

# EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION AND IDENTITIES OF JAPANESE-SCHOOLED ZAINICHI KOREANS

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## Abstract

This paper explores the experiences of Japanese-schooled Zainichi Koreans. It analyses the differences and commonalities in terms of their education, family structure, and ethnicity. It also examines how some Japanese-schooled Koreans (re)gained their ethnic identity through their activities in the Chongryun youth group, as well as why they were attracted to the group and how their activities affected their lives and identities. The author conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirty-seven Zainichi Koreans, including eighteen Japanese-schooled Zainichi Koreans, from 2007 and 2010. This research shows differences in schools and education are the major source of divisions in the Zainichi population and the subsequent formations of their identities.

**Key words:** Zainichi Koreans, education, Japanese schools, Ryugakudo, identity, ethnicity

## 1. Introduction

The majority of Zainichi Koreans are now those of the third, fourth or even fifth generation born in Japan and most of them go to Japanese schools. The purpose of this paper is to look at the experiences of Japanese-schooled Zainichi Koreans. The author conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirty-seven Zainichi Koreans from 2007 and 2010. Of thirty-seven respondents, eighteen Zainichi Koreans received education from Japanese schools. This research analyses the differences and commonalities in terms of their education, family structure, and ethnicity among these Japanese-schooled Zainichi Koreans. It also examines how some Japanese-schooled Koreans (re)gained their ethnic identity through their activities in the Chongryun youth group, as well as why they were attracted to the group and how their activities affected their lives and identities.

## 2. Zainichi Koreans in Japanese Schools

### 2.1. Passing as Japanese

In this paper, the Japanese-schooled Zainichi Korean interviewees are divided into three categories for the purpose of comparison and the analysis: (1) those who hid their ethnic origin

from their Japanese friends (or did not reveal it voluntarily), (2) those who did not conceal their ethnic backgrounds, and (3) those who started attending Japanese schools after having attended Chongryun-affiliated ethnic schools. In the sample, seven respondents did not reveal their ethnic backgrounds to their Japanese friends at school, and used Japanese names. Seven were open about their ethnicity, using their ethnic names except for one respondent who used her Japanese official name. The remaining four respondents attended Japanese schools after receiving education for various periods of time from Chongryun-affiliated ethnic schools. They used their Korean names at school, and their Japanese classmates knew about their ethnic roots. The research investigated the differences and commonalities between the groups and individuals in terms of education and ethnicity.

The first commonality among the respondents in group (1) was a lack of social interaction with other Zainichi Koreans due to physical and emotional isolation from them. None of them had frequent exchanges or contacts with Korean relatives or friends. They lived as Japanese using Japanese names. The second-generation parent(s) of four out of the seven interviewees had attended Chongryun-affiliated schools, but most of them no longer had a connection with any Zainichi-related organisations. Furthermore, with the exceptions of Interviewee 20 (male, age 21) and Interviewee 18 (male, age 25), the families of group (1) respondents were likely to lack familial solidarity and face serious family problems, such as divorce, domestic violence, destitution, and large debts. These negative aspects in the domestic domain are possibly correlated with their tendency to have negative self-images as Zainichi Koreans, or their unwillingness to give serious thought to Zainichi issues. When parents cannot offer children adequate role models, children tend to have a deeper sense of negative identity (Sasaki and Wagatsuma 2004). Moreover, the disassociation from or poor interpersonal relations with their Korean families and relatives prevented them from inheriting and passing on their cultural traditions and values in which Chongryun Koreans put great value.

Secondly, the extent of assimilation into Japanese society was high among the families of this group. They tended to abandon expressions of Korean culture, and adopted many Japanese cultural traditions in their daily lives. The deceased mother of Interviewee 5 (female, age 38) loved Japanese traditions and cultural practices, such as Japanese traditional dance, kimono, and the tea ceremony. Interviewee 7 (female, age 22) and Interviewee 19 (female, age 23) participated in Japanese traditional events such as shichigosan and wore kimono at coming of age ceremonies. Although the South Korean father of Interviewee 23 (female, age 22) played South Korean music and kept some Korean ornaments at home, the family mainly ate Japanese food.

The tendency toward assimilation was reflected in their motivation to choose Japanese schools over Chongryun-affiliated schools. While most of Interviewee 20's paternal relatives

were sent to Chongryun-affiliated schools, his parents, who were Chongryun-affiliated school graduates, sent him to Japanese public schools. His parents believed their children ‘should receive a Japanese education as they continue living in Japan,’ and it was natural because of ‘the change of the times.’ Similarly, Interviewee 23’s father sent her to Japanese schools, believing that ‘she should live like Japanese in order to live in Japanese society.’ The parents of Interviewee 18 (male, age 25) also thought that his attending Japanese school promised a better future. Hence their parents considered assimilation and adaptation into Japanese mainstream society would be beneficial for their children’s lives and futures.

Thirdly, the respondents categorised in group (1) tended to lack a strong awareness of or much interest in being Zainichi Koreans or ‘foreigners in Japan.’ Most of the respondents discovered their Korean roots at certain points in their lives. However, their parents and families rarely talked about their ethnic traits and never engaged in a proper conversation about it or provided explanations. Consequently, they never learned ‘the meaning of being Zainichi Koreans.’ Interviewee 25 (female, age 38), Interviewee 20 (male, age 21), and Interviewee 18 (male, age 25) were perplexed, and unaware of ‘who they were.’ Interviewee 25 and Interviewee 20 lacked drive for a search for their ethnic identity. Interviewee 25 regarded herself as ‘almost the same as regular Japanese’ and described her siblings as ‘completely regular Japanese.’ Interviewee 20 considered himself ‘80 percent assimilated into Japan.’ Asked why they never talked about their ethnic backgrounds to their Japanese friends, Interviewee 7 (female, age 22), Interviewee 20, and Interviewee 25 answered ‘that was simply because nobody asked so I didn’t need to tell.’ Interviewee 20 rarely encountered situations that made him ‘think or feel Zainichi’ due to his use of a Japanese name and a lack of experience of exclusion. Recently Zainichi Koreans are much less likely to experience discrimination at Japanese schools than before, as long as they live as Japanese using Japanese names (Nomura 1996: 67-68). In this context, mainly because their ethnic background was unknown and not manifested, respondents in this category seldom faced the situations in which their personal dignity was challenged in terms of their ethnic roots. This otherwise might have made them more aware of their ethnicity.

Fourthly, some of them retained negative images of Zainichi Koreans and were uncomfortable with their own Korean backgrounds. Except for one respondent, Interviewee 18, none of the other respondents in group (1) experienced discrimination at school, while passing as Japanese. Yet still, Interviewee 23 (female, age 22) and Interviewee 19 (female, age 23) had a great fear of ‘being different’ from their Japanese friends. Interviewee 18 described this fear as ‘shocking and traumatic.’ Despite her lack of experience of any discrimination, Interviewee 7 clearly hinted her repulsion of the fact of her being Zainichi Korean during the interview. Her unwillingness to show her graduate certificate with her Korean name to her future husband

exemplifies this. Likewise, Interviewee 18 and Interviewee 23 were also shocked to see their Korean names on their graduate certificates. Interviewee 18 was always trying to hide the inside of his house with its Korean traditional ornaments from his friends. These Korean elements represented their negative, secret ethnic background and their negative feelings regarding the fact of their Korean descent. In sum, the people in this group rarely had high self-esteem as Zainichi Koreans, nor had they means to gain or secure it.

## 2.2. Ethnicity as a Family Matter

The research also revealed some patterns and characteristics of the respondents of group (2), who were open about their ethnic roots. Firstly, aside from Interviewee 22 (female, age 22), who was a child of a mixed marriage between a Korean father and a Japanese mother, the rest of the six respondents used their Korean names in their daily lives. However, since the number of Zainichi Koreans using Korean names at Japanese schools was extremely small, they seldom ran into other Zainichi Koreans with similar backgrounds. This indicates a relatively clear division between the two types of Zainichi Koreans: Chongryun Koreans on one hand, and Zainichi Koreans passing as Japanese at Japanese schools like people in group (1) on the other. For these Zainichi Koreans attending Japanese school with Korean names, use of Korean names is one of the most vital resources to maintain their ethnicity.

Secondly, compared to group (1), the parents of the respondents in group (2) put a greater value on educating children as Koreans or ‘foreigners in Japan.’ They carefully and consciously educated their children to be aware of their Korean ethnicity. By so doing, they hoped that their children would be able to gain ethnic identity and to be prepared for discrimination. The parents of the sisters, Interviewee 8 (female, age 22) and Interviewee 9 (female, age 19), taught them Korean language at home. Their parents were of the opinion that a lack of command of the Korean language would cause them a feeling of inferiority.

By contrast, one respondent, Interviewee 6 (female, age 18), lacked a strong ethnic consciousness. Her mother graduated from Chongryun-affiliated schools and retained a strong Chongryun ethnic identity. She was also surrounded by her relatives who were deeply engaged in Chongryun activities. However, her mother sent her to an international school because she ‘did not like the education system of Chongryun-affiliated schools.’ Her mother was also concerned that attending a Chongryun-affiliated school would have been limiting for her and would cause her to encounter discrimination in Japanese society. Consequently, she lacked ethnic awareness and knowledge on issues surrounding Zainichi Koreans. This came across in the interviews as she remarked that she never discussed ‘Zainichi stuff’ with her family or friends from the international school. Her case shows that ethnic education at home is one of the important keys to nurturing

ethnic identity among Japanese-schooled children. As Jenkins states, children know ‘who they are’ because ‘others tell them’ (Jenkins 2008: 49, emphasis as in the original).

Thirdly, the families in group (2) tended to maintain firm and close relationships with their Korean relatives and took part in Korean ritual events and gatherings frequently. They were unlikely to have the serious family issues, which the respondents in group (1) experienced. Interviewee 22 (female, age 22) was strongly aware of her ethnicity since childhood, in spite of her hybrid backgrounds. Her ethnic awareness was built largely on her family’s frequent visits to her Zainichi Korean father’s relatives. She was also surrounded by Korean culture: the traditional Korean songs her father sang to her, the Korean food she had everyday, and certain Korean words and phrases she used in conversations with her Korean relatives. In addition, her Japanese mother made massive efforts to make her children feel proud of being Zainichi Korean; she showed great respect for Interviewee 22’s father, relatives and Korean culture.

In contrast to the other interviewee with a hybrid background in group (1), Interviewee 19 (female, age 23), Interviewee 22’s family had stronger family ties and more frequent interactions with their Korean relatives. These aspects surely helped her to develop a positive ethnic identity. As Fenton puts it, when family life is important and family ties are translated into ethnic sentiments, a loose ethnic identity may be generated (Fenton 1999: 110). Interview data revealed how close relationships with relatives and strong family ties can support a Korean cultural environment and Korean ethnic heritage. Consequently, compared to the respondents of group (1), most respondents in group (2) had less confusion about their ethnic roots as they recognised the clear difference between themselves and their Japanese friends.

Fourthly, the respondents in group (2) hardly experienced being excluded at school, despite their parents’ warnings of the possible discrimination against them. Although three of the seven in this group were ridiculed or teased a few times due to their Korean names and ethnic traits, they said they did not consider the incidents as serious problems. They were on good terms with the Japanese surrounding them, including their Japanese friends, colleagues and boyfriends. Interviewee 22 usually used her Japanese name (her legal name) but never hid her ethnicity from anyone, and her Korean background had not affected her friendships with Japanese friends. On the contrary, they became excited and asked her questions about their favourite South Korean singers.

Few respondents in group (2) were seeking to interact with other Zainichi Koreans or to get involved with Zainichi-related organisations. Even though some met one or two Zainichi Koreans with similar backgrounds at school, it was unlikely they struck up a friendship purely because of their similar ethnic background. On the other hand, as is discussed in the subsequent section, Interviewee 19 (female, age 23), who was categorised in group (1), remarked that she had

been thrilled to make friends with other Zainichi Koreans, and shared stories of harassment from her high school classmates with them. In this light, the respondents in group (2) did not yearn for contacts with other Zainichi Koreans, probably because of the lack of need to share negative experiences and sufferings. Meanwhile, few respondents discussed Zainichi-related issues with their Japanese friends. This is mainly because many Japanese have less knowledge on Zainichi issues or Japan's colonial history. Interviewee 26 (female, age 25) described an oft-repeated conversation with some Japanese:

When I say my name, they would go, 'Huh?' So I say, 'I am South Korean.' 'Oh, you are? Your Japanese is pretty good.' 'Because I've lived in Japan all my life, and besides, I can't speak Korean.' Then people claim, 'If that's so, you are pretty much the same as Japanese.'

She assumed that people perhaps supposed her grandmother or parents came from South Korea, but did not suppose many Japanese knew 'what Zainichi means.' Her friends never asked her searching questions. Even though Japanese ignorance and indifference towards Zainichi Koreans frustrated respondents like Interviewee 26, they were reluctant to discuss Zainichi-related issues with their Japanese friends. She was worried that 'things would go sour [between them]' if she raised those issues. Similarly, Interviewee 3 (female, age 33) also avoided the topics related to Zainichi Koreans during the conversation with Japanese. This is because, she remarked, 'we [Interviewee 3 and her Japanese friends] would never be able to understand each other.' To quote her:

I'm firmly aware that I'm not Japanese at all. But Japanese people can't understand this, this feeling of 'being different.' They would think I'm the same [as Japanese] since I was born in Japan and have Japanese nationality. People would say, 'then you are Japanese, aren't you?'[...] But I can never become Japanese, and I never want to become Japanese.

Although the respondents in group (2) were open about their ethnic backgrounds, they tended not to attempt to deepen dialogues with Japanese people. This is partly because, as Interviewee 26 stated, they hope to avoid causing disruption or awkwardness in their friendships. In Japanese schools many Zainichi Korean children are made to be 'invisible.' As a result, Zainichi-related issues are considered a taboo by Japanese people, which may result in 'building a wall between Zainichi Koreans and their Japanese friends' (Nomura 1996). Consequently, as Interviewee 3 and

Interviewee 26 concluded, they felt that ‘discussion on Zainichi-related issues should not go beyond the realm of family.’ In this context, there is no space for these Zainichi Koreans to fit in outside their family in terms of ethnic identity, living, as they do, in a society that denies their existence. Clearly, the nature of the ethnic identities of these Japanese-schooled Koreans differs from that of many Chongryun Koreans.

### 2.3. Maintaining Ethnicity and Culture in Japanese Arenas

The respondents in group (3) transferred from Chongryun-affiliated schools to Japanese schools. They received ethnic education for six or nine years and their second-generation parents also attended Chongryun-affiliated schools. All of the four respondents were pleased to have attended ethnic schools since they made friends, and learned about their roots and Korean culture. Interviewee 31 (female, age 31) stated, ‘I was much more at ease at the Chongryun-affiliated school because I didn’t have to assert myself there.’ Although their life at Chongryun-affiliated schools was enjoyable, they wanted to go to Japanese schools for similar reasons. Interviewee 35 (male, age 22) ‘wanted to know more about Japan by making friends with Japanese and entering Japanese society.’ Some of them found the Korean school regulations too strict. They also disliked the atmosphere of strong collectivism, exemplified by the fact that most Chongryun students progressed to Chongryun high schools after junior high school. At the school of Interviewee 30 (female, age 31) school, only four out of 45 students took the entrance examination for Japanese high schools. However, all their families and relatives supported their entrance into Japanese schools, while their Chongryun teachers and classmates strongly opposed it.

In Japanese junior high and high school, Interviewee 35 was picked on by his classmates and pejoratively called ‘*Chōsenjin*’ during quarrels. This experience made him recognise his own ‘*Chōsenjin* identity.’ He stated that if he had been surrounded by only Chongryun people after elementary school, he would not have noticed this identity for a long time. He might have taken for granted that he was a Zainichi without the necessity of being aware of it. On the other hand, being called ‘*Chōsenjin*’ in a negative way did not destabilise his *Chōsenjin* identity, as he ‘never hated being a *Chōsenjin*.’ This experience at Japanese school led him to a rediscovery of his ethnicity, and made him subsequently seek out his fellow Zainichi Koreans. Meanwhile, the other three respondents never participated in Chongryun activities, although they occasionally met their old classmates. Interviewee 30 enjoyed her life at the Japanese high school more than at the Chongryun-affiliated school. Most of her friends were Japanese. Currently, at work, she hides the fact that she is Zainichi Korean and a graduate of a Korean school.

There was a great deal of difference in the extent to which the respondents in each group retained Korean cultural conventions as opposed to Japanese ones. For some Zainichi Koreans,

the importance of Korean culture is much diminished from their daily life, or it is blended in with Japanese culture. On the other hand, some maintained the eating of Korean food, use of certain Korean words, the wearing of traditional dress, and the performance of *chesa*, a Korean family memorial service rite. For example, Interviewee 20, who considered himself highly assimilated into Japan, called his father *Aboji* ('Father' in Korean) and routinely joined his relatives for *chesa*. Interviewee 30's brother, Interviewee 32 (male, age 26) said as the oldest son in his family he wanted to protect and continue conducting *chesa* for their late mother throughout his life. The family of Interviewee 26 (female, age 25) frequently held *chesa* and traditional-style family gatherings. She wore *chima chogori* at the coming of age ceremony in which Japanese female participants usually wear *kimono*. She commented that it would be abhorrent if her future daughter insists on wearing *kimono* instead of *chima chogori* at her ceremony.

Meanwhile, Interviewee 22 (female, age 22), the child of a mixed marriage between Japanese and Korean parents, enjoyed both Korean and Japanese cultures. She wore both *kimono* and *chima chogori* occasionally and enjoyed both Korean and Japanese dishes. Interviewee 8 (female, age 22) and Interviewee 3 (female, age 33) had a strong sense of being 'a foreigner in Japan' or South Korean. Nonetheless, they wore *kimono* at their coming age of ceremony. While Interviewee 3 wore *chima chogori* at her graduation ceremony and her wedding, Interviewee 8 had no desire to wear *chima chogori* on any occasions. Likewise, Interviewee 7 (female, age 22) was happy to wear *kimono* at her ceremony and never desired to wear *chima chogori* instead. Therefore, the degree to which respondents exhibited cultural traits was not necessarily in proportion to the intensity of their ethnic identification. As Barth suggests, it is problematic to attempt to identify and distinguish ethnic groups only by the morphological characteristics of their cultures (Barth 1996: 76).

### **3. Student Activities in Ryugakudo**

#### **3.1. Ryugakudo Activities**

As the previous section have discussed, contacts between Chongryun Koreans and Japanese-schooled Koreans are limited, and hence they have few opportunities to get to know each other. One of the few exceptions to this, and where some respondents with different backgrounds met each other was Ryugakudo, an affiliate unit of Chongryun mainly for university students. Among the interviewees aged between late teens and early 20s, ten participated in Ryugakudo. Ryugakudo members are primarily third and fourth generation Zainichi Koreans ranging in age from 18 to 23. They are students at technical schools, colleges, and universities. Regarding its policies and activities, Ryugakudo's website says it has attempted to facilitate solidarity and deepen exchanges between comrade students of the North (Korea), the South



(Korea), and overseas. It also has actively worked in creating friendships and promoting goodwill among students from Japan and all over the world (Korean Student League in Japan 2010).

Ryugakudo holds events for Zainichi Korean and Japanese students regularly. Some symposiums are open to general citizens irrespective of age or nationality. It involves educational activities, study groups for debates and discussions, and lectures by guest speakers on Japanese colonial history and Zainichi Korean issues. Ryugakudo regional representative Interviewee 18 (male, age 25) and Chongryun-operated Korea University student Interviewee 12 (male, age 22) also remarked that one of the targets of their activity is contributing to the improvement of relations between Japan and Korea through interactions with Japanese students. According to Interviewee 17 (male, age 21), their activities involved visits to historical sites with Japanese students. According to Interviewee 12, Chongryun, which operates Ryugakudo, has sought to raise awareness of Korean ethnic identity among ‘invisible Zainichi Koreans.’ Interviewee 13 (male, age 19) noted that they helped assimilated and passing Zainichi Koreans learn their own ethnic roots, history, and language. Notwithstanding, many members found it difficult to attract assimilated people. Their activities, which are aligned with North Korea’s communist ideology, have generated scepticism among people in Japan, including Japanese-schooled Koreans. As a result, few people showed interest or agreed to take part in their events.

While some ethnic school graduates frequently participated in Ryugakudo, others did not. Interviewee 27 (female, age 19) and Interviewee 29 (female, age 19) commented that many of the active participants were Japanese school graduates, who had had few opportunities to meet other Zainichi Koreans or the community before. Not having been affiliated with Chongryun before, these Japanese-schooled Koreans found everything fresh and new. On the other hand, many ethnic school graduates “felt tired of the same old routine” of what they had gone through in their schools. Interviewee 27 also stated that only ‘red’ Chongryun Koreans joined the events aggressively. Her remark indicates that they assumed in Ryugakudo a similar brand of ethnic education to that of the Chongryun-affiliated schools, in which North Korean ideologies are largely reflected, has been repeated, this time being directed toward Japanese school graduates.

Interviewee 35 (male, age 21) also stated some Chongryun-affiliated school graduates in Ryugakudo ‘do not think about anything.’ According to him, those people considered themselves neither as Japanese nor Chōsenjin, and their activity in Ryugakudo was only an extension of their friendships with other members. His statement suggests that not all the Chongryun graduates in Ryugakudo are strongly motivated by its activities themselves. Some are not deeply concerned with the great issues of the time surrounding Zainichi Koreans or the relations between Japan and Korea.

### 3.2. Discovery of Korean Ethnicity

For some Japanese-schooled Korean respondents, Ryugakudo was influential and valuable. As few Japanese schools provide proper historical education on Japan's colonial past and the current issues surrounding Zainichi Koreans, Japanese-schooled Koreans rarely have a fair picture of history. Many of them also keep their identity hidden from their Japanese friends. As a result, they were unlikely to know much about their own ethnic heritage or have pride in being Korean. Ryugakudo enables them to study history from a new perspective and associate with other Zainichi Koreans, and consequently they (re)gain and develop their ethnic identity through its organised activities.

Among the Ryugakudo participants, four interviewees were Japanese school graduates and one attended both a Chongryun-affiliated and a Japanese school. The regional representative Interviewee 18 (male, age 25) and Interviewee 20 (Interviewee 20, male, age 21) started attending Ryugakudo upon applying for a scholarship funded by Chongryun. Interviewee 19 (female, age 23) contacted Ryugakudo through her Zainichi Korean high school teacher when she was seeking advice for a trip to North Korea. Interviewee 19 invited Interviewee 22 (female, age 22) to a Ryugakudo event through a social networking site on the internet. Interviewee 35 (male, age 21) was invited to an event by his old ethnic elementary school classmate, although he had been distant from his old classmates. All of the participants were called by their Korean names within the group.

The active Ryugakudo participants, Interviewee 18, Interviewee 19, and Interviewee 35 were highly affected by the group. They visited North Korea after having joined Ryugakudo and gained a strong sense of sympathy towards the North. Their remarks sounded politicised, and were full of expressions which can often be heard from avid Chongryun supporters. These expressions included '*Minzoku Kaiho*' (national liberation), '*Nanboku toistu*' (the reunification of the North and the South), and 'fighting against suppression from Japanese society.' They also used the word '*Chōsenjin*' to refer to themselves, being consistent with Chongryun's public reference to its members.

Ryugakudo also offered former Chongryun youths opportunities to return to the community and rediscover their ethnic identity. Interviewee 35's attitude to and his perception of his own identity seemed to have changed after he had joined Ryugakudo in his second year of university. He received a six-year ethnic education at a Chongryun elementary school. When he participated in an event in which Zainichi Korean participants across the country got together, he became shocked to see 'everyone was revelling in being Zainichi.' He found himself enjoying their company. He had since started studying about history and socialising with other Zainichi Koreans through Ryugakudo activities.

Two Japanese-schooled Koreans, who had previously held negative self-images as Zainichi *Chōsenjin*, learned to accept their Korean ethnicity rather positively through their participation in Ryugakudo. Interviewee 18 (male, age 25) was often bullied and ostracised by his classmates from elementary school through high school because of his ethnic background. However, studying at Ryugakudo made him realise that ‘there is nothing to be ashamed of in being and asserting oneself as *Chōsenjin*.’ To quote Interviewee 18:

I realised that I was wrong for denying myself. I wanted to be strong and live like normal people. [...] Ryugakudo and my current job gave me self-confidence.

He claimed that knowing and speaking about ‘who I am’ through learning Zainichi history was most important to unite Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds. He served as a representative of a Ryugakudo regional office despite the low salary and opposition from his parents. His goal was to protect Ryugakudo as a place for Zainichi Korean students with different backgrounds. He said:

I don’t believe we need to assimilate at all and we have to say it aloud. There is nothing wrong with being *Chōsenjin* and the word *Chōsen*. So I am determined to continue to work for Ryugakudo.

Interviewee 19 was first fearful of Ryugakudo because it was ‘a unit of Chongryun and North Korea.’ However, her negative image towards them completely changed after her visit to North Korea and her participation in Ryugakudo. Ryugakudo members’ earnest endeavours to accomplish ‘national liberation’ greatly moved her. Ryugakudo also provided her a chance to find ‘real’ friends who were Zainichi Koreans. They sympathised with each other and talked about ‘the wrongdoings of the Japanese.’ She was very thrilled by ‘the feeling of having *Chōsenjin* friends,’ as she felt alone among Japanese students at university. She commented:

I would have been harassed if I fought as *Chōsenjin* by myself. After joining Ryugakudo, finally I was able to efface my repulsion at being *Chōsenjin* and of my Korean name from the bottom of my heart. [...] Encountering other *Chōsenjin* really liberated me. I used to think it was so hard to fight against the oppression. But people in Ryugakudo were doing this so naturally and I felt this was a place for me.

These three respondents established pride in their ethnic heritage and began asserting their

ethnicities. In the course of the search for roots, they recovered their ‘lost histories’ (Hall 2009: 203), which they could not learn in Japanese schools. They (re)discovered the meaning of being *Chōsenjin* by joining Ryugakudo. Interviewee 18 and Interviewee 19 chose to adopt a Korean identity through participating in activities in Ryugakudo, after having been brought up as Japanese.

Despite its aim to unite Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds, there was a certain barrier between Japanese school graduates and Chongryun-affiliated school graduates within Ryugakudo. Even Interviewee 19 and Interviewee 18, who were now leading figures in the group, felt there was a gap between themselves and Chongryun Koreans at first. According to them, many Japanese schooled Koreans attended a single event and never returned. The other interviewee, Interviewee 22 (female, age 22), still sometimes felt isolated and excluded from Chongryun-affiliated school graduates. She thought of quitting the activities several times. Her father, a second-generation Chongryun-affiliated school graduate, strongly opposed her involvement in Ryugakudo, viewing it as ‘a branch of Chongryun.’ However, she was amazed to have learned much, and interacted with people in similar situations and with similar thoughts to herself in Ryugakudo, and decided to stay in the group. For Japanese-schooled Koreans like Interviewee 22, institutions such as Ryugakudo are rare. It provides a place for them to associate with others of similar backgrounds and to learn about their origins and history, opportunities which are unavailable in Japanese educational settings.

#### 4. Conclusion

Each Zainichi Korean has specific and different experiences and backgrounds. Above all, differences in schools and education are the major source of divisions in the Zainichi population and the subsequent formations of their identities. Many Zainichi Koreans are still in the middle of the process of adaptation into Japanese society and reconstruction of their ethnic identities. In order to investigate the complexities of these processes and the dynamics of their identities, this paper has first explored the experiences and overviews of Japanese-schooled Zainichi Koreans. Those who concealed their ethnic identity and lacked social interaction with other Koreans. Some faced serious family problems which may have been partly caused by their distance from their Korean networks. Their parents believed assimilation and adaptation would be beneficial for their lives and futures. These respondents lacked a strong awareness of or interest in being Zainichi Koreans. Some of them tended to maintain negative self-images as Zainichi Koreans and had trouble accepting their Korean backgrounds. On the other hand, the respondents who were open about their Korean identity were educated to be aware of their Korean ethnicity by their parents, and thus clearly recognised the difference between themselves and their Japanese friends. However, they seldom showed interest in interaction with other Zainichi

Koreans or involvement with Zainichi-related organisations, and they rarely discussed Zainichi-related issues with their Japanese friends. For some Japanese school graduates, Ryugakudo was an influential and valuable organisation. It helped them to acquire knowledge of their own ethnic heritage and develop their ethnic identity.

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