” (p. 269). He ends his book by a) urging that society stop attaching a negative meaning to difference, b) suggesting that difference should be accentuated instead of diluted; (he feels that ethnic identity can be maintained and revitalized through educational efforts, and c) stressing that the majority and minority get in touch with each other.

### **Conclusion**

These two books provide some insight into the lives of resident Koreans in Japan. As Ryang succinctly puts it, “[w]e find difficulty and pain, happiness and joy among Koreans in Japan whose lives we now unfold to the reader, as they are found among all peoples. In unfolding these experiences we hope to open the way to understanding the human condition of Koreans and other minorities in Japan and beyond” (p. 11). Deciding what name to use and when to use it, coping with bullying, overcoming discrimination when applying to college, finding a job, or searching for an apartment; deciding upon a nationality; trying to find a spouse from the “right” city in the “right” prefecture in the right “country,”—these are issues that resident Koreans deal with in their everyday lives. Understanding these issues should help us when working with resident Koreans in our classes and it should make us more sensitive educators.

### **Author Information for these books**

Sonia Ryang was born in Japan to Korean parents and at the time her book was published was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at John Hopkins University. Yasunori Fukuoka is a graduate of the University of Tokyo and Professor of Sociology at Saitama University. He helped found the Japanese Association of Sociology for Human Liberation.

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## Appendix A

### *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*

#### Table of Contents

Introduction: resident Koreans in Japan

1. The politics of legal status: the equation of nationality with ethnonational identity
2. The North Korean homeland of Koreans in Japan
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4. Mothers write Ikaino
5. Reading against the bourgeois and national bodies: transcultural body-politics in Yu Miri’s textual representations
6. Cultural identity in the work of Yi Yang-ji
7. Korean ethnic schools in occupied Japan, 1945–52
8. Korean children, textbooks, and educational practices in Japanese primary schools
9. Kids between nations: ethnic classes in the construction of Korean identities in Japanese public schools
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## **Appendix B**

### ***Lives of Young Koreans in Japan***

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Part One—Identity Formation in Japan’s Korean Minority

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- 2 . Japan’s Korean Minority Today
- 3 . A Typology of *Zainichi* Identities

Note: chapters 4 to 8 each consist of two case studies

- 4 . Learning to Live with the Japanese
- 5 . For the Sake of Our Fellow *Zainichis*
- 6 . Living as Overseas Nationals
- 7 . Going it Alone
- 8 . Turning Japanese

Part Two—Korean Women in Japan: Their Lives and Struggles

Note: chapters 9 to 20 each consist of a case study

- 9 . A Dream is a Dream
10. Diplomatic Incidents
11. This Japanese is Still Korean
12. Mixed Blood, Mixed Feelings
13. Lifting the Fog
14. ‘I hate Japan, but I’ll Live Here Anyway’
15. Not Japanese, Not Korean but *Zainichi*
16. In Search of Self-Fulfillment
17. Looking for a Way Out
18. Making Japan a Place Where Koreans Can Be Themselves
19. Japanese Nationality Not Good Enough to Beg for
20. Floating on the Tide of Assimilation

Conclusion: Towards a Society of Peaceful Coexistence