

ZAINICHI KOREANS' ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND ROLES OF ETHNIC ORGANISATION AND COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This paper discusses how Zainichi Koreans developed their identities both within and outside the realm of the ethnic community and ethnic organisations. This study uses qualitative multi-methods research based on interviews with members and non-members of Zainichi Koirean organisations and field observations. The examination on Zainichi Koirean organisation members mainly concentrates on lived experiences of members from one of the ethnic organisations of Zainichi Koreans, Chongryun. This study finds that although some young Koreans separate themselves from the organisation and the *homeland*, they remain in the community. Many Chongryun Koreans share a collective ethnic consciousness, which was based on members' love for the Chongryun schools. While there is an internal division within the community in terms of political views, many members still have a strong sense of group solidarity. On the other hand, the identities of non-member respondents are remarkably diverse. While some of them are assimilated into Japanese society, others retain strong ethnic identities. Their identities are less affected by any ethnic organisations and they rarely share collective memories with other Zainichi Koreans. This study shows that social networks and experiences of ethnic community individuals have a key role in determining their identities and the ways in which they live their lives.

key words: Zainichi Koreans, ethnic associations, ethnic community, collective identity

1. Introduction

This paper explores how Zainichi-related organisations and communities have affected the formation of their member's ethnic identities and lives. It mainly focuses on Chongryun, which serves as a representative of North Korea in Japan. Chongryun was established by Leftist Zainichi Koreans in 1955 and has offered firm loyalty to North Korea; it consists of a complex of numerous associations affiliated to the main organisation covering forty-seven prefectures of Japan. The way in which the affiliated organisations are arranged is similar to the North Korean (and Soviet) style, where the central party operates satellite organisations for women, youth, children and occupational groups (Ryang 1997: 3). The first part of this paper provides overviews of the lives and activities of Chongryun members within that community. This examination shows how

Chongryun started losing its importance in the economic and social lives of its members. Consequently, a decline of its membership occurred. The second section explores their shifting orientation and the resultant divisions of the Chongryun collective identity. This section analyses the shifts in relation to the transitional identity of Zainichi Koreans from the central Chongryun organisation to the local Chongryun community-centred Korean schools. Lastly, this paper investigates identities of non-Chongryun Zainichi Koreans in comparison to Chongryun Koreans. The attitudes and views of non-organisational Koreans towards Zainichi-related organisations and their members are examined. In this section, the following key questions are investigated: Do non-Chongryun Koreans maintain an ethnic identity? If they do, how do they retain it without taking part in organisational activities? What is the difference between their identity and Chongryun collective identity?

2. Organisational Backgrounds of Chongryun Respondents

This study adopts empirical qualitative multi-methods research based on semi-structured and in-depth interviews and field observations. The fieldwork was conducted for three years between 2007 and 2010 in the Kanto Region. The semi-structured/in-depth interviews were completed with 36 Zainichi Koreans and a mother of two of the respondents. Out of 37 interviewees, 23 were members of Zainichi Korean groups. The other 14 Koreans were not involved with any Zainichi-related groups. One person out of the 23 group participants took part in several non-Chongryun Zainichi-Korean groups. The remaining 22 people belonged to the Chongryun organisation or Chongryun-operated groups, although some of them were not very active. Of the 22 Chongryun participants, ten were university or technical school students who participated in Ryugakudo (Korean Student League in Japan). Three male Koreans in their late 30s and early 40s belonged to affiliates of Korean Youth Commerce Community (KYC), including a leading representative of a regional affiliate of KYC and a former leading representative. In addition, four Zainichi Koreans worked for Chongryun full time: two for the Chongryun organisation centre, one for Ryugakudo as a leading representative of the committee, and one for a Chongryun-affiliated high school as a teacher. Out of 22 Chongryun-related Koreans, three Japanese-schooled Koreans had begun participating in Ryugakudo when they reached their late teens or early 20s. The remaining 19 participants had family histories of involvement with Chongryun over two or three generations.

Although most first generation Zainichi Koreans were originally from South Korea, an overwhelming majority supported North Korea after the war. According to Fukuoka (2004), they formed a strong working-class identity through the experience of poverty and racism in Japan. They became sympathetic with the workers' state in the North. Statistics from the 1950s show

that only 7.4 percent of the Koreans in Japan were classified as South Korean citizens (Chin 2001: 62). In fact, the respondents' first generations also came from southern parts of Korea, such as the regions of Kyongsang, Cholla and Cheju. Most Chongryun respondents shared the same view regarding the reason why first-generation Zainichi Koreans favoured the North; their grandparents had felt abandoned by South Korea. It was North Korea and its leader Kim Il-Sung that had assisted them in their hardships and their struggle to preserve ethnic schools in Japan. Since its establishment, the largest Zainichi community has been centred around Chongryun. Its members have been generally regarded as pro-North Koreans. Their presence is often perceived as an unacceptable threat to Japanese society and social order.

As Rex's definition of the functions of ethnic associations shows, Chongryun helps individuals to overcome social isolation and to deal with moral and social problems (Rex 1997: 217). It serves as a kind of trade union defending the interests of the organisation's members. It also maintains the group values and beliefs that perpetuate its political ideology (Rex 1997: 217). Chongryun has operated organisational units and regional affiliations throughout the country. Both Ryugakudo and KYC, for example, are affiliated with Chongryun. Ryugakudo is a student association for young Zainichi Korean college, university and technical school students, irrespective of their institutions. Meanwhile, KYC mobilises its members to collaborate in pursuit of mutual aid and common goals in business. According to respondents, members of KYC were overwhelmingly male business people aged from 29 to 41. All three of the KYC members among the respondents were male Chongryun-affiliated school graduates. They worked in Zainichi-particular industries, such as *pachinko* parlours and an industrial waste plant.

As Chongryun is a pro-North Korean organisation, the school curriculum offers North Korean ideological education. It teaches Zainichi history as part of the 'revolutionary activities of General Kim Il Sung' (Kim, C. 2004: 5, cited in Lie 2008). 18 respondents had received ethnic education for periods from 12 to 16 years at Chongryun-affiliated schools from elementary to high school or university level. Four respondents attended such schools for six or nine years until they were transferred to Japanese junior high or high schools. Almost all the young interviewees who had graduated from Chongryun high schools were in varying degrees involved with Chongryun. Most of them participated in Ryugakudo.

3. Chongryun and Community

3.1. Insulation of Life in Chongryun

Chongryun Koreans' isolation from mainstream Japanese society has allowed them to create their own culture (Lee, S. 2002) and sustain the self-sufficient community separate from the dominant society. Several of the Chongryun respondents and their families lived in a close

social circle. They conducted significant social interactions only within the local Chongryun community. They tended to cut themselves off from ‘outside’ contact except for business and to obtain the minimum necessities of life. The adults were largely likely to take up jobs within the organisation or in Zainichi-related companies through their ethnic networks. Mothers stayed at home to look after children and the elderly, focusing on housework. Their children were also restricted; they attended Chongryun-affiliated schools. Some of the Korean cultural distinctiveness has been disappearing overtime, for instance, the clothing worn and the speaking of Korean at home. Yet Zainichi Koreans have retained their ethnic heritage by preserving some Korean traditions, such as eating Korean food, seasonal rituals, and familial and organisational gatherings. Contact with Japanese people tends to be limited for some Chongryun Koreans. Even though many of them are surrounded by Japanese in their neighbourhoods, they rarely develop neighbourly ties with them. Their life dimensions, involving friendship formation, network mobilisation, and social interaction, are limited to their community.

Those who were geographically isolated from other members have strived to stay in the Chongryun community. They send their children to the nearest Chongryun-affiliated schools, which are often a long commute for small children, usually taking one to two hours by train. In the case of Se-hong (male, age 32), he and his sister were sent to a school in another prefecture since there were no Chongryun-affiliated schools nearby. They lived with other Zainichi peers in a boarding house away from their parents from the age of six. All the students from elementary and junior high boarded at the school dormitory and went home to see their parents only at the weekends. After graduating from Chongryun’s Korea University, Se-hong started working in the Chongryun organisation. Living only within the Zainichi community, he seldom interacted with Japanese and refused to make friends with them.

Meanwhile, other Chongryun Koreans moved out of the Chongryun circle due to marriage or business links to regions with a smaller Korean population and no Chongryun-affiliated school. This was the case for Toshiaki (male, age 21), Kwang-ho (male, age 25) and Chung-ja (female, age 22). After moving to new environments, all of their families alienated themselves from Chongryun networks. Their parents began using Japanese names in daily life and sent their children to Japanese schools. Subsequently, Kwang-ho and Chung-ja started participating in Ryugakudo events as university students, after starting to live on their own in Tokyo. Their parents were strongly opposed to their participation in Chongryun activities.

Chongryun Koreans, who remained in the community, rarely recognised their Zainichi community as part of Japanese society. They drew sharp community boundaries. For example, Ae-young (female, age 21) described Chongryun-affiliated schools as ‘their own territory.’ They did not consider the ‘outside,’ namely Japanese society, a place they belonged to. Similarly, Jung-

a (female, age 38) did not feel she knew 'what society was really like' because she had 'never been outside the Zainichi community.' The Chongryun community is an independent space that gives them comfort and security. This perception of a clear contrast between their own community and Japanese society was often seen in the remarks of Chongryun respondents. Their recognition of territorial boundaries implies the persistence of 'ethnic boundary maintenance' (Barth 1996).

Chongryun Koreans would often meet at local Chongryun events. They are usually held at local Chongryun-affiliated schools attended by their children. The author observed an athletic festival held in the fall of 2008 at a Chongryun-affiliated high school in Tokyo. It seemed that hundreds of people, most of whom were obviously families and relatives of the students, knew each other. In effect many of them were closely connected, not only as families of the students, but as old friends from their school days or, in many cases, their relatives. Many of the ethnic school graduates were married to their former classmates or those related to school friends. This involves the people in a real family kinship. The big events in Tokyo are usually held at the sole Tokyo Chongryun-affiliated high school. Many alumni from this school and their multigenerational families enjoyed getting together there. Fieldwork suggested a broad tendency among Chongryun Koreans to stay close to each other long after graduation. Most Chongryun interviewees agreed this allows them to create a warm and familial atmosphere. This also clearly provides the community members with a sense of pride and belonging.

At Chongryun events, two languages – Korean and Japanese – were switched and intermingled depending on the situation within the Chongryun sphere. On the stage or in announcements at Chongryun events, people spoke only Korean. Even in casual and off-stage settings, some people spoke only in Korean, especially when speaking to elderly people, presumably first-generation Koreans. But many people spoke almost entirely in Japanese. During conversations they used some conventional expressions in Korean, such as '*Anyeong Hashimnika*' (hello), '*Omo-nim*' (mother) or '*Aboji*' (father). It was also common to refer to friends older than themselves as their 'brother' or 'sister' in Korean, and behaved towards each other as such. These practices in language usage obviously help strengthen emotional ties to each other as an extension of a *family*, as language may serve as 'an internal reminder of difference' (Nash 1996: 26) and strengthen ethnic consciousness.

Chongryun Koreans' strong communal solidarity was partly a consequence of the oppression they experienced and the pressure to assimilate into Japanese society. According to Eun-mi (female, age 35), they were constantly compelled to regard Japanese people and the society as 'their enemy whom they have to fight against.' They occasionally experienced oppression from Japan in the forms of North Korea bashing, racial attacks and verbal abuse against Korean students, and harassment against Korean schools and Chongryun. Eun-mi recalls

witnessing Japanese police barge into her school every time some political problem occurred. As a result of incidents such as these, the community members were constantly highly sceptical of Japan. As their anger toward the Japanese government and the society built up, their determination to hold on to their ethnic bonds grew stronger (Lie 2008: 119).

The antagonism between the Chongryun community and Japanese society was reflected in Chongryun education; Pan-yong (male, age 26) recalled how teachers at Chongryun-affiliated schools portrayed Japan as ‘a virtual enemy.’ Many students had a sense of hostility towards Japanese students and assimilated Zainichi Koreans. This ‘enemy’ notion is effective in increasing the level of group solidarity among students (Ryang 1997: 181). Hence one of the keys to understanding their firm unity and the formation of their ethnic identities is the shared sense of resistance to subjugation. Their Chongryun identity is, to borrow Castells, based on ‘an oppressed identity,’ grown from ‘collective resistance’ (Castells 1997).

3.2. Maintain the Organisation

Interviews also revealed that the extremely close ties among the Chongryun community members also functioned to ensure that members to remain in the community. Nami (female, age 31) and her family lived in an area with a high population of Chongryun Koreans. Her parents were Chongryun members, although they were not very active. Her parents sent her to Chongryun-operated schools, not only because they hoped that she would receive ethnic education but because there was a great deal of pressure toward her parents from Chongryun over their choice of their children’s schools.

As Nami’s case shows, the organisation has a significant influence on a member’s life decisions. If the members or their families choose something that is seen as being against Chongryun values and beliefs, they disgrace themselves. For example, when the oldest sister of Sun-hi (female, age 19) got married to a Japanese man, her father strongly opposed the marriage. Sun-hi’s parents did not attend their wedding, and her father kept his daughter’s marriage entirely secret from other Chongryun Koreans. Sun-hi’s father was in a high position within one of the units. Out of fear for ‘losing face,’ every effort is made to avoid any individual choices that are seen as incompatible with the community’s values. Evidently each member is expected to give priority to group values, rather than to personal desires. In so doing, members play the role of monitors keeping an eye on each other. This surveillance has especially intensified towards Chongryun full-time workers, usually fathers and breadwinners. They often have others intervene in their private matters and choices in life. The fathers can be put in difficult positions within the organisation depending on their own or their family members’ behaviour. For instance, the father of Sang-mi (female, age 39), who had worked in a central position within Chongryun, was ordered

by the organisation to send her to their Korea University 'by any means.'

Out of those interviewees, three Chongryun full-time workers had fathers who worked in central positions within Chongryun. One of these respondents, Chung-ae (female, age 31), admitted that an approved plan of her life was already set within the community in terms of choice of schools and occupation. Community involvement and commitment among Chongryun members is mandatory for the children of the full-time Chongryun workers. These students have to serve in Chongryun schools and other offices upon graduating from Chongryun schools or the University (Ryang 1997: 38). Their obligation to continue membership in the organisation is crucial for Chongryun because, as Hechter argues, a community's survival is contingent on its success in retaining members in succeeding generations (Hechter 1996).

The hierarchical convention within schools was also pointed out by several respondents. It is based on their contributions to the organisation. According to Sang-mi, Sun-hi and Hae-jung (female, age 19), their teachers treated students differently depending on their family donations and their parents' positions within the organisation. Sun-hi and Hae-jung also complained that the children of Korea University teachers were exempted from tuition fees to Chongryun-affiliated schools. At the same time, however, they pitied these children of Chongryun cadres because 'they are not free to have their own opinions.' They were often elected as class representatives by teachers, sometimes against their own will, because their leadership experiences would be appreciated in Chongryun. Indeed, some of their friends in this position were barred from attending Japanese schools to fulfil a career ambition due to the pressure from the school and their parents. Their sympathy towards these students suggests that being Chongryun fulltime workers is no longer regarded as an ideal among the community members.

3.3. Leaving Chongryun and North Korea

While many Chongryun Koreans have left the organisation, some younger generations have remained within the Chongryun community. Nevertheless, they have also spoken against Chongryun and become doubtful about North Korea's future (Ryang 2000). Indeed, some Chongryun interviewees actively engaged in Chongryun activities, but most of them expressed objections to Chongryun on certain issues in varying degrees. For example, interviews revealed the inter-generational disagreement on nationality between the third-generation respondents and the older generations of grandparents and parents. Chongryun has long rejected the idea of naturalisation, seeing it as a step towards total assimilation and many second-generation Koreans have opposed the idea. Meanwhile, third-generation respondents in their 30s and early 40s had different views. For example, Yo-sub (male, age 41) believed that Chongryun should accept Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds, including naturalised Koreans, for the survival of

the organisation. Bong-wa and In-sung (male, age 40) even supported the idea of Korean-Japanese in succeeding generations to acquire equal rights with Japanese. For these generations in the centre of the unit, retaining either *Chōsen* or South Korean nationality is no longer an absolute requirement for membership. However, this new perspective does not correspond with that of the older generations. In this respect, the organisation has failed to meet the demand of younger generations and to understand the reality of their individual lives.

Most Chongryun respondents pointed out the fact that Chongryun has reduced the centripetal force of the organisation and its membership has fallen precipitously. This is partly the result of distrust towards its top management and towards North Korea among Zainichi Koreans. According to In-sung, recently many Koreans have grown tired of the politics and the internal conflicts within the organisation. The number of schools has been decreasing accordingly. Zainichi Koreans' distrust towards North Korea was also attributed to the reports on the kidnapping of Japanese nationals by North Korea in 2002. Chongryun had reinvented itself to better adapt to Japanese society since around 1998 (Chin 2001). However, the abduction issue shook the members' faith in North Korea. Most Chongryun respondents in their late 30s and early 40s were deeply disturbed by the news and felt betrayed by North Korea. Bong-hwa (male, age 39) saw numerous Zainichi Koreans naturalise and leave Chongryun altogether. They stopped sending their children to ethnic schools. During their interviews, respondents whispered as they talked making sure that the people around the table were out of earshot. This indicates how sensitive this issue is among Chongryun respondents. Given such conditions, it is unsurprising that some Chongryun Koreans have difficulty in maintaining their allegiance to North Korea.

Another explanation for the decline of Chongryun is that many Zainichi Koreans are now able to make a living without relying on the organisation. According to Chung-ae, the first and second generations of Chongryun Koreans engaged in collective actions to improve their social situations. Chongryun members made desperate efforts to challenge discrimination through various collective movements, i.e. development of Korean ethnic schools and resistance against Japanese suppression. As Nathan and Moynihan propose, people are connected to their groups not only by ties of family and friendship, but also by ties of interest (Nathan and Moynihan 1996: 138). The organisation had no difficulty mobilising members when discrimination against them in Japanese society was prevalent. However, as visible discrimination lessened and their social situations improved, Chongryun became unnecessary for some Koreans. They started prioritising their personal lives rather than fulfilling their duties as members.

A student of Chongryun's Korea University, Man-su (male, age 22) indicated Chongryun Koreans' vigorous efforts and eventual success in improving their lives had led to the decline of Chongryun. For instance, when Japanese universities denied Chongryun students the

opportunity to take the entrance examinations, many students went to Korea University, but once most Japanese universities began accepting Chongryun students, the number of those enrolling in Korea University decreased. Consequently, it became difficult for the university to foster Chongryun-affiliated school teachers; they faced a dilemma. Man-su stated:

There used to be a high wall between Japanese society and the Zainichi community which Zainichi Koreans couldn't surmount. Zainichis couldn't get out of the community at that time. For this reason, we were able to build such a cohesive community. But now people have scattered and there is more diversity among Zainichi.

According to Man-su, Chongryun has now attempted to meet the new challenge by recruiting other Zainichi Koreans. For instance, its student group, Ryugakudo, has sought to enhance ethnic ties and patriotism among Zainichi Korean students, both Japanese-schooled and Chongryun-schooled Koreans. Man-su explained:

Some people don't have a firm ethnic identity. They hesitate to use a Korean name in Japanese society and can't take pride in being Koreans. They can't live as Koreans. We are trying to help and give them the opportunities to have a solid identity. [...] We recruit these people and let them know this kind of community exists.

Man-su's statement reflects Chongryun's endeavours to reproduce Chongryun Korean ethnicity and gradually change its strategies. Chongryun based uniting people on 'homeland orientation' (Lie 2008) and shared political purposes and mutual interests since its establishment in 1955. Now Chongryun's urgent task is to encourage Zainichi Koreans to identify themselves with the organisation and to mobilise them collectively. To this end, Chongryun groups have sought to foster a sense of ethnic identity among Zainichi Koreans, including non-Chongryun members, by emphasising emotional dimensions. In the absence of shared political motives, it has strived to incorporate Zainichi Koreans of various backgrounds into Chongryun by *helping* them a search for identity. It has aimed to generate a collective identity among the young people by diversifying cultural and social experiences. Nevertheless, the steady decline of the organisation, despite this effort, shows the limitations of its consciousness-raising method as a strategy.

4. New Collective Identity of Chongryun Koreans

4.1. Chongryun Identity in Transition

Although the size of the Chongryun community has continued to shrink, some

Chongryun Koreans choose to stay in their local Chongryun community. In-sung (male, age 40) reported that many people no longer attended events organised by the central organisation, but they participated in local Chongryun events in their hometowns. These people still place importance on their Korean ethnicity and have a strong sense of loyalty to the local community, even though they are not fully supportive of the North or Chongryun.

The resistance to identification with Chongryun and North Korea was often seen in the respondents' narratives. Some Chongryun Korean interviewees claimed to be different from those deeply committed and attached to North Korea by calling them *red* (from the red colour representing Communism and North Korea) or '*baribari*' (a casual term to mean 'hard core'). Chongryun people often teased each other by calling him/her 'red,' even though the users had no intention to humiliate or be spiteful toward them. This is a common expression among Chongryun Koreans, containing the nuance of mocking loyal followers of North Korea. According to Sun-hi, there were only a few 'red' people at school who idealised and rationalised the North and Chongryun. She claimed her parents were not 'red' at all either, even though they opposed her sister's marriage to a Japanese man. Her statement revealed a sense of apathy and irritation towards the North and Chongryun; it also implied her hope to distance herself and those around her from them. These young people no longer have shared collective memories or political ideologies with either their homeland or the leadership of Chongryun.

4.2. Love for Schools

Some parents have also been critical of Chongryun-affiliated schools and the North, especially since the abduction issue was revealed. In addition, Chongryun schools and parents began to receive anonymous phone calls threatening to kidnap, hurt and kill their children (Ryang 2005: 235). Consequently, the number of parents sending their children to ethnic schools has been decreasing. The parents of Gyong-si (male, age 21) and Min-ho (male, age 21) hoped their sons would go on to attend Japanese high schools after the ethnic junior high school and opposed their active participation in Chongryun youth groups.

Irrespective of this, several Chongryun respondents had strong emotional bonds of love for Chongryun-affiliated schools. Preservation of these schools is one of the primary goals for their activities in Chongryun. Even those showing the least emotional attachment to the North and Chongryun, such as Sun-hi and Hae-jung, had made their best friends at these schools and had a strong desire for them to be preserved. They also confirmed that they would send their children to Chongryun-affiliated schools in the future. Many younger Chongryun Koreans separated themselves from both Chongryun and North Korea, yet they still identified themselves with the Korean community in Japan and had pride in being Zainichi Korean. The schools are now the

centre for local Chongryun activities. This suggests that their loyalties and attachment have been localised and their local schools have become the motivating force for individual members.

In 1957 the North Korean government began sending education funds to Chongryun, but it stopped in the late 1970s and the early 1980s (Ryang 2005: 226). Since then, the schools have been preserved and mostly funded by parents, alumni, wealthy donors and the community. According to In-sung (male, age 40), the majority of KYC members in his region were graduates of Chongryun schools, and they regularly organised events to collect donations for the schools. Bong-hwa (male, age 39) continued to pay an annual membership fee to Chongryun, donate money, and help with fund-raising events only because he hoped to preserve the schools. Likewise, In-sung served as the representative of a KYC regional office for the same reason. According to him, many Koreans meet at schools when Chongryun affiliates hold events, such as barbecue parties, athletic festivals, and charity events there. To quote In-sung:

There is still discrimination against us in society. But people including the elders can get together and enjoy companionship with their comrades at these schools. [...] The only thing we always agree on at meetings of KYC is that we must preserve schools at the very least.

In-sung not only sent his children to Chongryun-affiliated schools but also paid the tuition for all the six children of his Chongryun employees, who had been his seniors at school. He did not want them to put their children in to Japanese schools for financial reasons while working for his company. This reflects the strong ties and connections among Chongryun-affiliated school graduates as well as an eagerness to preserve ethnic schools. It seemed their relationships went beyond the usual ones between an employer and employees, and their connection was as strong as that of a family. Within this close relationship, In-sung's employees may have had no choice but to send their children to Chongryun-affiliated schools, even though they may have secretly desired to enrol them in Japanese schools. The ethnicity of these Chongryun Koreans is constructed in the regularities of obligations and social bonds and in the extensions of kinship (Fenton 1999: 25).

Moreover In-sung's account suggests that Chongryun-affiliated schools are not only for attendant students, but also for Chongryun Koreans of all ages and generations. They get together and meet their *comrades* at school. Additionally, some school graduates often displayed a great feeling of gratitude to the first generation for their strenuous effort in having built up the ethnic schools. For the younger generations, their determination and endeavour to preserve schools is a manifestation of their allegiance to the first generation. Passion for the schools binds together all,

from young to old. In this context, they have retained a firm unity based on the schools that transcends time and space. A love for these schools has become a significant vehicle for collective mobilisation and maintenance of their community structure at the same time.

For Chongryun Koreans, attending the schools is believed to be fundamental in gaining Korean ethnic identity. Another KYC member, Dak-ho (male, age 41) first hesitated in sending his children to a Chongryun-affiliated school out of concern for their future in Japan. Nevertheless, he eventually enrolled his children into the ethnic school and did not regret his decision. He predicted his grandchildren's generations and succeeding generations would become more Japanese, and this was inevitable. But at the same time he believed the destiny of the ethnic identity and the community of Zainichi Koreans depended on the survival of the school and its ethnic education.

The hope for the preservation of the schools was shared by most Zainichi Koreans in the Chongryun community, even among those who were discontented with some parts of the 'exclusive' ethnic education of the schools. Chongryun-affiliated schools play the most crucial role for community members to retain their ethnic identity and sustain group solidarity. Their schools are one of the most important geographical spaces as 'a reference point for establishing the boundaries of an ethnic community' (Eder, Giesen, Schmidtke, and Tambini 2002: 54).

5. Non-Chongryun Members

5.1. Ethnic Consciousness

Out of the 15 respondents who were not affiliated with Chongryun, Kana (female, age 22) was the only interviewee who participated in non-Chongryun groups. She contacted these groups on the internet. Kana had kept her ethnic heritage hidden from her Japanese friends until recently, even after spending one year in South Korea to master the language. Her aim in joining the Zainichi groups was to meet other Zainichi Koreans from her own generation. Kana's encounters with other Zainichi Koreans changed her views about Zainichi issues and her own identity. Despite of this, Kana was not able to decide which group to stay in because she was 'still wondering how to live [her] life.' Her hesitation to choose which group she would belong to suggests that each Zainichi group has certain cultural values, moral qualities, behaviours, and expectations about what Zainichi Koreans should be. That is to say, the ethnic organisations affect the core of members' lifestyles and identities, as they offer individuals beliefs about themselves, namely, identity options or ideas about who they are (Rex 1997: 217).

Kana also pointed out the difficulty of attracting Zainichi Koreans with names that allow them to 'pass' as Japanese to Zainichi groups. According to Kana, they were divided into two groups: those who yearn for contact with other Zainichi Koreans and those who never wanted to

associate with them. People who participate in their events voluntarily are declining in numbers. She also stressed the difficulty for those Koreans distant from Korean networks to maintain their ethnic identity. Kana said:

There's no doubt that we're easily overwhelmed by circumstances while living here. It would surely be easy to live without thinking about anything. But the people who find this way of thinking wrong join the activities of groups such as Mindan and Chongryun.

In the quote above, she also indicated that Japanese society makes those with Japanese names more susceptible to assimilation. It suggests that participation in Zainichi Korean groups is one of the keys to maintaining or discovering ethnic identity.

On the other hand, the remaining 14 respondents were not involved with any Zainichi-related groups or activities. Four of them received ethnic education from Chongryun-affiliated schools for some years but subsequently became estranged from the Chongryun social circle. Three were brought up as Japanese with Japanese names and had no strong Korean networks. One was a native South Korean and the mother of two of the respondents. One participated in the activities of a non-Chongryun Zainichi group several times but stopped taking part in it. Another one was sometimes taken to Chongryun-related gatherings by her mother and her Chongryun relatives but she was not a member of the group herself. The remaining two were sisters and attended Mindan events with their families several times. Yet neither of them belonged to a particular group.

Several respondents, who were isolated from Zainichi networks, were still aware of their ethnicity in varying degrees. There were some common features for maintaining their Korean ethnicity. Parents and certain circumstances made these individuals conscious of being Korean and *different* from the Japanese around them since childhood. Yeun-ja (female, age 25), for example, had only a Korean name and had a strong consciousness of being a foreigner and Korean. Her parents had used passing names but started using Korean names upon joining a Zainichi Korean group at the age of 20. They gave their children only Korean names and brought them up as Koreans. Her parents had stressed that she was South Korean and different from her Japanese friends. Yuri (female, age 22) and Miri (female, age 19) were brought up by a second-generation father and a South Korean mother; they only used their Korean names. Their parents taught them Korean language at home to ensure that they could communicate with their South Korean relatives.

What is significant here is that both their second-generation parents had lived as Japanese in their youth, using Japanese names and attending Japanese schools. Upon reaching adulthood, they started using Korean names and exhibiting Korean ethnicity. Comparing her

father's generation with hers, Miri felt that her father's generation had a much stronger identity as Zainichi Koreans because 'they had to hide it constantly.' They were delighted when they could show their Korean ethnicity and ethnic pride. In sharp contrast, Miri herself likely took being Korean for granted because she 'was brought up as such.' She also lacked the experiences which made her feel so proud of being Korean. Therefore, whereas Miri's father acquired his ethnic identity by overcoming numerous obstacles and adversities, for Miri, living as a Korean was perceived as a normal path of life. As is the case with Miri's father, Yeun-ja's parents also had previously kept their ethnic backgrounds hidden, but subsequently began asserting Korean ethnicity.

For both analytic and presentation purposes, within the context of this research, Miri's and Yeun-ja's parents' type of ethnicity is defined as an *acquired* ethnicity. As De Vos emphasises (2006), those who sought and failed to assimilate into the mainstream of society have two alternatives: to accept inferior status as their collective self-definition, or to deliberately redefine themselves symbolically. The latter option helps them to create a positive view of themselves based on cultural and racial (ethnic) distinctions and establishing a sense of collective identity (De Vos 2006: 5). Their parents' ethnicity was *acquired* through the latter process. Due to discrimination and prejudice in mainstream society, their hidden Korean identity had long been stigmatised. However, after many years of passing as Japanese, they were determined to redefine themselves as Koreans. Alienating experiences of racism encouraged them to gain strong oppositional ethnic self-definition (Song 2003: 55). This *acquired* ethnicity is developed and pursued through their willpower and convictions to reverse negative representations of themselves and to obtain ethnic pride; it is not automatic but consciously gained through effort, training and learning to be Korean. Using ethnic names and learning Korean history and language are fundamental ways to accomplish this. Voluntarily adopting this new ethnic identity enables them to gain the strong motivation and subjectivity to lead a Zainichi Korean life, and to deny the stigmatised self.

A second-generation Zainichi Korean, Kim Keung-duk, who became the first lawyer with foreigner nationality in Japan, obtained Korean ethnicity through this *acquired* ethnicity process. Kim highlights the need for Zainichi Koreans to regain their Korean selves by acquiring ethnic elements through learning language, history, and culture (Kim, K. 1995: 28). He emphasises the importance for them to extricate themselves from the sense of inferiority that was imposed by Japanese society, and to attempt to change the social structure. This type of ethnicity was also shared by several Japanese-schooled interviewees who had declared that they would live as Koreans after years of passing. For them, ethnicity has been salient in their lives.

On the other hand, the ethnicity of their children, such as Miri, Yeun-ja and many

Chongryun-affiliated school graduates, is defined as a *born-into* type of ethnicity. The aforementioned Kim earnestly provided his children with an ethnic education at home; he wanted them not to have an inferiority complex as Koreans and to acquire their ethnic identity naturally (Kim, K. 2006: 13). In contrast to their parents like Kim, Miri, Yeun-ja and Chongryun Koreans gained an ethnic consciousness effortlessly during the childhood from the surrounding ethnic elements, including their parents' or ethnic schools' Korean education. Thus the individual sense of ethnic membership was internalised during early primary socialisation (Jenkins 2008: 49). They retain their ethnicity almost unconsciously and a sense of 'being Koreans' or 'not being Japanese' is taken for granted. This ethnicity gives people an ingrained ethnic consciousness with objective and subjective certainty, and it tends to become the core and permanent identity.

Another factor for non-participants maintaining Korean ethnicity is that one of their parents is a native South Korean. Eun-hee (female, age 56), a South Korean mother, made her daughters use Japanese names at nursery school because she assumed that Japanese people would have difficulty pronouncing Korean names. Nevertheless, she switched them to Korean names shortly afterwards, because Eun-hee spoke Japanese with a Korean accent, nobody would mistake her for Japanese, even if she and her children used Japanese names. As obvious foreigners, their families could not hide their ethnic background. Consequently, they were always made aware of their difference in ethnicity from the Japanese in their daily lives. This suggests that their ethnic identity was created 'in the meeting of internal and external definition' (Jenkins 2008: 55).

5.2. Attitudes toward Zainichi Groups and Members

Interviews with non-Chongryun respondents present a clear picture of their attitudes toward and views about Zainichi Koreans groups and their members. The research can also account for reasons why they did not seek out encounters with other Zainichi Koreans. Out of 15 non-Chongryun respondents, four received ethnic education from Chongryun-affiliated school for the period of six to 12 years. Their Korean identities remained relatively firm and long-lasting even after they had become estranged from the community. In fact, except for Nami (female, age 31), all participants kept using their Korean names within Japanese society. Compared to the Chongryun participants, the common feature of these four people was their emphasis on their pursuit for personal meaning in their lives, rather than a sense of group affiliation. They developed their individuality and focused on their personal lives. Indeed, they did not assume or share a sense of responsibility to 'preserve their schools,' as did Chongryun members.

When asked about the difference between her parents' generation (second generation) and her generation (third generation), Eun-a (female, age 35) described her generation as being 'less passionate.' The people in her parents' generation helped each other because they were

Zainichi, and their feeling of camaraderie was much stronger. She contrasted this with the younger people who like her built human relationships ‘in a calmer manner,’ regardless of the other person’s Zainichi background, or lack thereof. Compared to the older generations, they seemed to have more freedom in their lifestyles and friendship choices. Their ethnic identities tend to be free from the traditional community structure. This indicates that the collective sense of ethnicity has ceased to be salient. They can attend to the past with less emotional risk than their grandparents’ and parents’ generations (Gans 1996: 148). Consequently, they have developed multi-faceted identities, although their Korean ethnicity still tends to remain core to their identity.

Some other non-participants were not enthusiastic about meeting other Zainichi Koreans partly because of their negative image of Zainichi Koreans in general. Hence they rarely identified themselves with Zainichi Koreans and hardly referred to themselves as Zainichi. A naturalised respondent, Chie (female, age 22) never described herself as Zainichi, but rather as Japanese or sometimes as South Korean during the interview. She showed her repulsion towards Zainichi and criticised their activities. She claimed that Zainichi people ‘should become Japanese if they continue living in Japan.’ She also argued ‘Japan does not need to establish rights for them.’ Chie said:

If they don’t like Japan, they should just go back to their own country. To me, it is just reasonable that we [or they] become Japanese nationals [by naturalisation]. I don’t understand why they are screaming and yelling so much all the time.

Surprisingly her statement on non-naturalised Zainichi Koreans coincided with the typical expressions of some Japanese. They often post messages like ‘if you don’t like Japan, go home’ on the internet when criticising and harassing Zainichi Koreans. A similar opinion was given by another naturalised respondent, Chang-sook (female, age 33). As her second-generation father did not trust in ‘any nation or any organisation,’ Chang-sook never interacted with other Zainichi Koreans. She never wanted to encounter them either in person or on the internet and bitterly criticised ‘Zainichi people.’ Chang-sook said:

I don’t like the expression ‘Zainichi.’ They are like, ‘we are being discriminated against!’ They flock together and can’t do anything without relying on groups. [...] When I read books on Zainichi, I notice that they cannot get over a strong sense of victimisation. They began from it and cannot overcome it. [...] They just go around and around in the same place down there. Japanese feel sorry for them but just look at them from outside.

What was significant was that those who commented unfavourably on 'Zainichi' had never been overtly discriminated against in Japanese society, but their parents had. These respondents were naturalised and thus retain equal rights with native Japanese. Therefore, there was no necessity for them to resist oppression and prejudice by 'sticking together.' They felt that organisation participants were grumbling for no reason, and they could not sympathise with 'Zainichi Koreans' let alone retain a collective identity as Zainichi Koreans. According to Goldberg and Solomos (2002), collective identity is established based on the process of memory, and recollection of a common past allows a group to recognise itself as distinctive. A lack of common memory between these naturalised people and non-naturalised Zainichi Koreans and discontinuity of their experiences as Zainichi Koreans resulted in their refusal to be categorised and bundled into the 'Zainichi' group.

Some other respondents previously had connections with certain Korean networks but had decided not to interact with them. A naturalised respondent, Aki (female, age 38) used to be a member of a Mindan regional group in her neighbourhood, although she never engaged in its activities. She complained that Mindan had taken advantage of its status in Japan, charging its members an excessive fee for granting passports or documents to be sent from South Korea. After naturalising, she was never involved with the organisation. According to her, once a member became naturalised, Mindan would remove his/her name from the list and have nothing to do with him/her. That is to say, naturalisation is one of the definitive boundaries of exclusion from the membership of Mindan, which functions as a 'governmental agency' (Lie 2008: 70).

On the other hand, the aforementioned Yeun-ja (female, age 25) had rarely seen other Koreans until finishing high school, but then started participating in a Zainichi-related group, which was originally a unit of Mindan and later became independent. At first Yeun-ja was excited to see other Koreans and enjoyed talking to them, but she became increasingly aware that the participants in the group actually used Japanese names outside. She was disappointed and left the group. Yeun-ja did not feel that they were her comrades. She did not consider Chongryun-affiliated school graduates her Zainichi comrades either. She remarked, 'they are only keeping to themselves.' She shared and talked about Zainichi issues only with her family but not with other Koreans or her Japanese friends.

There was a tendency for the non-organisation participants to base their Zainichi Korean ethnicity not on a collective identity but on association with their family. Unlike Chongryun participants, they had very few political views concerning the Zainichi. For example, in his youth, Chang-sook's father was bullied at school on account of his ethnic background and poverty. His father (Chang-sook's grandfather) was a drinker and rarely worked, so his mother had to bring up

their seven or eight children working as a street peddler. They always suffered destitution and discrimination, as there was nobody and no organisation to help them. Even after he had children and established his own trading business dealing with South Koreans, his memory about the hardships and his distrust in any nation or any Zainichi group were not effaced. Accordingly, he kept telling his children they were not ordinary Japanese, and they would be discriminated against. He sent his daughters to Christian girl schools to protect them from possible bullying, and made them study hard, saying, ‘if you can’t get a respectable job, Japan will forsake you.’ As a result, although Chang-sook herself never faced discrimination, she felt she ‘took over the discrimination he experienced.’ To quote Chang-sook:

I read some books [on Zainichi] but I couldn’t empathise with them. For I’ve never faced any form of discrimination, there was no reality in them for me. I thought they were different from me. But there was a reality in what my father said. I didn’t experience it, but there was a reality. [...] The issue about us being Zainichi is actually a family issue for us, not ‘a Zainichi issue.’

Some of their core problems were derived from their being born into Zainichi families. Nevertheless, their attention was not directed towards political and postcolonial perspectives, which Zainichi-related groups usually emphasised to some degree. They seldom condemned Japan for its colonial history and the resultant current situations; they rarely made connections between their personal/family problems and the effect of Japan’s imperialism. As there are no mutual interests shared with the participants of ethnic organisations, these non-participants’ ethnicity is not a ‘political phenomenon’ (Cohen 1996: 84). It is primarily a primordial sense of belonging to their ancestry and origin (De Vos 2006: 15). For this reason, their Zainichi issues and identities did not go beyond the realm of family life. This should explain why they rarely associated with other Koreans let alone experience a sense of group affiliation.

6. Conclusion

This paper explored how the organisation and the community of Chongryun affected the lives and identities of their membership. While Chongryun full-time employees and members are still largely affected by its hegemonic control, other Chongryun people have become more independent from the organisation. This indicates that they no longer have shared collective memories or political ideologies either with their *homeland* or with the leadership of Chongryun. Nevertheless, many Chongryun Koreans still share the collective identities based on their love for the schools. Whether they graduated from Chongryun-affiliated schools or not is one of the clear

ethnic boundaries that separates their comrades from others. On the other hand, the identities and lives of non-Chongryun member respondents are diversified and differentiated from those of Chongryun Koreans. Whilst some were highly assimilated into mainstream Japanese society, others maintained individual ethnic identities. They refused to be categorised and bundled into 'the Zainichi' group. Their personal/family problems deriving from their Zainichi Korean background and Japanese colonialism rarely extended beyond the realm of their family issues. This study shows that social networks and experiences of ethnic community individuals have a key role in determining their identities and the ways in which they live their lives.

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