

**A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Identity Formation and  
Cultural Heritage Thinking Among Young Zainichi Koreans:  
Insights from Diverse Educational Backgrounds**

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# **A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Identity Formation and Cultural Heritage Thinking Among Young Zainichi Koreans: Insights from Diverse Educational Backgrounds**

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Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2023

## **Abstract**

"Zainichi Koreans" refers to people who came from the Korean Peninsula or are descendants of Korean immigrants and have been residing in Japan for approximately 150 years. They have long been described as individuals who had their "ethnic identity deprived" and as "incomplete entities," with no definite place to call home, neither in Japanese society nor in South Korea or North Korea. Despite facing severe discrimination in Japanese society, the 1st and 2nd generations of Zainichi Koreans have respected their ethnic identity and built their communities and identities. However, with changing times, the number of Zainichi Koreans has decreased, and their ethnic identity has been influenced by assimilation into Japanese society, becoming more diluted.

This research focuses on young Zainichi Koreans, specifically those who attended Korean Ethnic Schools and those who attended Ethnic Classes within the Japanese school. Through qualitative interviews, the study explores how these two groups have managed to assimilate into Japanese society while upholding the intentions of their predecessors to establish a distinct culture and ethnic identity. Additionally, the study examines the influence of Zainichi education on their identity and how these individuals, who have experienced Zainichi education, intend to pass on their Zainichi identity to the next generation. The results reveal several differences and commonalities in the processes of ethnic identity formation, Zainichi education, and ethnic heritage. Furthermore, new issues related to education have emerged, which offer insights into the future coexistence of Japanese society and the Zainichi Koreans community.

Keywords: Zainichi Koreans, ethnic identity formation, Zainichi education, ethnic heritage

在日韓國人之族群認同形成與文化傳承思維研究：

多元教育背景下的年輕族群訪談分析

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摘要

“在日韓國朝鮮人”指的是來自朝鮮半島或是朝鮮移民後代，已在日本居住約150。長期以來，他們被描述為被剝奪了“民族身份”，是“不完整的個體”，在日本社會、韓國或北朝鮮都沒有明確的歸屬地。儘管在日本社會面臨嚴重的歧視，但在韓國朝鮮人的第一代和第二代一直尊重他們的民族身份，建立了他們的社區和身份。然而，隨著時代的變化，在日韓國朝鮮人數量減少，他們的民族身份受到了日本社會同化的影響，變得更加淡化。

本研究聚焦於年輕的在日韓國朝鮮人，特別是那些曾在朝鮮學校和在日本學校中參加民族班級的人。通過質化訪談方法，研究在日韓國朝鮮人在面臨日本社會同化時，這兩組人是如何維護他們前人建立獨特文化和民族身份的意願。此外，本研究還探討了在日教育對他們身份的影響，以及他們是如何將他們的在日身份傳遞給下一代。研究結果呈現了在民族身份形成、在日教育和民族傳統方面的幾個差異和共同點。此外，本研究結果呈現了教育相關的新問題，為日本社會和在日韓國社群的未來共存提供了見解。

關鍵字：在日韓國朝鮮人，民族身份形成，在日民族教育，民族繼承

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Korean residents in Japan, also known as Zainichi Koreans, are a minority group with a long history in Japan. According to the statistics on resident foreigners, as of the end of June 2022, there were over 2.96 million registered foreign residents in Japan, accounting for approximately 2% of the total population. Among these registered foreign residents, there were approximately 430,000 individuals with Korean nationality (韓國籍) and Chōsen nationality (朝鮮籍, refer to the Korean Peninsula Korea before split into North and South).<sup>1</sup> The number of Korean nationals in Japan reached its peak in 1984, with 687,135 individuals, accounting for 85.9% of the registered population at that time. However, in recent years, the number of special permanent residents has been declining, and the number of Korean residents in Japan has been decreasing every year.<sup>2</sup> The figure of 430,000 Korean or Chōsen nationals includes individuals referred to as "newcomers" who migrated from Korea to Japan for business or study purposes since the 1980s. Among these 430,000 individuals, approximately 150,000 are newcomers.<sup>3</sup> Within the population of 430,000 Korean nationals, the remaining 280,000 individuals consist of those who directly or indirectly have historical roots during the time when the Korean Peninsula was under colonial rule by Japan before it was divided into present-day South Korea and North Korea. They are either individuals with

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<sup>1</sup> 出入国在留管理庁ホームページ, "在留外国人統計 (旧登録外国人統計)," 国籍・地域別 在留資格 (在留目的) 別 在留外国人 (2022/06 2022). <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/file-download?statInfId=000032258905&fileKind=4>.

<sup>2</sup> 金泰泳, "在日コリアンの言論におけるアイデンティティの変遷: 季刊誌 『三千里』 『青丘』 にみる 70 年代から 90 年代の 「在日」," *東洋大学社会学部紀要* 45, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>3</sup> 福本拓, "大阪府における在日外国人 「ニューカマー」 の生活空間," *地理科学* 57, no. 4 (2002).

a direct connection to that era or their descendants.<sup>4</sup> These individuals, in contrast to the newcomers, are sometimes referred to as "oldcomers." Most of the oldcomers hold the residence status of "Special Permanent Resident," and they are commonly referred to as "Zainichi Koreans" in Japan. Many Zainichi Koreans have also acquired Japanese citizenship, with approximately 380,000 individuals obtaining Japanese nationality between 1952 and 2021. Therefore, it is believed that there are even more Zainichi Koreans than the aforementioned figure of 280,000.<sup>5</sup> The Special Permanent Resident status is different from what newcomers hold. It is a residency status granted to individuals who were forcibly taken from former Japanese colonies such as Korea and Taiwan and relocated to Japan, as well as to foreign residents and their descendants who have been living in Japan before World War II.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of their settlement and the development of their social position have been shaped by various harsh past experiences. There is a generational shift among Zainichi Koreans, from the first generation who came to Japan from Korea to the fifth generation now. In the present Zainichi Koreans community, the second and third generations play a central role, but those from the second generation onward have been born and raised in Japan without experiencing life in Korea. As generational shifts occur, the connections and relationships with the first generation have weakened for the fourth and fifth generations. Simultaneously, their ties with Japanese society have strengthened, and ethnic consciousness has become diluted. Zainichi Koreans have long been labeled as having their "ethnicity deprived," being "incomplete existences," and as "homeland-dispossessed individuals" with

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<sup>4</sup> 出入国在留管理庁ホームページ, "在留外国人統計 (旧登録外国人統計) ."

<sup>5</sup> "在日同胞社会," updated 2021/12, accessed 06/15, 2023, <https://www.mindan.org/syakai.php>.

<sup>6</sup> 後藤光男, "外国人の公務就任権をめぐる一般永住者と特別永住者," *早稲田社会科学総合研究* 14, no. 1 (2013).

no settled place in either Korean or Japanese society.<sup>7</sup> With the generational shifts, more Zainichi Koreans now hold Japanese citizenship. The reasons and backgrounds for their naturalization or being born with Japanese citizenship vary, including discrimination faced by Zainichi Koreans throughout history and intermarriage with Japanese individuals. Among the current younger generations, such as the fourth and fifth generations, some have lived their lives without knowing they are Zainichi Koreans. There are cases where they suddenly learn about their Korean heritage or remain unaware of their roots. The existence and identity of Zainichi Koreans are continuously evolving, indicating their increasing assimilation into Japanese society.

Research on the existence of Zainichi Koreans in Japanese society has been conducted from various angles, including identity, education, politics, and social aspects. However, many of the previous studies have often focused on Zainichi Koreans up to the third generation, and many have targeted those with Korean or Chōsen nationality.

Therefore, the researcher believes that further research is necessary to shed light on the current situation of young Zainichi Koreans in contemporary Japan. Currently, the education of Zainichi Koreans is primarily provided through two main forms: Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes. Comparative studies simultaneously examining these two educational experiences have been relatively rare in past research. As a result, this study will focus on Zainichi Koreans with experiences in both types of education. Young Zainichi Koreans with different experiences will be studied to determine how they form their identities, how their respective educational institutions influence their identities, and how these differences affect their choices and thoughts for cultural transmission.

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<sup>7</sup> 金泰泳, "在日コリアンの言論におけるアイデンティティの変遷: 季刊誌 『三千里』『青丘』にみる 70 年代から 90 年代の「在日」."

## **Motivation**

Zainichi Koreans have been present in Japan for a long time, but in the past, they were expected to hide their roots and live as Japanese. However, Korean culture, including Korean pop culture, has become popular among Japanese youth, leading to an increase in visitors to places like Koreatown in Osaka and Shin-Okubo in Tokyo. Most of these places are filled with shops run by Zainichi Koreans, and over time, the presence of Zainichi Koreans has been recognized and understood. However, the Zainichi community has also become more diverse, raising concerns about the dilution of their ethnic identity.

The researcher, therefore, hopes to study the younger generation of Zainichi Koreans and clarify the current situation of the dilution of their ethnicity. They also hope that this research will be useful for the continuation of the Zainichi society in the future.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to understand the situation of the younger generation of Zainichi Koreans, with a focus on the strength or dilution of their ethnic identity, differences in ethnic identity among Zainichi Koreans with experiences in Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes, as well as their awareness of assimilation into Japanese society and the importance of ethnic education. The study aims to investigate how these differences in ethnic education may impact the choices for future cultural preservation.

## **Research Question**

- 1 . What are the differences in ethnic identity formation between Zainichi Koreans from Korean Ethnic Schools and Zainichi Koreans from Ethnic Classes?
- 2 . How does the influence of diverse ethnic education approaches on the identity development of Zainichi Koreans compare between Korean Ethnic School and Ethnic Classes?
- 3 . How do the ethnic cultural heritage thinking differ between two groups of Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds?

## **Contribute**

In this study, if significant differences in identity formation of Zainichi Koreans and issues related to the two different educational systems become apparent, it could have the potential to explicitly highlight the need for social support and development of Zainichi education for the future sustainability of the Zainichi community. Furthermore, by recognizing the importance of their own ethnic identity and expressing it within Japanese society, Zainichi Koreans can contribute to Japan's goal of multicultural coexistence and a more global society by providing diverse perspectives and values. This can potentially contribute to the evolution of society. In order to maintain the Zainichi community in the future, which the previous generation of Zainichi Koreans have been protecting, it is important to understand the cultural heritage status of the Zainichi community and consider what is needed for future Zainichi ethnic education and identity formation.

## **Limit**

Given the limited research time, it may be challenging to conduct interviews with every individual from the younger generation of Zainichi Koreans, despite their significant

numbers. Additionally, Korean Ethnic Schools exist across Japan, and there may be variations in approaches to ethnic education and the incorporation of ethnic culture in different regions. Therefore, the study will be confined to a specific region and may have limitations regarding the number of interviewees.

### **Delimit**

This research will primarily focus on interviewing the younger generation of Zainichi Koreans residing in Osaka. Osaka has a relatively large population of Zainichi Koreans in Japan, and historically, many Koreans migrated to Japan, particularly to the Tsuruhashi area in Osaka. In the Tsuruhashi area, there's a town known as "Koreatown," is a community formed by Zainichi Koreans and is also a popular tourist destination. Osaka has a significant number of descendants of Zainichi Koreans, and compared to other regions, they have more opportunities to engage with Korean culture. Therefore, by interviewing them, more detailed information and insights can be expected.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## **The History of Zainichi Koreans**

The Korean community in Japan, known as Zainichi Koreans, has a nearly 150 years history. Zainichi Koreans began around 1880 when Korean students came to Japan as part of their studies. The background of this foreign student's arrival in Japan includes the period when Japan ended its policy of national seclusion and began moving towards opening up to the world, while Korea continued to maintain its policy of isolation. However, Japan desired the opening of Korea for its own security and national development and sought to strengthen its influence through an assertive diplomatic policy.<sup>8</sup> However, actually, Japan also accepted Korean students with the aim of colonial domination, which led to instances of discrimination from teacher and other students. As Japan progressed in its modernization, a working-class was formed, and there was a growing demand for cheap labor. During this time. Many Koreans came to Japan in search of employment and were often subjected to harsh working conditions.<sup>9</sup>

In 1910, Japan concluded the annexation of Korea, placing it under colonial rule. At that time, the Korean people were granted Japanese nationality and were expected to live as Japanese citizens. With the onset of Japanese rule, the Government-General of Korea implemented an undertaking of landownership investigation between 1910 and 1918 to establish clear land ownership throughout the Korean Peninsula. As a result of the survey, much of the land previously owned by farmers was occupied by the Japanese government. Consequently, many Korean peasant farmers lost their land, leading to an increase in the

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<sup>8</sup> 金贊汀, "在日朝鮮・韓国人一世の歴史," *青山学院女子短期大学総合文化研究所年報* 10 (2002).

<sup>9</sup> 金贊汀, "在日朝鮮・韓国人一世の歴史."

number of people migrating to Japan and Manchuria in search of livelihoods.<sup>10</sup> Following that policy, Japan's colonial rule further exacerbated poverty in the Korean Peninsula. In 1910, the number of Koreans in Japan was less than 3,000. However, with the rapid increase of Korean laborers in the subsequent decades, their population in Japan increased dramatically, surpassing 1.2 million people by 1940.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the "undertaking of landownership investigation," the colonial policy involved various assimilation policy that essentially denied the ethnic culture of Koreans and stripped away their ethnic identity. This policy included the prohibition of using the Korean language and the enforcement of Japanese language usage, the forced adoption of Japanese names instead of Korean names, and the compulsory worship at Shinto shrines.<sup>12</sup>

On August 15, 1945, with Japan's defeat in World War II, Korea was liberated from colonial rule. At that time, there were over 2 million Koreans in Japan, but by the end of March 1946, approximately 1.3 to 1.4 million had returned to Korea.<sup>13</sup> However, due to the political and economic turmoil in the Korean Peninsula at that time, as well as strict policies limiting the amount of money and belongings that returnees could bring with them, approximately 600,000 Koreans chose to remain in Japan.<sup>14</sup> The people who chose to remain in Japan became the beginnings of the present-day "Zainichi Koreans". Subsequently, on April 28, 1952, Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and upon its enforcement, both

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<sup>10</sup> 趙聖民, 布野修司, and 韓三建, "日本植民統治期における韓国密陽・三浪津邑の都市形成と土地所有変化に関する考察: 旧日本人町に着目して," *日本建築学会計画系論文集* 71, no. 607 (2006).

<sup>11</sup> 岩佐和幸, "戦前期大阪の都市形成と朝鮮人移民労働者 (大会報告・共通課題: 労働のグローバル化と国家・地域-歴史と現状-)," *歴史と経済* 47, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>12</sup> 小林孝行, "韓国家族の変容と家族政策," *文化共生学研究* 4, no. 1 (2006).

<sup>13</sup> 松平功, "日韓併合から 100 年を経過して: 在日コリアン問題の課題と展望: キリスト教倫理学の視点から," *桃山学院大学キリスト教論集*, no. 46 (2011).

<sup>14</sup> 李洙任, "変わりつつある在日韓国・朝鮮人のエスニック・アイデンティティ," (2011).



Koreans and Taiwanese lost their Japanese nationality completely.<sup>15</sup> The Japanese government, without granting them the right to choose their nationality, unilaterally stripped individuals from former colonies, such as Zainichi Korean, of their Japanese citizenship. This measure of nationality deprivation resulted in rendering the Korean residents in Japan stateless and deprived them of not only suffrage but also their status as sovereign individuals.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, Zainichi Koreans have endured a history filled with hardships due to Japan's colonial rule and challenging economic conditions.

### **Japan's Notion of a Homogeneous Nation and Discrimination**

In Japanese society, there exists a latent discourse that evokes the idea of a homogeneous nation, and the presence of this discourse has given rise to discrimination that has made life most challenging for the Zainichi Koreans. This discourse is the idea of alignment between nationality and ethnicity, meaning the belief that in Japanese society, there should be consistency in terms of nationality, ethnicity, and the purity of blood.<sup>17</sup>

A homogeneous nation refers to a country where only the Japanese (Yamato) ethnic group resides. While Japan is a nation where many people share the same language, culture, customs, and history, in reality, contemporary Japan has evolved into a society where people with diverse cultures and values coexist. Moreover, many foreigners are coming to Japan. Furthermore, there are foreigners who have been in Japan since before the war, such as

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<sup>15</sup> 竹中理香, "戦後日本における外国人政策と在日コリアンの社会運動," *川崎医療福祉学会誌* 24, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>16</sup> 松平功, "日韓併合から 100 年を経過して: 在日コリアン問題の課題と展望: キリスト教倫理学の視点から."

<sup>17</sup> 朴育美, "アイデンティティの語りを成り立たせているもの: 『ケナリも花, サクラも花』 のナラティブ分析が顕在化させる日本社会のディスコースの前提," *研究論集* 94 (2011).

Zainichi Koreans, as well as the indigenous Ainu people. As a result, Japan can be considered as a nation with ethnic diversity and cannot be characterized as a homogeneous nation-state. However, it is said that the idea of Japan as a homogeneous nation took root in the minds of Japanese people during and after World War II. After the war, the deprivation of Japanese nationality for Koreans and Taiwanese became a backdrop for the notion of a homogeneous nation-state, and some politicians and scholars justified Japan's status as a homogeneous nation-state by categorizing them as "foreigners." Japan's notion of a homogeneous nation has been unconsciously internalized by the Japanese people and has become "common sense," leading to significant social impacts. One of these impacts is "exclusivity." In other words, individuals who have internalized the notion of a homogeneous nation tend to deny the diverse individualities within Japanese society and exhibit a tendency to exclude heterogeneous elements.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this underlying "exclusivity" in Japan contributes to discriminatory treatment towards ethnic minorities.<sup>19</sup>

Discrimination against Zainichi Koreans society manifests through various forms, including institutional discrimination such as fingerprinting under the Foreign Registry Law and unilateral deprivation of Japanese citizenship, resulting in exclusion from social security and welfare systems. It is also observed in everyday life through employment discrimination, marriage discrimination, housing discrimination, and other forms of social discrimination. Additionally, hate speech and hate crimes have inflicted further misery on the affected communities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Opinions-オピニオンズ-," 日本は「単一民族社会」？—多文化社会形成に向けて、問われる日本社会「自己像」, updated 2021.12.14, 2021, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> 別府春海, "日本研究・京都会議 KYOTO CONFERENCE ON JAPANESE STUDIES 1994 ?," .non01-01 (3/25 1996), <http://doi.org/10.15055/00003479>.

<sup>20</sup> 松平功, "日韓併合から 100 年を経過して: 在日コリアン問題の課題と展望: キリスト教倫理学の視点から."

The fingerprinting requirement under the Foreign Registry Law was introduced by the Japanese government in 1955 and mandated the compulsory fingerprinting of foreign residents aged 16 and above who had been living in Japan for one year or longer.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of the fingerprinting requirement was related to security measures during the Korean War period and was conducted for identity verification purposes.<sup>22</sup> Takano (高野) argues that the system represents a continuation of colonial rule for Zainichi Koreans, serving as a symbol of their tragic history and experiences of discrimination and oppression in Japanese society.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Takano acknowledges that the act of fingerprinting for Zainichi Koreans is a humiliating physical experience that has been deeply ingrained, as observed through their complaints about it.<sup>24</sup>

The responses to discrimination against Zainichi Koreans, including the fingerprinting requirement, differed between the first generation and second generation. According to Sō (宋), the first generation experienced long-term discrimination from Japanese people, which had been ongoing since the colonial era, leading them to become accustomed to the tragic circumstances. They tended to consider discrimination in Japanese society as something natural and, in order to survive in Japan, they engaged in “niche-adaptation” by finding work that Japanese people avoided, often within the Korean communities. On the other hand, the responses of the second generation were divided into two main types: active and passive. Most second generation received education in Japanese schools, and like the first generation,

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<sup>21</sup> 市川速水, "論座 RONZA," *朝日新聞 DIGITAL* 2019/12/22.

<sup>22</sup> 高野麻子, "戦後日本の再編と外国人登録法の指紋押捺," *立命館言語文化研究* 29, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>23</sup> 高野麻子, "戦後日本の再編と外国人登録法の指紋押捺."

<sup>24</sup> 高野麻子, "「指紋」という視座の持つ可能性—書評への応答—," *Quadrante: クアドランテ: 四分儀: 地域・文化・位置のための総合雑誌* 20 (2018).

they tended to accept discrimination in Japanese society as something inevitable. However, as they became aware of the unstable political situation under the military dictatorship in Korea, their hope of returning to their homeland was shattered, and their settlement in Japan became more apparent. Consequently, they began to engage in more proactive struggles against the discrimination they had previously tried to avoid.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1970s, discrimination against Zainichi Koreans began to be openly discussed in Japanese society. The incident that triggered these discussions was the "Hitachi Employment Discrimination" case. The Hitachi Employment Discrimination case involved a second-generation Zainichi Korean, Mr. Park Jeong-seok (朴鐘碩), who passed the company's entrance examination using a Japanese name. However, when he revealed his Korean status, his acceptance was rescinded, leading to a lawsuit.<sup>26</sup> For Zainichi Koreans, their ethnic names serve as symbols to express their origins. Due to historical discrimination and prejudice, many Korean residents in Japan choose to adopt Japanese names in their daily lives. According to Kariya (狩谷), even if individuals do not have such intentions, using a Japanese name as a Zainichi Korean can be interpreted as hiding their "Zainichi" status.<sup>27</sup> This lawsuit was not merely an individual lawsuit, but positioned as an accusation against the company that committed ethnic discrimination and against Japanese society itself. It was a battle fought for the dignity of the Zainichi Koreans ethnic group.<sup>28</sup> Park Jong-seok won the lawsuit, and this victory sparked organized support movements addressing employment

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<sup>25</sup> 基燦 宋, "<研究ノート>在日韓国・朝鮮人の「若い世代」の台頭と民族教育の新しい展開," *京都社会学年報 : KJS9* (2001-12 2001), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1050001335799781120>.

<sup>26</sup> 市川速水, "国籍とは何か～当然ではなかった「当然の法理」."

<sup>27</sup> 狩谷あゆみ, "「在日である」/「在日をする」/「在日になる」: 在日韓国朝鮮人の若者のアイデンティティについて," *広島修大論集. 人文編* 41, no. 1-1 (2000).

<sup>28</sup> 李榮鎬, "朴鐘碩の日立闘争と在日朝鮮人文学: 『季刊まだん』の記事を中心に," (2018).

issues, national pension problems, and more, leading to the expansion of anti-discrimination movements against Zainichi Koreans.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of these anti-discrimination movements, the legal status of Zainichi Koreans improved, leading to the establishment of the current Special Permanent Resident status. Additionally, the nationality clauses in Japan's social welfare system significantly decreased. Citizen movements and media coverage increased, and whenever topics related to Zainichi Koreans were discussed, incidents of harassment and discriminatory remarks by Japanese individuals were repeatedly reported. However, nowadays, third and fourth-generation Zainichi Koreans experience less direct discrimination. The relationship between Japanese society and the Zainichi community has changed, creating a situation where they can live without experiencing significant direct discrimination and without feeling a strong sense of exclusion from the Japanese population.<sup>30</sup>

The discourse present in Japanese society has led to the tragic discrimination experienced to Zainichi Koreans. However, their resistance and efforts for social change have contributed to the improvement of their status, creating a situation where their children and descendants can live securely in Japanese society. And currently, among the younger generation, Korean pop culture is gaining popularity, and due to changing times, the extreme discrimination seen in the past is gradually easing.

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<sup>29</sup> 金兌恩, "< 論文> 公立学校における在日韓国・朝鮮人教育の位置に関する社会学的考察: 大阪と京都における「民族学級」の事例から," *京都社会学年報: KJS* 14 (2006).

<sup>30</sup> 中島智子, "在日韓国・朝鮮人のエスニシティと教育 「文化的志向性」と「社会的志向性」の視点から," *教育学研究* 61, no. 3 (1994).

## Zainichi Korean's Identity Formation

The identity of Zainichi Koreans has become more diverse, allowing each individual to freely pursue and express their own identity. Zainichi Koreans possess different identities based on their individual experiences, backgrounds, and intergenerational differences. The aforementioned changes in Japanese society have also played an important role in shaping the identity of Zainichi Koreans.

Firstly, regarding identity, Mead stated that it arises through social experiences and activities, and individuals develop themselves based on the entire process and their relationships with others. He also emphasized that identity should be understood as a social process.<sup>31</sup> According to Jean S. Phinney and Anthony D. Ong, ethnic identity emerges from a sense of humanity within a group, culture, or specific environment. The formation of ethnic identity is not solely based on recognition and understanding of one's affiliating group but is constructed through various experiences. However, experiences alone are not sufficient elements. Individual actions and choices are essential to the process of forming this ethnic identity, which takes a long time to develop.<sup>32</sup> In this way, ethnic identity is constructed through the understanding within a group, relationships with others, and the recognition of oneself as a member of that ethnic group, all of which occur through ethnic experiences. It involves choices, self-expression, and the individual's acknowledgment of their ethnic affiliation.

As the generational shift occurs among the Zainichi Koreans, the nature of their identity and identity formation process has also diversified. The number of first-generation

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<sup>31</sup> Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, "The dynamics of organizational identity," *Human relations* 55, no. 8 (2002).

<sup>32</sup> Jean S Phinney and Anthony D Ong, "Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions," *Journal of counseling Psychology* 54, no. 3 (2007).

individuals, who were born on the Korean Peninsula and became the starting point of the Zainichi community, continues to decline, and currently, the second and third generations play a central role in the Zainichi community. Furthermore, there is now a fifth-generation emerging.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the first generation, the second generation and subsequent generations were born and raised in Japan, primarily receiving education in Japan. They lack experience of living in Korea, which strengthens their connection with Japanese society and weakens their sense of belonging to the Korean Peninsula.<sup>34</sup> However, while they assimilate into Japanese society, they continue to maintain Korean culture and customs. This indicates that they consciously form their ethnic identity as Zainichi Koreans.

Lee (李) categorized the identity formation of Zainichi Koreans who was born in Japan into four stages. The first stage is childhood, where individuals are unaware of their differences from other Japanese people and do not realize their Korean status or have a root to Korea. Some may not even learn about their Korean identity until their teenage years, often triggered by obligations such as foreign registration. In the second stage, individuals experience discrimination and prejudice from Japanese society, leading to internal conflicts. They may hide their heritage and try to live as Japanese. In the third stage, individuals disclose their ethnic name and roots to close friends, establishing their identity. This stage marks the first step in self-recognition and self-formation. In the final fourth stage, individuals focus more on personal identity rather than ethnic identity, exploring their future

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<sup>33</sup> 慶鎬 曹, キョンホ チョウ, and Kyongho Cho, "在日朝鮮人のエスニック・アイデンティティの多様性に関する調査研究 一日本学校在學生と朝鮮学校在學生の比較を中心に一," *多言語多文化：実践と研究 (Journal of multilingual multicultural studies and practices)* 5 (2013-11 2013), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1050001337709387392>.

<sup>34</sup> Jung-hui Lee and Tomoko Tanaka, "海外移民の文化変容態度と文化的アイデンティティ研究にみる在日コリアン研究への示唆 (2): 二文化への態度と新たな生き方をめぐって," *岡山大学大学院社会文化科学研究科紀要* 33 (2012).

paths. Lee conducted interviews based on these four stages and found that the majority of Japanese-born Korean residents experience these stages of identity formation. However, there are also individuals who never reach the third stage and continue to conceal their roots.<sup>35</sup>

Fukuoka (福岡) pointed out the diverse changes in the formation of ethnic identity among Zainichi Koreans. Conducting life history interviews with Zainichi Koreans since 1988, he surveyed a large number of individuals, including over 150 young generations. His research aimed to avoid political bias and quantitatively and qualitatively investigate Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds, including those of Korean and North Korean descent. In the final stage of personal identity establishment, he categorized the orientations of Zainichi Koreans into five categories based on different life examples: "Coexistence-oriented," "Fellowship-oriented," "Homeland-oriented," "Individual-oriented," and "Naturalization-oriented." The "Coexistence-oriented" individuals prioritize harmony and cooperation with Japanese society, actively participate in Japanese culture and society, and aim to promote mutual understanding and coexistence. The "Fellowship-oriented" individuals support Korea and value Korean culture, values, and communities. The "Homeland-oriented" individuals support North Korea and have an interest in the politics and social situation of South Korea. The "Individual-oriented" young Japanese-born Koreans, who aspire to work for top or foreign companies, pursue social advancement through personal efforts and prioritize their own happiness and success. The "Naturalization-oriented" individuals seek assimilation into Japanese society through naturalization to avoid obstacles in daily life. They hope to acquire Japanese citizenship and aim for complete integration into Japanese society.<sup>36</sup>

The identity of Japanese-born Koreans varies significantly across different generations.

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<sup>35</sup> 李洙任, "変わりつつある在日韓国・朝鮮人のエスニック・アイデンティティ."

<sup>36</sup> 山脇啓造, "在日コリアンのアイデンティティ分類枠組に関する試論," (2000).



First-generation Zainichi Koreans, who crossed the sea to come to Japan, tend to internalize cultural elements shaped by their experiences in Korea and strive to maintain them.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the first generation experienced treatment in Japan that was akin to being treated as slaves, which resulted in a weak sense of identification as Japanese. In contrast, the second and subsequent generations were born and raised in Japan, and their connection to the Korean Peninsula as a "homeland" becomes weaker compared to the first generation. While the second and third generations grew up exposed to Korean cultural elements within their households, the majority received their education in Japanese schools, with Japanese as their first language. As a result, it is not easy for them to acknowledge their Korean identity. In particular, the second generation, while being exposed to Korean culture, directly experiences discrimination in Japan, leading to strong negative associations with ethnic culture and consciousness. Therefore, many second-generation individuals have lived concealing their Korean identity. The second generation starts to grapple with conflicts in a Japanese society where social discrimination against Zainichi Koreans exists. The third generation, on the other hand, experiences fewer discomforts in both their family and school lives, and Japanese society has changed to a more multicultural mindset, where experiences of discrimination and poverty have decreased. As a result, the third generation's life in Japan has been less challenging than that of the second generation. However, this situation depends on whether the third generation behaves as "Japanese." They often find the relationship between themselves, Japanese people, and Japanese society to be complicated.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it is evident that there are different perspectives regarding their own ethnic identity even among three generations.

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<sup>37</sup> 鄭喜恵 and 八島智子, "在日韓国人の言語使用とアイデンティティー," *多文化関係学* 3 (2006).

<sup>38</sup> 中島智子, "在日韓国・朝鮮人のエスニシティと教育 「文化的志向性」 と 「社会的志向性」の視点から."

As generational transitions progress, the presence of "naturalized citizens" and "mixed-race" individuals is increasing. The process of naturalization began with the deprivation of Japanese nationality in 1952 and initially revolved around avoiding ethnic discrimination, employment discrimination, and considerations for spouses and children through marriage to Japanese individuals. However, the reasons for naturalization have evolved, and an increasing number of people now seek naturalization to secure a more certain residency status or for the convenience of traveling abroad. Contemporary naturalization does not necessarily entail abandoning one's ethnic identity.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, in recent years, there are young individuals who have acquired Japanese citizenship through naturalization or those who were born with Japanese nationality and have mixed race. However, they maintain their ethnic consciousness and affirm their identity in Japanese society, with some choosing to live as "Koreans." Thus, the Zainichi Koreans population includes not only Korean and Chōsen nationality but also those with Japanese nationality. Among them, some have assimilated into Japanese society, resulting in a weakening of their ethnic consciousness, while others incorporate or develop their ethnic consciousness during their growth process. The Korean community in Japan has become diverse, and the identities of Zainichi Koreans have taken on various characteristics.

### **Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes**

The existence of Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes plays a crucial role in the lives of Zainichi Koreans in Japan society and has a positive impact on them. Korean Ethnic Schools are educational institutions specifically designed for Zainichi Koreans. The primary objective of these schools is to offer ethnic education by utilizing the Korean language as the

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<sup>39</sup> 金眞那, "在日コリアンにおける企業家活動の分析: エスニック・アイデンティティとエスニック・ネットワークの概念を用いて," (2015).

primary medium of instruction. They are established across Japan, providing access to Korean education regardless of the students' nationality, whether they hold Korean citizenship, Chōsen citizenship, or Japanese citizenship.

After the liberation from Japanese colonial rule, approximately 600,000 Zainichi Koreans remained in Japan, and their initial challenge was to reclaim their lost language, culture, and history for their children until the day they could return to their homeland. Ethnic education for Zainichi Koreans began with the establishment of places where first-generation Zainichi taught the Korean language and script to their children after August 15, 1945.<sup>40</sup> However, the Japanese government rejected the idea of Korean ethnic education, citing security concerns and support for communism, and adopted a policy of not legally recognizing Korean Ethnic Schools, which ignored the Japanese School Education Law.<sup>41</sup> From the late 1940s, the Japanese government began a comprehensive suppression of "ethnic education" for Zainichi Koreans. As a result of this oppressive policy, many Korean schools were forced to close.<sup>42</sup> However, Zainichi Koreans aimed to rebuild ethnic education and staged protests against the closure orders of Korean Ethnic Schools, known as the "Hanshin Education Struggle," in Osaka and Hyogo Prefectures. Such issues between Zainichi Koreans and the Japanese government regarding Korean Ethnic Schools continue to exist, leading to ongoing conflicts. Until the 1990s, Zainichi Koreans students were unable to purchase regular commuter passes for Japanese school, and even if they had the skills, they were not allowed to participate in official matches in extracurricular activities. There was also an increase in

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<sup>40</sup> 金美善, "変わる移民政策: 朝鮮総連系民族学校のバイリンガル教育," *国立民族学博物館調査報告* 83 (2009).

<sup>41</sup> 徐明淑, "青年期在日韓国・朝鮮人のアイデンティティに関する研究: 自己イメージと言語の側面から," (2012).

<sup>42</sup> 李修京 and 権五定, "在日コリアンの '共生に生きる' という主体的選択 (1)," *東京学芸大学紀要. 人文社会科学系*. 169 (2018).

attacks against students wearing the traditional Korean attire called " *Chima-Chogori* (한복 Korean dress)," making it difficult to wear such clothing outside of school. Furthermore, there were demonstrations by Japanese opposing Koreans, which also targeted schools.<sup>43</sup> Despite various difficulties, the dedicated movement demanding the continuation of ethnic schools by Zainichi Koreans led to the transformation and development of the school system, which initially began as preparation for repatriation.

Currently, there are 98 schools throughout Japan, including 4 schools that are temporarily closed.<sup>44</sup> Zainichi education in Japan follows a similar structure to Japanese education, with four stages: elementary school, middle school, high school, and university, known as the 6-3-3-4 system.<sup>45</sup> In Korean Ethnic Schools, students have the opportunity to learn not only general subjects such as mathematics, English, and Japanese but also "ethnic subjects" like the Korean language, Korean history, Korean geography, and contemporary Korean history. These subjects form the foundation of the school's curriculum and play a role in teaching Korean values and culture. Students have many opportunities to engage in Korean traditional dance, Korean songs, and Korean customs from a young age. Additionally, they grow up surrounded by fellow Zainichi Koreans within the school environment. Through these experiences, they naturally develop a positive identity as Koreans.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, Ethnic Classes are educational institutions also established by

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<sup>43</sup> "바다 건너, 우리학교를 소개합니다(일본의 조선학교 이야기)," YouTube, updated 2017/11/20, 2017, 2023, <https://youtu.be/LgM40IG6YsA>.

<sup>44</sup> "Korea World Times," iphone を使っていると没収されるのか？朝鮮学校にまつわる噂について聞いてみた, updated 2020/03/12, 2020, accessed 6/22, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Ryoko Okamura/ Yukie Saito, "Endangering the Right to Ethnic Education: Japan's Exclusion of Chōsen Schools from the Tuition Waiver Program," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 20, no. 3 (2/1 2022).

<sup>46</sup> 山本かほり, "朝鮮学校で学ぶということ," *移民政策研究= Migration policy review/移民政策学会編集委員会 編* 6 (2014).

Zainichi Koreans during their struggle with Japanese administrative authorities. These classes provide a place for Zainichi children to learn their own language and culture. Ethnic Classes expanded in the 1990s and are often set up by Japanese public schools and educational institutions. Zainichi Koreans have the opportunity to receive ethnic education by attending Ethnic Classes. In fact, since many Zainichi Koreans children are enrolled in Japanese public schools, Ethnic Classes are considered to play a crucial role in ethnic education. However, due to the limited duration of 1-2 hours of classes after school, there are challenges in fully acquiring the Korean language and culture in ethnic classes. Additionally, ethnic classes may face issues such as a lower-quality curriculum and teaching materials compared to Korean Ethnic Schools, as well as a shortage of teachers.<sup>47</sup>

A comparative study on the formation process and characteristics of ethnic identity among Zainichi Koreans students attending Japanese schools and Korean schools, conducted by Chō (曹), revealed that Zainichi Koreans students attending Korean Ethnic Schools have fewer opportunities for serious psychological conflicts regarding ethnic identity formation and can perceive it positively.<sup>48</sup>

Within ethnic schools, there is a sense of community and mutual support among peers who share a common culture and language. These experiences provide emotional stability and support for Zainichi Koreans. The experiences in Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes are crucial in shaping the ethnic identity of Zainichi Koreans and serve as places where they hold respect and gratitude for their past.

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<sup>47</sup> 朴永晁 and 竹中優子, "< 論文> 在日同胞の民族教育の変遷と現状-大阪府公立小学校における民族学級を中心に-", *大阪経済法科大学論集*, no. 114 (2019).

<sup>48</sup> 曹慶鎬 and チョウキョンホ, "在日朝鮮人のエスニック・アイデンティティの多様性に関する調査研究-日本学校在学生と朝鮮学校在学生の比較を中心に-", *多言語多文化: 実践と研究 (Journal of multilingual multicultural studies and practices)*, no. 5 (2013).

## Zainichi's Ethnic Heritage

The presence of Zainichi Koreans and their ethnic culture is experiencing a tendency towards dilution due to coexistence with the Japanese population. This implies the difficulty of inheriting ethnic and cultural traditions within the Zainichi community and the transformation brought about by assimilation with Japanese culture.

The cultural heritage of Zainichi Koreans has not only occurred through Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes but also at home where aspects of lifestyle and culture have been passed down. Through this heritage, their cultural and ethnic identity has been enhanced, influencing the identity of Zainichi Koreans. However, they now face the current reality of language and culture being assimilated into Japanese society due to changes in the Zainichi community and generational shifts. As a result, it is noted that the survival and preservation of the Zainichi community have become challenging. In particular, concerns arise about the increasing number of intermarriages with Japanese, as it may make it difficult to maintain and pass on their ethnic culture and lifestyle. For example, Jesa (제사 memorial services), which are considered important for Zainichi Koreans as a place for reaffirming their identity, involve Confucian rituals to honor ancestors and serve as a gathering for relatives. However, in modern times, there have been changes in how Jesa is conducted, such as not performing the rituals in certain family situations or the emergence of simpler ways to carry them out, due to changes in family dynamics and generational shifts.<sup>49</sup> Food culture is also closely related to ethnic identity. Higher ethnic identity tends to involve the performance of traditional events such as Jesa in a more ethnic style, the use of special ceremonial food and Korean-style tableware. Currently, Korean specialty stores such as Koreatown in Osaka are

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<sup>49</sup> 山本かほり, "在日韓国・朝鮮人の生活史にみる「民族」の継承と変容: 在日韓国・朝鮮人の家族・親族単位の世代間生活史調査より (特集 家族形成と社会再生産)," *社会分析*, no. 40 (2013).

frequently visited by Zainichi Koreans for purchasing ingredients.<sup>50</sup> Regarding language, the use of the Korean language is rapidly declining within the Zainichi Koreans community. Second and third-generation, especially those who do not attend Korean Ethnic Schools, rarely use Korean, which can be attributed, in part, to the background of concealing their Korean identity during a period of discrimination towards Zainichi Koreans. Second-generation used alternative Japanese names in school and concealed their Korean identity, leading their parents' generation to consciously limit the use of the Korean language. Therefore, the choice of attending Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes is sometimes made to provide children with ethnic education that cannot be covered solely within the household.

The diversification of the Zainichi Korean's way of life significantly impacts the heritage of their ethnic identity. The inherited ethnic identity from the first and second generations continues to be passed down, albeit undergoing transformation due to changes in Japanese society, the generational shift, reduced contact with the first generation, and an increase in intermarriage with Japanese individuals.

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<sup>50</sup> 黄慧瓊, "大阪市の在日コリアンにおける食文化の民族的アイデンティティ (第 1 報) 行事食を主たる対象として," *日本家政学会誌* 53, no. 7 (2002).

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative research methods using in-depth interview is employed. In-depth interview is a method for exploring participants' experiences, opinions, and insights in detail through dialogues. The objective of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of Zainichi Koreans regarding their identity, Zainichi education, and ethnic heritage. However, the process of identity formation and their experiences vary with different backgrounds, and it is a highly complex and delicate research, which some individuals may find difficult to discuss. Therefore, the method of qualitative research using in-depth interview, which can be conducted in an environment that ensures privacy, is considered appropriate. Additionally, in some cases, interview was conducted with two participants simultaneously, based on the participants' preferences.

The researcher analyzed the data obtained from the interview and compare the opinions of Zainichi Koreans who attended Korean Ethnic Schools and those who attended Ethnic Classes. The research addressed the following three research questions:

1. What are the differences in ethnic identity formation between Zainichi Koreans from Korean Ethnic Schools and Zainichi Koreans from Ethnic Classes?
2. How does the influence of diverse ethnic education approaches on the identity development of Zainichi Koreans compare between Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes?
3. How do the ethnic cultural heritage thinking differ between two groups of Zainichi Koreans with different backgrounds?

### **Source of Data**

The data for this study was collected through interview. The research focused on young generation Zainichi Koreans who are female university students between the ages of 20 and



23. The study involved conducting interview with a total of eight participants, comprising four individuals who attended Korean Ethnic Schools and four who attended Ethnic Classes. The reason for focusing on female university students is that it was believed that women have more opportunities to pass on culture within the family,<sup>51</sup> which is important for ethnic heritage preservation.

There were primarily two ways in which potential interviewees were identified. Since there is a significant Zainichi Koreans community in Osaka, and I had Zainichi Koreans willing to participate in this research within the researcher's social circle, they were initially Zainichi Koreans as research participants. However, to conduct a comparative study, it was necessary to find more participants. Through the introductions of those initial participants, additional Zainichi Koreans were sought. Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of ethnic education on the identity of Zainichi Koreans and to learn about the current status of ethnic education, the researcher visited a middle school in Osaka that offers Ethnic Classes and interviewed two of the teachers. This study was conducted with the cooperation of a total of ten participants, as indicated in Table 1.

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<sup>51</sup> 安本博司, "民族性継承への意味づけ: 在日と韓国人ニューカマーに着目して," *女性学研究: 大阪府立大学女性学研究センター論集*, no. 23 (2016).

**Table 1: Interviewee List**

Interviewee	Age	Nationality	Nth Generation Zainichi	Education Background
A	21 years old	Korean (韓國籍)	4th Generation Zainichi	Korean School
B	21 years old	Korean (韓國籍)	4th Generation Zainichi	Korean School
C	21 years old	Korean (朝鮮籍)	4th Generation Zainichi	Korean School
D	21 years old	Korean (Naturalized from 朝鮮 籍)	3th Generation Zainichi	Korean School
E	22 years old	Japan	4th Generation Zainichi	Ethnic Class
F	22 years old	Korean (韓國籍)	4th Generation Zainichi	Ethnic Class
G	23 years old	Korean (韓國籍)	4th Generation Zainichi	Ethnic Class
H	22 years old	Japan	4th Generation Zainichi	Ethnic Class
Teacher 1	-	Korean	Newcomer	-
Teacher 2	-	Japan	-	-

Source: The author sorted

## **Data Collection**

To collect detailed data, thorough preparation before conducting interview is crucial. Therefore, as shown in Appendix A, the researcher began by preparing interview questions related to the research problem. In this study, the questions focused on understanding the differences between these two groups of Zainichi Koreans in the process of forming their ethnic identities, particularly in the context of the ethnic environment within their families and their surroundings as they grew up. The exploration delved into the events they experienced during this process and the life stories related to identity formation. Specifically, questions were asked about their exposure to ethnic culture within their households, experiences of discrimination and prejudice they encountered while living in Japan, instances of hate speech, and their self-expression. Additionally, to understand the impact of Zainichi education, questions were posed about their experiences in Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes, as well as the thoughts and values they developed through these experiences. Lastly, questions were asked about ethnic heritage preservation, inquiring about how they intend to pass on their Zainichi identity to the next generation through their experiences in Zainichi education and exposure to ethnic culture within their families. They were also asked about the emotions and thoughts they had at the time of these events.

Furthermore, separate interview was conducted with Ethnic Class teachers, in which they were asked about the educational objectives, curriculum content, and challenges faced by Ethnic Classes.

All the interviews were conducted in Japanese, and the conversations were recorded with the consent of the participants. The same set of questions was asked to all participants, and the answers obtained were analyzed to focus on commonalities, differences, and new emerging issues.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In Chapter 4, the researcher thoroughly explores the data analysis results by comparing and analyzing the data obtained from the interviewees. This provided answers to the three research questions. This chapter comprises three sections, namely, "Exploration of Zainichi Koreans Identity," "Zainichi Education," and "Cultural Heritage Preservation."

### Exploration of Zainichi Koreans Identity

#### Family Ethnic Experiences

Individuals' awareness of their roots is shaped by various factors including their experiences, environment, and the influence of family and friends, typically during childhood and adolescence. Interviewees have diverse life experiences, and when focusing on the home environment of those who attended Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes, it becomes evident that different factors influence their perception of their roots.

First, The researcher asked about their exposure to Korean culture within their home environments. They primarily mentioned three aspects: Korean cuisine, the Korean language, and ethnic events.

Regarding Korean cuisine, the interviewee who attended Korean Ethnic Schools often consume Korean dishes regularly as part of their daily meals. Additionally, they emphasized that Korean cuisine is a prominent feature during special occasions such as memorial services (Jesa 제사) and the Korean New Year.

*"Even though I eat various types of food, during special occasions like New Year's, Korean cuisine is predominant; it's almost entirely Korean food. Dishes like Chijimi (Korean pancake), kimbap, and steamed pork are common. The same goes for Jesa (제사 memorial services)." – Interviewee A*

*"I've never had Osechi." – Interviewee B*

*"I always eat kimchi. My father used to have a restaurant serving Korean cuisine, but we had to close it due to COVID." – Interviewee C*

*"Compared to regular Japanese households, we definitely eat a lot of Korean food. My mom always makes kimchi." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, members from Ethnic Classes had a habit of eating Korean cuisine from a young age, but it was found that they did not necessarily eat Korean food for events and occasions.

*"When I was young, my family often went and gathered at my grandfather's brothers' houses in Ikuno or my great-grandmother's house (in Osaka) to eat and spend together with my relatives. The food we ate that was primarily served was Korean cuisine. I had been going to Koreatown since I was very young, enjoying dishes like jokbal (족발 Korean pig's trotters), kimchi, and chijimi (Korean pancake). During New Year's, we used to have tteokguk (떡국 rice cake soup). When I was a child, I ate Korean New Year's dishes more frequently than Japanese New Year's dishes." – Interviewee E*

*"My mother's side of the family used to hold Jesa (제사 memorial services) every year, and my mother would certainly prepare some Korean dishes occasionally, but we didn't always have a fully Korean meal." – Interviewee F*

*"I used to live near Tsuruhashi (in Osaka), so I often got taken there. Back in the day, Tsuruhashi was like a desolate Korean market, and I'd go along to buy kimchi. We'd have lunch, eating kimbap and chijimi. We also had Korean food quite frequently at home." – Interviewee G*

*"My grandmother used to buy kimchi in Tsuruhashi, and whenever she came to our house, she'd bring a huge amount of kimchi, along with namul, jokbal (족발 Korean pig's trotters), chapchae (잡채 Stir-fried glass noodles and vegetables), and we'd definitely eat those. My mom also often made chijimi at home." – Interviewee H*

Regarding the Korean language, interviewee who attended Korean Ethnic Schools primarily use Japanese in their daily lives. However, they often had environments in their homes and schools where Korean was spoken. In particular, attending Korean Ethnic Schools required them to use Korean, leading to a natural acquisition of the language from a young age.

*"At school, it's all Korean, like an absolute must to speak in Korean. But in daily life, I don't use Korean much, except for words like 'omma (엄마 mom),' 'appa (아빠 daddy),' 'eonni (언니 old sister)' and such." – Interviewee A*

*"One thing I realized when I started attending Japanese university was that during lessons or conversations with friends, there would often be moments of 'What's the Japanese word for this?' This happened frequently because I had been studying Korean for about 12 years at school. So, I encountered such situations quite often." – Interviewee B*

*"I use Korean quite a bit, but not exclusively. Mostly, it's Japanese. 'Uri maru' (우리말 Korean), Words that start with 'uri' (우리 'us' or 'our' in Korean) are often in Korean. However, when my grandmother gets angry, she switches to 'uri maru (Korean).' She used to be a Korean language teacher, so I guess she uses it when she's really upset." – Interviewee C*

*"There are specific words that are definitely not in Japanese. For example, it's not ' Chōsen gakkou (Korean school in Japanese)' but 'uri hakkyo (우리 학교, our school in Korean),' and for the teachers, it's not 'sensei (teacher in Japanese)' but 'seonsaengnim (선생님 teacher in Korean).' In terms of percentages, I'd say over 90% is almost always in Japanese." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, it was found that there is an individual variation in the Korean language proficiency of those who attended Ethnic Classes. In the era of their grandparents, the use of the Korean language was more common, but in the present day, Japanese is predominantly used. Most of them have an interest in Korean culture, and their motivation to learn Korean comes from K-POP and Korean dramas. Through self-study, some individuals have seen significant progress.

*"My father is a Zainichi Korean, but he can't speak Korean. My grandparents, on the other hand, can read Hangul (Korean) completely and speak the language. However, they don't speak Korean when it's just the two of them. When my grandparents and I speak, we use Japanese, but when I'm talking to them about K-pop and I've learned some Korean words, they understand what I'm saying." - Interviewee E*

*"In my case, Korean isn't used much in daily life, but both my father and mother can*

*... speak it to some extent. Our communication, between my mother and me, is mainly in very simple Korean, like expressions of affection or secret words. We don't use it in everyday conversation much. But when I was little and attended ethnic classes, if I wanted to say something like secret words in town, I tried really hard to say it in Korean. When there was a possibility of me going to South Korea, I was attending ethnic classes and studying Korean. But I haven't really studied it properly since then. There was a time in elementary school when I was really into BIGBANG, KARA, and Girls' Generation, but I haven't studied much since then."*

*– Interviewee F*

*"At home, we don't really use it much. Sometimes, my grandmother would say things like 'Aigoo (아~오)~' an exclamation)', but lately, I've been talking more with those from the Ethnic Korean school, so when I'm with them, we do use those simple words and expressions quite a bit." – Interviewee G*

*"We don't really use Korean at home; we mainly speak Japanese. But when I was self-studying Korean and spoke to my grandmother casually, I was surprised to find that she could understand Korean better than me. I somehow felt a responsibility to learn Korean because I have Korean roots. So, at that time, I could speak, write, and read Korean for simple things." – Interviewee H*

Regarding ethnic cultural events, in the homes of the interviewees who attended Korean Ethnic Schools, various Korean traditional events were frequently held, and their response to these events was very enthusiastic. In particular, their experiences with "Jesa (제사 memorial services)" were described. However, in the present day, Jesa is rarely



conducted in most households.

*"I wear Chima-Chogori (한복 Korean dress) for events like coming of age ceremonies or graduation ceremonies. Apart from that, for things like Jesa. Actually, my relatives started doing Jesa less and less from around four years ago." –*

*Interviewee A*

*"Jesa are also becoming less common. Some households take it very seriously and go all out, while others simplify it." – Interviewee B*

*"When a child turns one year old, there's a celebration called 'Doljanchi (돌잔치 First -birthday party) ' where everyone celebrates the baby turning one year old. But maybe during my time, it was very elaborate, but it's becoming simpler and simpler. Even in my family, we don't do memorial services anymore. I really loved Jesa because it brought relatives together." – Interviewee C*

*"Jesa stopped last year. My mom said it was too much work, and even though we've been doing it all this time, Jesa have ceased. It's a lot of preparation, and I had to help for sure. Well, it's considered a woman's job. In our case, we used to host the Jesa at home, which might have made it even more tough." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, according to the testimony of the interviewee from the Ethnic Classes, there were individual differences in their experiences with Korean culture during their childhood. There were also mentions of Jesa, but some stated that they didn't have many memories of experiencing it, highlighting that there were individual differences in their

experiences with Jesa as well.

*"My mom said they used to do memorial services when she got married, but it became too difficult, so they stopped. I don't have much personal experience with it, so I don't really know. But for events like relatives' weddings, we wore Chima-Chogori. I've seen photos of them wearing Chima-Chogori, and my dad wore Chogori ( 한복, Paji-Chogori) when he was born. It looked very cute."*

– Interviewee E

*"I only realized when I was in the fourth grade that we had memorial services at our own home. We had memorial services every year, and my grandmother was really concerned about it. She said we absolutely had to do it, but I never thought of it as a Korean thing, personally. I don't go to other people's homes much." – Interviewee F*

*"There were things like Jesa, memorial service, making Namul ( 나물 ), and other such activities. In my family, we had Jesa culture until around middle school. Lately, it has become more of a hassle and we stopped doing it, but we used to do it quite often, either at relatives' homes or in our own home. There was no recognition that it was Korean culture. Later, I realized, 'Oh, this is different,' and I understood."*

– Interviewee G

*"Well, I realized this when I was in my third year of high school, but I noticed that our visits to the graves were somehow different from the Japanese way. Recently, I realized, 'Oh, this is more like the Korean way,' and I confirmed with my friends for many times. I also checked the names on the graves, and they had Korean place*

*names and those Korean names were engraved, so out of curiosity, I observed it and thought, 'This is Korean.' I haven't done memorial services myself, but there were memorial service tools at my grandmother's house." – Interviewee H*

From their testimonies about their home environments, some commonalities and differences between the interviewees from Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes became apparent. A commonality was that both groups had been exposed to Korean cuisine and traditional culture from a young age. However, those from Korean Ethnic Schools had experienced authentic ethnic events and recognized them as part of Korean culture. They expressed disappointment regarding the decline of traditional practices. It was also evident that they had ample opportunities to learn and use the Korean language, with all of them being confirmed to be proficient in speaking Korean. On the other hand, those from Ethnic Classes had been exposed to Korean culture but perceived it as Japanese or their family's culture rather than Korean culture at the time. There were individual differences in their attitudes towards learning Korean, with some expressing a desire to learn, while others did not.

### **Realization of Ethnic Roots**

The researcher asked them about the timing when they began to be conscious of their roots. From their testimonies, it became clear that their home environment influenced their recognition of their identity as Zainichi Koreans and was one of the factors in establishing their identity.

The interviewee from Korean Ethnic Schools mentioned that they had been exposed to Korean culture from a young age. Having a Korean name and attending Korean Ethnic School made them aware of their distinct identity compared to others. As a result, they had no

doubts about recognizing their roots, and it was evident that they had confidence in their identity.

*"For me, I first realized my Korean roots when I was in kindergarten. I went to a Japanese kindergarten, but I was the only one who went to a different Korean Ethnic Elementary School in the district. That's when I realized I was a bit different from my surroundings. My feelings at that time were like, I didn't really understand anything yet, so I was just excited. " – Interviewee A*

*"I realized my Korean roots because I've been going to Korean Ethnic School since kindergarten, so it was kind of normal. Kids, you know, they don't know. I had Korean nationality, so learning about Korea was normal." – Interviewee B*

*"I think I started learning 'Uri maru' (우리말 Korean) when I was a child, probably. I learned words like 'Omma' (엄마 mom) and 'Appa' (아빠 dad) from the very beginning, and my name was my actual name (Korean name), so it was like, 'My name is something different from others' – Interviewee C*

*"In my case, I already thought my name was different from the time I was in the kindergarten, the Japanese kindergarten. I knew my older brother was going to the Korean Ethnic School, so when I started going there, I already knew it. But I didn't really question it that much." – Interviewee D*

On the contrary, the testimonies of the interviewees who attended Ethnic Classes revealed that their recognition of their roots primarily began during elementary school or

junior high school, with most of them identifying as Japanese before that. After recognizing their roots, they went through a process of establishing their identity as Zainichi Koreans, which often involved experiencing internal conflicts and doubts.

*"I found out that I had Korean roots when I was in junior high. I became friends with someone who was half Zainichi Koreans and Japanese, and I liked Korea too because K-POP was popular at the time. So, one day when I mentioned to my parents that my friend is half of Zainichi Koreans, my dad just said, 'Oh, you too,' like it was no big deal. I always had wondered why it was different when I saw pictures. No one had ever told me anything when I was young, but I later learned that there were discriminatory incidents in their parents' generation, so maybe that's why they didn't feel the need to say anything. It seems like my mom was a bit worried about it."* –

*Interviewee E*

*"I first became aware of being "Zainichi" when I was in the fourth grade of elementary school. I currently have a Korean passport, and it was when I was told that I needed to have that passport in my own possession that I first heard from my parents that I am "Zainichi." So, when my mother told me this in the fourth grade, so why I had always thought I was Japanese because at that time, I didn't even know the concept of identity. I didn't really understand nationality and such at that age. When my mother told me I was Zainichi, it was the first time I became aware of this identity that I didn't know I had. But even then, my mother said, 'Don't ever tell anyone.' I used to wonder why it had to be kept a secret. "* – Interviewee F

*"I didn't have many specific points of realization here. When I was young, I was*

*inadvertently exposed to Korean culture, even though I didn't consciously notice it. However, there was a period, maybe around the third or fourth grade in elementary school, when I couldn't quite embrace it. You know, kids around that age tend to want to be like everyone else. It was a time when we all wanted the same things. We were all the same, yet I would think, 'Why am I Korean?' or 'Why am I not Japanese?' There wasn't any clear difference, and perhaps it was because I didn't speak Korean that I questioned why it was that way." – Interviewee G*

*"I didn't really have a moment of realization here. Maybe when I was younger, like in elementary school, there was a somewhat playful comment from my mother in the car, something like, "You're half Korean," and that part left an impression, and I remember only that. At that time, I didn't fully understand or feel happy about it. I didn't grasp the significance. During the time I had various questions, maybe in middle school, I got heavily into K-POP, and I started to like Korea. I wanted to learn Korean myself and go beyond K-POP to explore more about Korean culture. At that time, for some reason I can't quite remember, things started to click in my mind, like 'Oh, I'm a Zainichi Koreans, or I'm a half.' But at the time, it was challenging because I had heard about discrimination, and I wasn't sure if it was okay to ask, and I didn't have the courage to ask my mother directly." – Interviewee H*

From this testimony, it is suggested that the recognition of their roots is significantly influenced by their home environment. For those who attended Korean Ethnic Schools, they were exposed to Korean culture at an early age, and there was little to no doubt about their roots. On the other hand, for those who attended Ethnic Classes, the lack of exposure to Korean culture at home and the perception that their surroundings were more Japanese-like

with no clear differences from Japanese people meant they had fewer opportunities to realize their own roots. Such circumstances may imply that when establishing their identity as Zainichi Koreans, there is a potential for conflict and questioning.

### **Discriminatory Experiences of Zainichi Koreans**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, since the beginning of the Zainichi Koreans migration to Japan, they have faced various forms of discrimination. While some argue that this discrimination has decreased over time, the researcher interviewed them to understand the current situation and whether discrimination still exists today.

From the testimonies of interviewees from Korean Ethnic Schools, it was evident that they do not personally experience much discrimination. However, when they engage in group activities like on the way to and from school or participating in events and matches as a Korean Ethnic School, they become identifiable as "Chōsen people (朝鮮人)", which can sometimes lead to experiences of discrimination.

*"Discrimination hasn't been directed at me personally, but some other my friend around me. For example, in junior high school, some friend wore their Chogori (traditional Korean clothing) with their names embroidered on them, just three Chinese characters that clearly indicated they were Korean. Those who commuted to school by train sometimes faced not good comments, like 'Go back Korea.' So, everyone hid it for safety. In junior high school, when we played practice matches or games as 'Higashi-Osaka Chōsen ' (東大阪朝鮮 East Osaka Korean Ethnic School), we were sometimes told by members of opposing teams, 'Oh, that's North Korea.' – Interviewee A*

*"During the free high school fee elimination, we handed out flyers, and sometimes*

*we were told things about it. We say it's discrimination, but they say they're just 'distinguishing' or something like that." – Interviewee B*

*"As for hate speech, they often come in front of Korean University. Not every day, but from the three years I've been living here, it happened about twice. They are right-wing people from Zaitokukai (在特會). Those Zaitokukai people hire someone and have them shout in front of Korean University. They would use speakers from their cars and shout things like 'Go back to Korea.' Japanese young people are generally not interested in politics. Probably because Korea is trending now, we don't get it directly from young people. But the invisible discrimination, like the free high school fee elimination, still exists." – Interviewee C*

*"But discrimination has decreased somewhat. There aren't many direct comments anymore. I think it's less than before. Also, sometimes people just don't notice. Back then, we would commute wearing Chogori, but now we wear tracksuits or uniforms similar to those of Japanese schools, so maybe Japanese people don't even realize we're Koreans. It has become less common." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, the testimonies of members with an Ethnic Class revealed that experiences of discrimination vary by individuals. Interviewee E and H, both of whom hold Japanese nationality, have never experienced any ethnic discrimination. In contrast, F and G, who hold Korean nationality, have experienced direct discrimination.

*"I've never really experienced ethnic discrimination. If anything, I felt like people often envied me. When I got to high school, students came from different areas, and*



*when I saw other mixed-race students, I didn't feel like being a Zainichi or a half was anything special." – Interviewee E*

*"To be honest, there have been times when I was kind of confused, like, 'Oh, was that discrimination?' I've had a curious mind since I was in the fourth or fifth grade. I heard some like discrimination when I asked some question to some friends like 'Can you marry with a Korean?' and then they'd say, 'No, my parents won't allow it.' When I was in New Zealand, I didn't hear it from Korean friends, but I would hear it from Japanese or other Asian. They'd say, 'I know you are a fake Japanese.' Even now, I'm living in Taiwan, my friends say, '你是假的日本人' (You're a fake Japanese), which is kind of a joke within our friendships, so maybe they think it's okay to say that. They probably wouldn't say it if they knew the history. We're friends, but for me, it's really crossing a line. I met someone the other day, and I mentioned I'm Korean, and that's when the conversation started. I didn't respond well in Korean, and that person said, 'Hey, you can't even speak Korean,' and it felt like I was being laughed at. I feel that subtle prejudice, ignorance of history, and things like that a lot." – Interviewee F*

*"When I was 18, about four years ago, I was attending a preparatory school. I had already changed my name to a Korean name, and that's when the teacher asked me questions like, 'Do you have Zainichi Koreans roots?' or 'Do you have relatives in Korea?' Then the teacher asked, 'You're pretty much Japanese, so isn't it meaningless to cherish Korea?' My mind went completely blank at that time because I had never heard that before." – Interviewee G*

*"I've never personally experienced discrimination. I think it's probably because I didn't talk about it much with others. I often feel like people envy me. But I wonder if they might be mistaking that for newcomers." – Interviewee H*

From the testimonies of both groups, it is evident that Zainichi Koreans from Korean Ethnic Schools find themselves in a minority position within society. While they have a supportive community within their schools and living environment with fellow Zainichi, individual discrimination has reduced. However, when they step outside their Zainichi community, they encounter increasing instances of discrimination, and there is also the presence of invisible structural discrimination, such as the "high school free education" system. On the contrary, Zainichi Koreans with Korean nationality who attended Ethnic Classes have experienced personal discrimination and show different responses to this discrimination. Members from Korean Ethnic Schools tend to accept discrimination as an unfortunate reality they have to endure. In contrast, interviewee F and G, who hold Korean nationality, have different reactions to discrimination.

Interviewee F stated that she can understand that discrimination against zainichi occurs because the history of zainichi is not properly communicated. However, she believes that we should not tolerate a "natural" or "inevitable" attitude toward discrimination and has shown a willingness to stand up against discrimination. Furthermore, she pointed out the presence of hate speech and discriminatory comments on platforms like Twitter, highlighting that discrimination against Zainichi Koreans continues to exist. She expressed frustration and resistance towards Japanese people who falsely assume that discrimination against Zainichi Koreans has completely disappeared.

During the interview, G's emotions, when discussing her experiences of discrimination, were described as "bewilderment," "confusion," and "surprise." Having

grown up in an environment where her school and local community acknowledged the presence of Zainichi Koreans, she was taken aback by the unexpected discrimination she faced when leaving her hometown, where many people were unaware of the existence of Zainichi Koreans.

### **The Presence and Recognition of Zainichi Koreans: Lack of Awareness among Japanese**

As mentioned by F and G, most of the interviewees pointed out a lack of awareness among Japanese people regarding Zainichi Koreans. In particular, those who attended Korean Ethnic Schools strongly felt this lack of recognition when they entered Japanese universities.

*"We have been quite active about the free high school fee elimination since junior high school, going in front of the Osaka Prefectural Government building, speaking out, and collecting signatures. Despite these efforts, it still seems that people understand us less than we thought, our existence." – Interviewee B*

*"It's quite common not to be understood. Since going to a Japanese university, my friends have asked me, 'Are you Korean?' It's because there's no recognition of Zainichi, so I can't get people to understand at all." – Interviewee D*

Later, the researcher asked the interviewees who felt there was a lack of awareness about Zainichi Koreans among Japanese people how they explain Zainichi . In response, many of the interviewees indicated that they try to explain Zainichi Koreans to those who are unaware but at the same time expressed a reaction of "it's a hassle." Among them, interviewee H, who holds Japanese citizenship compared to the interviewees with Korean nationality, expressed concerns about her right to talk about Zainichi Koreans and her lack of confidence.

*"I don't speak Korean perfectly, and I now have Japanese citizenship. Until I became aware of my roots, I grew up as a pure Japanese, so I used to think, 'Am I allowed to say I'm Zainichi?' I felt like my ethnicity was inferior compared to those who were Zainichi, attending Korean schools and such, and I don't have the confidence to openly talk about my roots." – Interviewee H*

Additionally, interviewee C from Korean Ethnic School and Interviewee F from Ethnic Classes expressed feelings of anger and frustration about the ignorance of Japanese people. Both of them were displeased with the fact that the history of Zainichi Koreans is not taught in Japanese education.

*"Many people don't know anything about it. I'd explain everything. Maybe it's because they don't learn about it in school. Not learning it itself is weird. Because, in those Japanese schools where they study history, there is definitely the fact of colonization, but they don't teach it at all. And that's despite Japan needing to apologize to Korea for everything they did." – Interviewee C*

*"Having to explain to people who don't know about Zainichi Koreans ultimately falls on the affected party every time. For example, within a context where no opportunity or means of learning is provided to you, when you encounter such a person, being made to explain to them is quite cruel. And the idea that explaining is troublesome is probably something that every affected party feels. However, the difficulties that accumulate on them when dealing with such situations cannot be ignored. It feels unpleasant, so that's why I think education is essential." – Interviewee F*

## Self-Expression and Complexity of Zainichi Koreans

Next, the researcher asked questions regarding the expression of identity. In response, all of the interviewees from Korean Ethnic School expressed themselves as Zainichi Koreans. However, they mentioned struggling with various ways of expression such as Zainichi Koreans (Japanese-made English), Zainichi Kankoku-jin (在日韓國人 current day South Korea), Zainichi Chōsen-jin (在日朝鮮人 Koreans during the Chōsen era before the split), and Zainichi Kankoku Chōsen-jin (在日韓國朝鮮人 refer to people of Korea both in current day and in the Chōsen era)." The conflict regarding these expressions was particularly prominent between C and D, both of whom have Chōsen nationality.

*"When I was studying in Canada, I have explained, 'I have Korean citizenship.' When someone asked me "What nationality are you?", I never said 'I'm Japanese.' Definitely Korean. I don't feel any resistance to being called Korean, it's more like 'Zainichi Koreans (Japanese-made English).' If you say 'Zainichi Chōsenjin (在日朝鮮人),' it feels a bit discriminatory, but if you say 'Korean (Japanese-made English),' it softens a bit. I only say it to friends I trust. I can say 'Zainichi Koreans,' but I absolutely can't say 'Chōsen.' Because of the image of North Korea." – Interviewee A*

*" Oh, I'd say I'm a Zainichi. But I'm not a local Korean. I don't even say 'Zainichi Kankoku jin (在日韓國人).' There are some Chōsen (Korean Peninsula, North Korea) mixed in among the Zainichi Koreans (Japanese-made English), so I'd say Zainichi Koreans." – Interviewee B*

*"When I talk to my Japanese friends, if they're not particularly interested in Zainichi, I just say 'I'm Korean.' But with close friends, I might say 'Zainichi Korean' and add a little ambiguity. Not Zainichi Chōsen jin (在日朝鮮人), not Zainichi kannkoku jin (在日韓國人). I find 'Zainichi Korean' to be the most convenient. It's a bit complicated, really. I feel a desire to identify as Zainichi Chōsen jin (在日朝鮮人) because I went to Korean Ethnic Schools. However, in terms of nationality, I'm Korean (South Korea 韓國), so I tend to go with 'Zainichi Korean,' adding a touch of ambiguity. How I introduce myself can vary depending on the friend."*

*- Interviewee D*

The researcher also asked these interviewees C who holds Chōsen citizenship and D who was originally a Chōsen citizen but has since naturalized as a Korean citizen, if they had any reservations about publicly stating their Chōsen citizenship.

*"I've started to say 'Zainichi Chōsen jin (在日朝鮮人)' recently. We had classes at school that taught us about it, and it felt like saying 'Zainichi Koreans or Zainichi Kankoku jin (在日韓國人)' was avoiding something. I used to hesitate a bit, thinking, 'This person might be difficult to explain to,' or 'This person seems like they might discriminate,' and in those cases, I would say 'Zainichi Koreans.' But lately, I've been making an effort to say 'Zainichi Chōsen jin (在日朝鮮人)' and consciously not avoiding it." - Interviewee C*

*"I've already naturalized to Korean citizenship, but if I hadn't, I would probably have been resistant to disclosing it. In my case, it's mostly saying 'Zainichi Koreans'*

*because explaining the other terms can be bothersome. "- Interviewee D*

On the contrary, it is evident that members who attended Ethnic Classes have varying ways of expressing their identities based on their respective nationalities. Interviewee F and G, who hold Korean citizenship, do not identify themselves as Japanese but rather as Zainichi Koreans. On the other hand, Interviewee E and H, who hold Japanese citizenship, mentioned that they are more likely to identify themselves as Japanese rather than as Zainichi Koreans.

*"I might say 'Japanese.' Or rather, I feel like a 'half' in a way. I often say something like, 'My dad is Korean, but I don't really speak Korean.' So, I'm like 'I'm a half with Korean,' when I do talk about it."- Interviewee E*

*"For me personally, Zainichi Koreans, as well as my own experiences of living in countries that aren't my motherland, make me feel very like, when I talk about my Zainichi identity, I don't feel the need to express a typical Zainichi aspect, such as speaking Korean or eating Korean food. Instead, it's more about learning my history, hearing my parents' stories, and discovering my family's background. I think that's something I want to do in life as someone born as a Zainichi Koreans. So, I often contemplate how best to express my identity."- Interviewee F*

*"I use 'Zainichi Koreans' when talking to people who show interest, but for those who seem less interested, I tend to say 'Korean (South Korea 韓國人).' If they become more interested, I explain further. Of course, in events or lectures, and times like these interviews, I explain clearly. There are still people with discriminatory*

*beliefs, and I sometimes feel the fear of how they'll react, which makes it quite difficult to speak about."- Interviewee G*

*"With people I meet for the first time, I don't really mention my roots, so I just consider myself a Japanese. But after I realized that I have roots, I've started to take pride in the part of my identity that's Zainichi Koreans. So, I want to tell close friends that I have Zainichi Koreans roots."- Interviewee H*

Regarding their self-expression, a commonality among them was that almost all of them took pride in their roots and were open about them with close friends. However, they tended to adapt their expressions based on the friends and situation when disclosing their roots to others. While the common element of experiencing inner conflict in self-expression was evident, they each faced different types of struggles. They had strong reservations about using the term " Chōsen" due to the negative connotations associated with North Korea in Japanese society. However, they also feared potential discrimination when openly identifying with Chōsen nationality due to the lack of recognition of the Zainichi presence in Japanese society.

On the other hand, E and H, who attended Ethnic Classes and held Japanese nationality, lacked confidence in identifying themselves as Zainichi Koreans. Their doubts stemmed from being in a half position, with one parent being Zainichi Koreans and the other Japanese, insufficient exposure to Zainichi education, limited proficiency in the Korean language, and a scarcity of an ethnic environment within their households. Consequently, they were concerned about their right to express themselves as Zainichi Koreans.



## **Zainichi Education**

The researcher interviewed the participants about their experiences in Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes, with a focus on how ethnic education has influenced the formation of their ethnic identity. In this section, the researcher will conduct a comparative analysis based on the interview data to examine the specific impacts of Korean schools and ethnic classes on the participants. Additionally, the researcher interviewed with two teachers from the Ethnic Classes in Junior high school in Osaka to gain insights into the current educational content and approach of Ethnic Classes."

### **Participation Background and Reactions from the Perspective of Zainichi Koreans**

Regarding the participation in Korean Ethnic Schools among the participants who graduated from Korean Ethnic Schools, as mentioned in the "Realization of Ethnic Roots" section above, most of them began attending Korean Ethnic Schools from kindergarten or elementary school. Consequently, their involvement in ethnic education was largely determined by their parents' decisions.

On the other hand, the participants who attended in Ethnic Classes had various ways of becoming aware of the existence of these classes and gaining entry into them, often through the influence of their parents, friends, or teachers.

*"I started attending Ethnic Classes around the time I was in 2nd year of middle school. The reason I began attending was through friends. I was invited by my friends." – Interviewee E*

*"At that time, I think I was in the 5th grade in elementary school, and my family was considering immigrating to Korea again. That's when I first started receiving intense*

*training in the Korean language every day, and I began attending Ethnic Classes at that time." – Interviewee F*

*"When I was in 1st grade in elementary school, a teacher at school invited me to join the Ethnic Classes. Initially, I didn't have a strong will to go because I was just a 1st grader, but I thought I'd go since my friends were going. So, I started attending because the teacher and my parents encouraged me." – Interviewee G*

*"I started attending Ethnic Classes when I was in the 2nd year of middle school. At that time, I had just mentioned to a friend that I was 'half-Japanese and half-Zainichi.' When I also told the teacher about it, the teacher said, 'There's an ethnic class for Zainichi Koreans. Why don't you come?'" – Interviewee H*

When the researcher asked about the reactions in their surroundings when they participated in ethnic education. Interviewees who graduated from Korean Ethnic Schools did not specifically mention any significant reactions when they initially entered in Korean Ethnic Schools. This lack of notable reaction might be attributed to the fact that many of them were surrounded by compatriots and had grown up in the Zainichi community. As a result, their enrollment in ethnic education did not raise any particular reactions from those around them.

*"My family was the only one that attended Korean Ethnic School. All my relatives attended Japanese schools. But all our relatives recognized that we are Zainichi, and there was no special reaction to the fact that I attended Korean Ethnic school." – Interviewee D*

In contrast, participants who attended Ethnic Classes had different reactions based on the region they grew up in and the nature of the Ethnic Classes they joined. Interviewee E and H both attended the same middle school and the same Ethnic Class. When they joined, there were no other students in the Ethnic Class, and it seems they discovered the existence of the class at the same time. They described the reactions and emotions surrounding their enrollment as follows:

*"In middle school, no one really said anything. It was a bit embarrassing. I think some friends might have asked, 'What are you doing in there?' It's not that I felt ashamed of being Korean or anything like that. It just felt something new for people who didn't know about Zainichi, but I felt that it was something important to me, so I continued to attend." – Interviewee E*

*"I started attending Ethnic Classes abruptly, so I was a little concerned about what my friends thought, and it was slightly embarrassing to do something different from others. But nobody said anything." – Interviewee H*

Interviewee G, who attended a school in a neighborhood with a significant Zainichi Koreans population, described the reactions as follows:

*"When I was in elementary school, among the 30 to 40 students in my class, about a third of them had Korean roots. Of course, there were more Japanese kids, but everyone knew the term 'Zainichi,' and teachers supported us." – Interviewee G*

In contrast, Interviewee F, who attended an Ethnic Class provided by the local

community rather than the ones in elementary or middle schools, described the reactions when she enrolled as follows:

*"Different from school, my actions in my private space were more personal and private. Therefore, there were fewer instances of someone saying something to me. Maybe if I had kept in touch with relatives I knew from the past, I wouldn't have been as open and free as I am now. Because those people had, you know, naturalized or they had been living as Japanese for a long time, so they might have a different perspective. I don't think they would have viewed me talking about important things like this in a positive light. So, I believe that the voices around you are quite important." – Interviewee F*

From this data, it becomes clear that three significant factors play a major role in their decision to participate in ethnic education: parental perspectives on Ethnic Education, the influence of teachers involved in Ethnic Education, and the characteristics of the local community where they grew up.

For interviewees who graduated from Korean Ethnic Schools, it was predominantly their parents' decision to enroll them in these schools. Since most of these interviewees' parents were also graduates of Korean Ethnic Schools and openly identified as Zainichi Koreans, it is highly likely that these parents aimed to provide comprehensive ethnic education for their children through Korean Ethnic Schools.

On the other hand, in the case of interviewees who attended Ethnic Classes, there was greater variation in their parents' backgrounds. The interviews suggested that some of their parents may have concealed their Zainichi Koreans identity due to past experiences of discrimination or the challenging circumstances faced by Zainichi Koreans. As a result, the

decision to actively provide ethnic education varied among the parents of these participants. Most of the interviewees who attended Ethnic Classes were encouraged to enroll in these classes by teachers. This highlights the significant role of third-party teachers involved in ethnic education in facilitating their participation.

Additionally, the responses to their participation in ethnic education from their surroundings varied based on the region. In schools where the presence of Zainichi Koreans was widely known, and the number of Zainichi Koreans students was significant, participants did not feel particularly "unusual" and were generally accepted within their school environment. Conversely, in schools with few Zainichi Koreans students, entering Ethnic Classes brought about a sense of shame and required a degree of courage as it made them stand out among their peers.

### **Curriculum of Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes**

Next, The researcher asked them about the primary subjects and activities they engage in at Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes.

According to the responses of the interviewees who attended Korean Ethnic Schools, in addition to regular subjects taught in Japanese schools, as a second or third language, they provide Japanese and English instruction. They also offer classes related to Korean society and Korean history, all of which are conducted in Korean except for the Japanese language classes. Interviewee A and B mentioned that, in order to raise awareness of being a Zainichi, statistics were collected during homeroom about the percentage of the day spent using the Korean language. This rigorous environment of speaking Korean has played a significant role in their ability to speak Korean fluently. Additionally, traditional cultural events are organized, exposing them to traditional arts such as ethnic dances and folk songs.

*"(If I spoke in Japanese), we got angry from teachers. My club had a teacher who was passionate about Korean history, so when we spoke in Japanese, we'd get scolded." – Interviewee B*

*"To raise awareness of being a Zainichi, we'd always have statistics on how much Korean we used during homeroom. The use of the Korean language was enforced. That's why I became fluent. The teachers were practically always speaking Korean and not just 100% in Japanese." – Interviewee A*

*"If the school organized an event, we had to participate. There were performances, and I watched traditional dances and heard folk songs." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, Ethnic Classes are typically held once a week after school or on weekends, focusing mainly on learning the Korean language, traditional instruments, history, and other activities. Additionally, some Ethnic Classes regularly organize summer camps.

*"We learned some Korean, wrote our names in Korean, played musical instruments, and even wore Chima Chogori in class. But it was just for a bit since it was once a week." - Interviewee E*

*"Basically, we learned songs, studied Korean, and practiced playing traditional Korean drums. We even participated in the prefectural tournament. So, we practiced a bit and had some snacks. Plus, ethnic classes were mostly free." - Interviewee F*

*"In elementary school, it was more about playing, and in middle school, we did*

*things like playing musical instruments and studying history. It was once a week. We also had summer camps and participated in 'Hagi Hakkyo' (하계학교 summer school), where three local elementary schools gathered for joint activities."* –

*Interviewee G*

*"We studied Korean using textbooks and games, played musical instruments, and greeted the teacher by saying 'Annyeonghaseyo (안녕하세요 hello).' I joined a summer camp-like event, where I learned about the history of Koreans and played games. Also, when I graduated from middle school, the ethnic class prepared Chima Chogori for us, and I wore it for the first time." -Interviewee H*

I also interviewed Ethnic Class teachers about the current curriculum, events, and educational goals. The teachers mentioned that, as mentioned by the interviewees, the classes mainly focus on teaching Korean, history, social studies, and traditional games. They highlighted the educational objectives as follows:

*"In our ethnic class, there are teacher who have attended Korean Ethnic Schools. So, in my personal opinion, I don't think the policy is different. The educational content might differ, but our main goals are nurturing identity, ensuring students can enjoy a school life with a sense of security, and making ethnic class activities enjoyable. I believe that's the policy. But teacher who taught at Korean Ethnic Schools before might think we could do more. The difference is mainly in the amount of time. We have Ethnic Classes about 35 times a year, which is approximately once a week." -  
Teacher 1*

## **Learning and Impact: Experiences in Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes**

The researcher asked them about what they experienced and how it has influenced them through those Zainichi education.

According to the responses from the interviewees who attended Korean Ethnic Schools, it was clear that they found strength in their ethnic identity by being a part of a social minority but connecting with many compatriots at these schools. They also mentioned that the educational curriculum provided by schools offered them the opportunity to think about their identity. They reflected on their roles as Zainichi Koreans in Japanese society and deepened their self-awareness. Additionally, they mentioned the benefit of naturally acquiring the Korean language in Japan.

*"It strengthens our ethnic identity. We have been studying together for a long time, and since Zainichi are a minority in Japanese society, having peers around us like that is genuinely reassuring. Growing up in such a community allows us to openly embrace our identity, and we've learned things that wouldn't be taught in Japanese schools, aside from history and language."- Interviewee A*

*"Ethnicity becomes stronger, or rather, being a Zainichi Koreans is considered normal at schools, and you can go through life without facing prejudices. With a relatively small number of students, everyone gets along. In Japanese society, Zainichi are rare, so it's comforting to have other ainichi around me. I also learned to speak Korean." – Interviewee B*

*"There aren't many Zainichi across Japan, but when you go to Korean Ethnic University, Zainichi from all over the prefecture gather. So, I can make many*



*connections. In the future, when you work and live in Japanese society, you have strong connections with fellow Zainichi. It's a powerful bond, so if something happens later, you can really help each other. We are in a rather complex situation, so we think a lot about our identity and struggle. We can think about our identity even if we don't see immediate results. Additionally, I can understand Korean naturally."- Interviewee C*

*"I have gained opportunities to think about my identity, like when I went to North Korea for two weeks, or even before that. I learned why I am here and who I am, and that was a good thing. And another thing is that I can understand Korean."- Interviewee D*

From the testimonies of those who attended Ethnic Classes, it is evident that they developed an interest in their ethnic self-awareness and identity through these classes. Moreover, the existence of Ethnic Classes has become one of the proofs of their identity as Zainichi Koreans.

*"I wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn if I didn't attend. I didn't have much interest in it, but I was influenced by friends who value their ethnic identity, and having Zainichi friends around me piqued my curiosity and made me want to know more." – Interviewee E*

*"In terms of language, I think it was great to learn Korean language back then. I believe that the memories of attending ethnic classes serve as a proof to my Zainichi identity. At the very least, I feel that I have had such an experience. The experiences*

*of interacting and playing with other Zainichi people during my childhood were simply wonderful. I genuinely feel that having had the opportunity to have those experiences was valuable." – Interviewee F*

*"It's not so much that the studies had a significant impact but, rather, the time I spent learning, the encounters with the teacher, meeting friends, and fellow Zainichi, all of those have influenced me quite a bit. As a junior high school student, we talked about our roots and that, now looking back, created strong bonds, so I think the activities in the ethnic class have played a role in establishing my roots." – Interviewee G*

*"I may have learned a relatively small amount by attending Ethnic Classes, and I only went once a week, so I may not have truly mastered the Korean language, or learned a lot about being Zainichi. However, the experience of attending ethnic classes is what allows me to have confidence in my identity as a Zainichi. Without that experience, I think I might have been less confident about being Zainichi, maybe just identifying with Japanese nationality, so it's a clear and factual aspect of telling my story about my roots." – Interviewee H*

When comparing the statements, in Korean Ethnic Schools, there is daily exposure to the Korean language, and ample time is allocated for learning Korean history, thus providing thorough education aimed at strengthening the identity of Zainichi Koreans. Interviewee C and D emphasized that one of the primary goals of Korean Ethnic Schools is to foster ethnic self-consciousness necessary for living as Korean or Chōsen jin. In contrast, the Ethnic Classes offer classes once a week, lasting around 1-2 hours, covering topics such as

history, traditional culture, and traditional games. While Ethnic Classes also aim to nurture the Zainichi identity, there exists a critical discrepancy in terms of "time." This time difference is distinct and is believed to result in variations in Korean language proficiency and understanding of Korean history and society. However, the experiences of ethnic education have significantly influenced the process of forming their Zainichi identity. Additionally, beyond mere influence, the existence of Ethnic Classes serves as proof of Zainichi identity for the participants, instilling confidence in their Zainichi identity.

Furthermore, through interviews with Korean Ethnic School graduates, some opinions regarding North Korea were expressed. Korean Ethnic Schools are operated by an organization called the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, which receives various forms of support, including financial assistance. Therefore, from the testimonies of interviewee C, attending the Korean Ethnic University, and interviewee G, who had connections with many Korean Ethnic University students, it was observed that some educational content and ideology contained elements that supported North Korea.

During the interview, interviewee C, who was studying the relationship between North Korea and Japan at University, expressed the opinion that Japan had issues related to its education, the Japanese government, and the North Korean missile problem. She held the view that these issues were Japan's fault, implying that Japan had problems. Such testimonies revealed a different perspective from the negative image that many Japanese people hold regarding North Korea.

## Cultural Heritage Preservation

### Passing Down Ethnic Culture and Identity to the Next Generation

The researcher also conducted interviews with them regarding how they plan to pass on their Zainichi Koreans ethnicity, culture, and values to their future children or the next generation within the context of their family and education. And also asked them what specific educational methods or approaches they consider important for this purpose.

In response to these questions, the interviewees who attended Korean Ethnic Schools expressed a strong desire to ensure that their future children receive education in Korean schools. They believe that these schools are essential for teaching the specific values and traditional culture of their community. However, concerns were raised regarding the uncertain future of the schools.

*"I want to send my children to Korean Ethnic Schools. But schools are decreasing in number. If they disappear, there won't be a place to learn this history. Rather than trying to convey it verbally to my children, I think it's better to have them learn. Probably there might not be Korean Ethnic Schools when we have children. Zainichi Koreans are a collective of cooperation, so the values of helping each other, and that kind of culture, are things I definitely want to pass on. I've gained the most from these 12 years of ethnic education, and I believe that the most valuable thing I've gained is this sense of cooperation. So, I want to pass it on." – Interviewee A*

*"I think that if my children don't attend Korean Ethnic Schools, they won't be able to speak the language. I think it's better if they attend, but there are no schools. The culture of cherishing one's alma mater and cooperating with fellow Zainichi in various ways is important. Because we are a minority ethnic group, we can naturally*

*accept and be accepted by others, and the bond is strong. I want to teach them about this." – Interviewee B*

*"I will definitely send my children to Korean Ethnic Schools. But I'm concerned about whether the schools will still exist... Our relatives are spread across Japan, and in the place where my relatives in Toyama are, there is something like a Jesa once a year. If it's still happening in the current situation, I want to connect with it, but it's not happening in my hometown, so I don't know. " - Interviewee C*

*"I want to send my children to Korean Ethnic Schools. They are the first option, and if that doesn't work out, maybe the ethnic classes. As for Jesa, I don't think it will come back." – Interviewee D*

On the other hand, the interviewees who attended Ethnic Classes expressed their opinion that it is essential for future generations to receive Zainichi Koreans education. They emphasized the importance of this education in preserving their heritage and cultural identity. Additionally, they mentioned specific aspects, such as traditional food culture, as crucial components to pass on.

*"I don't know much about Zainichi culture well enough to teach it myself, but I would like to make it more familiar, like cooking Korean dishes. I felt I learned too late, and if I had known earlier, it would have been better. So, it's better to pass on rather than hide about being Zainichi."- Interviewee E*

*"I come from a family with four generations, and I still encounter very different*

*customs when I go to Korea. It's hard for them to make an effort to get close to Koreans, and I don't think they need to. I want to maintain that sense of distance. I couldn't get as many opportunities as I wanted when I was younger. I didn't understand Korean well when I was a child. I regret that, and I want to expose young children to it as much as possible. I hope they have the chance to learn when they want to." - Interviewee F*

*"I want to send my kids to Korean Ethnic School, especially in elementary school. For junior high, I'd leave it to my child's decision. I can create a cultural environment within our family as well. If I have children and want to raise them in Osaka, I think it's important because it's easier to feel our ethnic identity and have some form of ethnic education within daily life. There's quite a lot in terms of cultural aspects, like food culture. For example, the culture of enjoying grilled offal that started among Zainichi Koreans, and traditional Korean dances, musical instruments, songs. I personally enjoy these things, and when I hear them, it really feels so ethnically rich and makes me appreciate it." - Interviewee G*

*"I want my child to know about our Zainichi roots. If Ethnic Classes are available, I think it's a good choice. I'm the only one in my family who received proper ethnic education, so I want to give my child a chance to gain more knowledge. There are no traces of Korean traditional culture left in my family, except for food culture, so I want to expose my child to that. I think visiting our ancestors' graves is also important. It's a place where I can really feel Korean culture. I also want to take my child to Koreatown." - Interviewee H*

From the testimonies of these two groups, several commonalities and differences emerged. As a common point, they both recognized the importance of ethnic education through their own experiences and expressed a desire to provide their future children with opportunities for ethnic education, either through Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes. In comparison to those who attended Korean Ethnic Schools, those who attended Ethnic Classes expressed regrets about their limited exposure to ethnic education and the delayed recognition of their own identity. Consequently, they emphasized the importance of teaching their children about Zainichi root from an early age and providing them with opportunities for ethnic education, such as Ethnic Classes.

Furthermore, the interviewees who attended Korean Ethnic Schools expressed a desire to pass down the values they learned at schools to the next generation. On the other hand, those from Ethnic Classes focused on the ethnic aspects they unconsciously experienced within their families, particularly in terms of food culture. This may be because they recognized that the ethnic elements they had encountered within their families, though initially unconscious, became pivotal in their identity formation process. Therefore, they considered food culture the most accessible and inheritable aspect of their identity.

### **The Korean Ethnic School Survival Crisis and Changing Ethnic Class: Challenges**

Most of the interviewee values ethnic education, but there were concerns about the precarious existence of Korean Ethnic Schools and changes in Ethnic Classes. Therefore, I conducted interviews regarding the future of ethnic education.

In the interviews with representatives from Korean Ethnic Schools, one major concern raised was the decreasing number of students attending schools each year, which they identified as a significant threat to the survival of the schools. They expressed deep regret about this situation and attributed the decline to the fact that Korean Ethnic Schools are

not eligible for Japan's free high school education system.

*"In the past, there used to be many people of Zainichi Koreans descent in Japan, but nowadays, their numbers have likely decreased. Probably the most significant reason for this decline is the high number of people naturalizing due to various issues involving North Korea. The fact that Korean Ethnic Schools are not eligible for Japan's free high school education and financial support is also a major factor. The tuition fees are high, and the school buildings are in poor condition, which makes parents anxious about sending their children there. It's regrettable that the numbers are decreasing, but it's somewhat inevitable." – Interviewee A*

*"Since we don't receive any financial assistance for our schools, the tuition fees are high, and that's why many students attend Japanese schools for middle school." – Interviewee B*

*"Most students live far away from the school, and due to this, the number of students attending is dwindling. Many parents are opting for the supposedly free education in Japanese schools. " – Interviewee D*

*"Firstly, Japan is also facing a declining birthrate. But ideally, I wish that once members of the Zainichi community get married, they would send their children to our Korean Ethnic Schools. It's because the current situation is that schools are disappearing. It would be better if each individual held onto their ethnic identity more strongly." – Interviewee C*



On the other hand, interviewees from Ethnic Classes also provided insights into both the future of ethnic education and the current changes in these classes.

Regarding the changes in Ethnic Classes, two main aspects were highlighted: the composition of participating students and the teachers. In the past, Ethnic Classes were primarily attended by students of Zainichi , providing them with a space to learn about their roots. However, nowadays, regardless of their own ethnic background, students with roots in countries other than Korea are also able to participate in these classes.

Additionally, testimonies from teachers at Osaka middle school, where the researcher conducted interviews, revealed a shift in the teachers who lead these classes. While in the past, teachers of Zainichi primarily taught Ethnic Classes, there is now an involvement of newcomer's teachers and those with Japanese citizenship in the education of Ethnic Classes. In a society that values diversity, the roles and approaches of teachers have diversified, and it appears that there is a consensus that there is no need for restrictions in Ethnic Classes that limit participation only to students of Zainichi Koreans. In fact, the mentioned middle school has started accepting students without ethnic roots into their Ethnic Classes, with the goal of creating a class that is inclusive, without any sense of "otherness" or distinctions like "Korean". The teachers emphasized the need to adapt educational content and their own perspectives according to the changing times. Various opinions were expressed about these changes in Ethnic Classes, and interviewees who have experienced Ethnic Classes felt that, if there is a possibility of losing a place where they can learn about their own ethnic identity, it should be preserved even if it takes on a different form.

Regarding the future of Ethnic Classes, three concerns were raised: the treatment of ethnic instructors, bias against ethnic classes, and disparities in school cooperation. Interviewee G pointed out, based on their experience as an ethnic instructor, that one of the problems currently faced by Ethnic Classes is the insufficient treatment of Ethnic Class

teachers, especially in terms of financial aspects. It is suggested that this is one of the reasons why the establishment of new Ethnic Classes is not progressing. Furthermore, Ethnic Classes teachers expressed concerns about the perceptions of ethnic education within schools. If ethnic education is seen as creating a sense of exclusivity or uniqueness only for Zainichi Koreans or Koreans, it could lead to biases and misunderstandings. They also emphasized the importance of school teachers' cooperation in conducting ethnic class activities. However, the current situation reveals disparities in the commitment of schools to Ethnic Classes, which is also considered one of the factors affecting the activities of Ethnic Classes.

### **The Basis for Cherishing Zainichi Identity**

In the final question, I asked them about the reasons they hold for cherishing their Zainichi ethnic identity and culture. Their responses were quite similar. While assimilating into Japanese society, they hope to maintain the culture, education, and values that the first, second, and third generation Zainichi Koreans have inherited over their long history in Japan for the future without changing them. Furthermore, by openly expressing their Zainichi identity, they aim to provide the same opportunity to other Zainichi Koreans and want Japanese society to acknowledge their presence. They hope that this mindset will spread to the younger generation, who will play a central role in Japanese society, leading to a broader awareness of Zainichi Koreans within Japanese society. This, they believe, would create an environment where they can freely and authentically express themselves, making it easier to pass on their ethnic heritage.

*"Being born in Japan as a Korean, in a way, we're a minority in society, and there might be a desire to hide that. However, I think it's important to accept that part of your identity without worrying about what others say. Instead of concealing it just*

*because it's somewhat different from the people around you, it's probably easier and more enjoyable to be upfront about it." – Interviewee A*

*"If we can talk about it without feeling ashamed, maybe other people can talk about it too. Like, actually, I'm Zainichi. If we hide it, they probably never will." –*

*Interviewee B*

*"If we lose that ethnic culture, or if Zainichi society ceases to exist, then the people who pass on the history of the colonial era will also disappear completely. It feels like it's exactly what the Japanese government wants, so we must ensure that this history, which indicates the existence of that colonial era, is not forgotten." –*

*Interviewee C*

*"We've been taught at school to cherish ethnic culture and our own identity, and I want to preserve the Zainichi Koreans community. I also believe it's something I need to pass on myself." – Interviewee D*

*"Understanding what kind of ethnicity you are, I think it can help enhance self-awareness, and that's why I believe it's essential." – Interviewee E*

*"I have an open-minded approach, and I want to continue being open about it. I hope for an environment where it's taken for granted, where nobody questions it. I even organize events and activities to make it more open. I wish for a society where it's just normal." – Interviewee G*

*"Having a unique ethnic identity within oneself is something that's not common. It's not something you can choose, and it's not something you can become just because you want to. I was born in this era, so maybe I can take pride in it, but I feel that having an ethnic identity like Zainichi in my family lineage is something I should cherish. My grandmother recently said, 'I have pride as a Korean,' and the moment I heard that, I felt that I should treasure it." – Interviewee H*

Interviewee F didn't provide a direct response but discussed the challenges of being a fourth-generation Zainichi, the values she wants to express as a Zainichi, and her vision for her place in Japanese society during the interview. She acknowledged that the hardships experienced by first, second, and third-generation Zainichi are beyond the understanding of those who haven't experienced them and emphasized that assimilating to make life easier in Japanese society is also a change. She stressed that even if Zainichi culture transforms, it doesn't mean it will disappear. As a fourth-generation, she expressed the ongoing challenge of representing the intentions of first, second, and third-generation Zainichi while dealing with her own struggles. She wanted a society where she could continue expressing her Zainichi identity without hindrance, hoping for a Japan where Zainichi identity could be expressed openly and freely.

## CONCLUSION

This study focused on young Zainichi Koreans and aimed to explore the differences in ethnic identity formation between individuals who attended Korean Ethnic Schools and those who attended Ethnic Classes. Additionally, it investigated the influence of Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes on their identity formation and how they intend to perpetuate their ethnic culture. Interviews were conducted with eight university students of Zainichi Koreans descent, yielding insights into these three research questions.

In terms of ethnic identity formation and the impact of Zainichi education on identity formation, differences and commonalities have become apparent. The first difference is that Zainichi Koreans who attended Korean Ethnic Schools grew up in the Zainichi community and were exposed to their ethnic culture from a young age. As a result, they tended to naturally and positively establish their ethnic identity at an early stage while living in Japan.

On the other hand, Zainichi Koreans who attended Ethnic Classes, having been exposed to Japanese culture and customs during their childhood and youth, were less conscious of their Korean culture at home and took a longer time to become aware of and establish their ethnic identity compared to Zainichi Koreans who attended Korean Ethnic Schools. In the process of identity formation, Zainichi Koreans from Ethnic Classes experienced different struggles and questions based on their nationality. Those with South Korean nationality often faced questions in their early years about why they were Korean and not Japanese like their friends, and they had also experienced discrimination and prejudice. Conversely, Zainichi Koreans with Japanese nationality tended to avoid explicitly identifying themselves as Zainichi Koreans, despite being aware of their Zainichi status. This tendency is believed to stem from the discourse present in Japanese society that emphasizes the alignment of nationality with ethnicity. As a result, it became apparent that identity formation for Zainichi Koreans from Ethnic Classes is not a straightforward or easily established

process.

In terms of Zainichi education, the educational beliefs and objectives aimed at nurturing ethnic identity don't differ significantly between Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes. However, the critical difference in "time" makes it impossible for ethnic classes to provide the same kind of education as Korean Ethnic Schools within the limited time available. Therefore, differences emerge between these two groups of Zainichi Koreans in terms of Korean language proficiency, knowledge of Zainichi history, and experiences with ethnic culture. Moreover, interviews have revealed that some Korean Ethnic School-educated individuals hold perspectives that differ from the negative image of North Korea often held by the general Japanese population, indicating a stronger sense of ethnic identity.

A commonality between these two groups of Zainichi Koreans is that participation in Zainichi education serves as a significant factor in establishing their ethnic identity clearly and strengthening their sense of ethnicity. Korean Ethnic School graduates receive the experience of long years of authentic ethnic education from elementary school through high school or college, and their long time spent with fellow Zainichi builds a strong foundation for them to live openly as ethnic minorities in Japanese society. Similarly, for Zainichi who attended Ethnic Classes, while the scope of Zainichi education they receive is limited, their participation in these classes and the experience of receiving Zainichi education become essential factors in boosting their confidence in their ethnic identity. Particularly, some of them actively make choices and efforts to establish their ethnic identity after experiencing Zainichi education. As a result, despite there are differences in the content and experiences of Zainichi education, both groups exhibit a comparable strength of ethnic identity, confidence, and pride, openly disclosing their Zainichi identity. However, as previously mentioned, this openness about their identity is primarily observed among Zainichi Koreans with South Korean or Chōsen nationality, while Zainichi Koreans with Japanese nationality,

especially those of mixed race, tend to reveal their identity in limited settings, such as among close friends or fellow Zainichi Koreans.

Regarding ethnic heritage, both groups shared a similar perspective, with most individuals recognizing the value of Zainichi education through their personal experiences and emphasizing the importance of passing it on to the next generation. Particularly, Ethnic Class-educated individuals, who had fewer opportunities to receive Zainichi education themselves, expressed a strong desire to provide early access to Zainichi education for the next generation. Furthermore, the majority of them focused on the preservation of food culture. This emphasis can be attributed to the fact that they grew up in an environment with a predominantly Japanese culture. After becoming aware of their roots, they found that food culture was the most accessible and tangible aspect of their ethnicity. It felt like a familiar and meaningful part of their culture, which is why they expressed their intention to pass it on to future generations.

Furthermore, regarding the tradition of "Jesa," which is considered an important venue for self-identity reaffirmation among Zainichi Koreans, most participants expressed that they are unlikely to continue this tradition in the future. This choice could interrupt the preservation of traditional culture and potentially contribute to a dilution of their ethnic identity. However, as the Zainichi Koreans community diversifies and assimilates into Japanese society, it is also recognized that traditional culture is changing. Therefore, they emphasize the Zainichi education that has had a significant impact on their identity.

However, through this study, several issues and challenges have become evident. Firstly, there is a lack of awareness among Japanese people about Zainichi Koreans. Areas like Osaka's Koreatown and Tokyo's Shin-Okubo are places where many Zainichi Koreans reside, and they are currently seen as tourist destinations. However, the majority of Japanese schools do not provide information about the history of these areas or details about Zainichi

Koreans. This situation leads to Zainichi Koreans facing some prejudice when they disclose their identity. It has become clear that this lack of awareness contributes to their sense of difficulty in living in Japanese society.

Besides, Zainichi education is facing several crises. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Korean Ethnic Schools are excluded from the provision of free high school education, and the discontinuation of subsidies from civic organizations has led to a significant decrease in the number of students, posing a severe threat to the continued existence of Korean Ethnic Schools. Moreover, within Ethnic Classes, poor treatment has resulted in a shortage of instructors, prejudice against ethnic education classes within the schools, and an imbalance in support from the school administration have also been identified as issues. These challenges have impeded the progress in establishing more ethnic education classes.

Japan is often said to be aiming for a global society; however, the reality is that Zainichi Koreans, who have been in Japan for many years, are not widely recognized. Instead, the emphasis often falls solely on South Korean popular culture. This serves as evidence that Japan still retains elements of a homogenous nation. If Japan truly aspires to be a global society, it is necessary to pay attention to the minority ethnic groups, at the very least in areas with a significant Zainichi Koreans population. It is believed that when the presence of Zainichi Koreans is discussed and recognized by more people, the reduction of discrimination and prejudice that still exist will follow. This, in turn, can lead to the creation of a society where Zainichi Koreans can express themselves more easily.

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# APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### 1. Basic Information

- a. Age/Gender/Nationality/Place of birth
- b. Family composition/Generation in Zainichi/ Educational background

### 2. Life Story

- a. Could you please share the background of your family and the circumstances under which your ancestors immigrated to Japan?
- b. When did you first become aware of your Korean roots? Could you share your feelings and emotions at that time?

### 3. Ethnic Environment at Home

- a. Did you experience exposure to Korean culture at home?
- b. Have you heard any stories or historical episodes related to your ethnic identity from your parents or relatives?

### 4. Ethnic Identity Formation

- a. Have you faced discrimination or prejudice due to your Korean roots? If so, how did those experiences make you feel, and how did you respond to them? (e.g., hate speech)
- b. How do you express your identity as a Korean? Do you primarily identify yourself as Korean, Japanese, or something else in your daily life? How do you perceive your nationality, and what are the reasons for your perception? What contributes to the strength of your ethnic identity?

### 5. Experience with Zainichi Education

- a. Can you share your motivations for participating in Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes? (e.g., curriculum content, participation in events, reactions from others)
- b. Could you discuss any challenges or conflicts you faced during your time in Korean schools or ethnic classes?
- c. How did participating in Korean Ethnic Schools or Ethnic Classes influence your understanding of history, culture, and your identity as a Zainichi Koreans?
- d. How did your parents, relatives, and friends react to your participation in ethnic education?
- e. What are your opinions on future ethnic education?

### 6. Cultural Inheritance

- a. Do you have any concerns or conflicts related to this decision?
- b. How do you explain or interact with people who have limited understanding of Zainichi Koreans?
- c. What are your thoughts on future nationality? (For Korean nationality) Are you considering the possibility of naturalizing as a Japanese citizen? What factors would influence this decision?
- d. If you plan to have children in the future, how do you intend to pass on your ethnic culture? Do you have specific educational methods or approaches in mind?
- e. Are there any specific traditions or values you want to pass on to the next generation?
- f. What are the reasons for cherishing your ethnic culture?

### **Interview Questions for Teachers in Ethnic Classes**

- a. What is the content and purpose of the classes and events in ethnic classes?
- b. How does the approach to education in ethnic education classes differ from that in Korean schools?
- c. What reactions and interests do students show regarding the classes and events in ethnic education classes, and can you share any anecdotes?
- d. What challenges do Zainichi student or ethnic classes face when implementing ethnic classes in middle schools?
- e. How do you believe the experience of ethnic classes influences the identity formation and self-esteem of Zainichi Koreans?
- f. What are your thoughts on the decreasing number of Korean schools and ethnic classes? Can you share your opinions on the future of ethnic education?
- g. As the Korean community in Japan continues to grow, what are your thoughts on the potential dilution of ethnic culture and identity?

## APPENDIX B

### Interviewee A and B

**Interviewer:**

Please share the background of your family and the circumstances under which your ancestors immigrated to Japan, and when did you first become aware of your Korean roots? Please also share your feelings and thoughts at that time.

**Interviewee A:**

Well, maybe there's this aspect of being brought to Japan through colonization and forced labor, but I heard that my ancestors, like my great-grandparents, came to Japan not because they were forced but because they thought they could have a better life here in Japan. They came to Japan to live, not in Korea.

**Interviewer:**

Where did you hear this information from?

**Interviewee A:**

I think I started learning about this when I was in fourth grade in school. We had a history class, and there was an assignment where we had to research why our ancestors came to Japan and where our hometown was.

**Interviewee B:**

The circumstances of their arrival were probably similar to interviewee A. When I was in elementary school, we had an assignment where we had to investigate why our ancestors came to Japan. It was more like trying to find out why they came from our own family members instead of just learning it from textbooks. It seemed quicker that way.

**Interviewee A:**

For me, I first realized my Korean roots when I was in kindergarten. I went to a Japanese kindergarten, but I was the only one who went to a different Korean elementary school in the district. That's when I realized I was a bit different from my surroundings. My feelings at that time were like, I didn't really understand anything yet, so I was just excited. At that time, I didn't really understand the historical context; I just thought it was something fun. I attended events like experience childcare and participated in various activities at the Korean Ethnic School, so it was exciting. I also learned some basic Korean language and songs, which was different from the experiences in Japanese kindergartens.

**Interviewee B:**

I realized my Korean roots because I've been going to Korean Ethnic School since kindergarten, so it was kind of normal. Kids, you know, they don't know. I had Korean nationality, so learning about Korea was normal. I thought if you were Japanese, you'd learn about Japan, and because I had Korean nationality, learning about Korea was just how it was. But in elementary school, there were some exchanges events with Japanese school kids, like a sort of cultural exchange event. It was a part of our elementary school events. In high school, there was some interaction with Japanese students through club activities, like practice matches and such.

**Interviewer:**

What were your thoughts and feelings when you interacted with the Japanese school students

during these exchanges?

**Interviewee B:**

At first, I thought it was just normal because that's how it had always been.

**Interviewer:**

In your household, what kind of exposure to Korean culture do you have? Have your parents or relatives shared any memories or historical stories related to your ethnic identity with you?

**Interviewee A:**

I eat various types of food, during special occasions like New Year's, Korean cuisine is predominant; it's almost entirely Korean food. Dishes like Chijimi (Korean pancake), kimbap, and steamed pork are common. The same goes for Jesa (제사 memorial services).

**Interviewee B:**

I've never had Osechi.

**Interviewee A:**

At school, it's all Korean, like an absolute must to speak in Korean. But in daily life, I don't use Korean much, except for words like 'omma (엄마 mom),' 'appa (아빠 daddy),' 'eonni (언니 old sister)' and such.

**Interviewee B:**

One thing I realized when I started attending Japanese university was that during lessons or conversations with friends, there would often be moments of 'What's the Japanese word for this?' This happened frequently because I had been studying Korean for about 12 years at school. So, I encountered such situations quite often.

**Interviewee A:**

Ethnic events are significant in expressing our identity, I wear Chima-Chogori (한복 Korean dress) for events like coming of age ceremonies or graduation ceremonies. Apart from that, for things like Jesa. Actually, my relatives started doing Jesa less and less from around four years ago.

**Interviewee B:**

Jesa are also becoming less common. Some households take it very seriously and go all out, while others simplify it.

**Interviewer:**

Have you personally experienced any discrimination or prejudice that people of your background have faced in the past?

**Interviewee A:**

Discrimination hasn't been directed at me personally, but some other my friend around me. For example, in junior high school, some friend wore their Chogori (traditional Korean clothing) with their names embroidered on them, just three Chinese characters that clearly indicated they were Korean. Those who commuted to school by train sometimes faced not good comments, like 'Go back Korea.' So, everyone hid it for safety. In junior high school, when we played practice matches or games as 'Higashi-Osaka Chōsen' (東大阪朝鮮 East

Osaka Korean Ethnic School), we were sometimes told by members of opposing teams, 'Oh, that's North Korea.

**Interviewer:**

How did you feel during those situations, and how did you cope with them?

**Interviewee A:**

It was irritating, but during games, I would think, "I'll just beat that team." I'd also think that it couldn't be helped. Although, it could be quite shocking for other friends who experienced discrimination more directly. But personally, I didn't have many experiences of direct discrimination. I think things were worse for older generations.

**Interviewee B:**

During the free high school fee elimination, we handed out flyers, and sometimes we were told things about it. We say it's discrimination, but they say they're just 'distinguishing' or something like that. We have been quite active about the free high school fee elimination since junior high school, going in front of the Osaka Prefectural Government building, speaking out, and collecting signatures. Despite these efforts, it still seems that people understand us less than we thought, our existence."

**Interviewee A:**

Right, they didn't. They'd ask things like, "When did you come from Korea?"

**Interviewer:**

Is this pamphlet distribution part of your school's extracurricular activities?

**Interviewee A:**

No, this is a gathering of Zainichi Koreans that happens every Tuesday. It's not organized by the school, and it's not mandatory. People participate if they want to.

**Interviewer:**

Do people consider Zainichi Koreans newcomers?

**Interviewee A:**

Yes, they do. They ask, "Why are you here if you're Korean?"

**Interviewer:**

When you encounter people who have little understanding of Zainichi Koreans, how do you explain it to them?

**Interviewee A:**

I give a brief explanation, like, "Our ancestors came here a long time ago, and our great-grandparents moved to Japan. So, our moms and grandmas and grandpas are Korean nationals, but they grew up in Japan." If I say this, they usually respond with "Oh" or "That's interesting."

**Interviewee B:**

I don't really explain it. I usually say, "I'm Korean by nationality but was born in Japan, so I can speak Japanese fluently." It seems like a lot of work, and people probably wouldn't understand anyway.



**Interviewer:**

How do you express your identity as a Zainichi Korean?

**Interviewee A:**

When I was studying in Canada, I made friends with South Korean students there. They naturally assumed I was Japanese because I came from Japan. However, they noticed that our names were different, and our last names were different too. So, I have explained, 'I have Korean citizenship.' When someone asked me "What nationality are you?", I never said 'I'm Japanese.' Definitely Korean. I don't feel any resistance to being called Korean.

**Interviewer:**

Do you use the term "Zainichi Korean" more often to describe yourselves than just "Korean"?

**Interviewee A:**

It's more like 'Zainichi Korean.' If you say 'Zainichi Chōsenjin,' it feels a bit discriminatory, but if you say 'Korean,' it softens a bit. I only say it to friends I trust.

**Interviewee B:**

Oh, I'd say I'm a Zainichi. But I'm not a local Korean. I don't even say 'Zainichi Kankoku jin (在日韓國人).' There are some Chōsen (朝鮮, Korean Peninsula, North Korea) mixed in among the Zainichi Koreans, so I'd say Zainichi Koreans. But some kids still hide it. I've been to North Korea on my school trip. We have the right to do so, but I would only tell close friends that I've been to North Korea. Others might say they've been to South Korea, so it's different for everyone.

**Interviewer:**

Do you feel that Koreans have a better understanding of the Zainichi Korean community than Japanese people?

**Interviewee A:**

Yes, I believe so. We share a similar history, so they are more informed about our existence. They understand why we are in Japan. When I say we are compatriots, they usually get it.

**Interviewee B:**

Koreans living in Korea and ourselves are different. So there is not much understanding there. However, during my stay in Korea, people have said things like, "Oh, your Korean is really good," and if I say, "We are compatriots," they get it.

**Interviewer:**

Compared to the older generations who may have concealed their Zainichi Korean identity, do you feel that you are more open about being Zainichi now?

**Interviewee A:**

Yes, I think we are more open about it. Older generations might have been more reserved, but we are more accepting of our identity. I can say 'Zainichi Korean,' but I absolutely can't say 'Chōsen.' Because of the image of North Korea.

**Interviewee B:**

We don't have Chōsen nationality; we have South Korean nationality, so we say we are South Korean. However, people at school just think of me as a regular Korean. I had a friend who

recently casually mentioned that they joined a right-wing group, and I found it uncomfortable. I didn't say anything, but it bothered me. When you see people like that, it does make you upset, but there's not much you can do about it.

**Interviewee A:**

North Korea is also doing some really bad things. It's not like they keep launching missiles all the time, but when they do, it makes us really angry. Ultimately, they launch their missiles, and then Japanese people attack us Zainichi Koreans. North Korea, they don't seem to understand that launching missiles toward Japan will lead to that. So, I find it really infuriating. I wouldn't say I'm a huge fan of my homeland, but I genuinely think they shouldn't do unnecessary things. Even our parents are very angry about it. It's tough for elementary school kids. They get attacked when they return home.

**Interviewee B:**

As long as we Zainichi Koreans are here, they (North Korean) won't drop any bombs here, for sure. However, Japanese media sometimes send notifications saying things like "Prepare for evacuation." So, we Zainichi Koreans had missile incidents during our elementary school years, because of that, some people might say somethings like bad things to us, as a result, teachers used to accompany us on the way home, and parents would come to pick us up.

**Interviewer:**

What was the reason for attending the Korean Ethnic School?

**Interviewee A:**

I think I didn't know much about my roots back then. So, I assume that my parents wanted me to know more about our heritage by enrolling me in the Korean School. I still didn't have any negative impressions of attending the Korean Ethnic School back then.

**Interviewee B:**

As I mentioned in my previous response regarding the awareness of our roots, I've been attending the Korean Ethnic School since kindergarten, and because I'm Korean, it felt normal. I participated without thinking much about it.

**Interviewer:**

What do you mainly learn at the School?

**Interviewee A:**

The content of the classes is usually the same as the Japanese courses, plus the Japanese language classes in Japanese schools is, in our school, it was Korean class, and the Japanese language classes are separate. In social studies, Korean society and Japanese society, Japanese history and Korean history are also included. Math and science, science basics and biology basics are also the same as in Japanese school, but they are all taught in Korean, and the only class taught in Japanese is Japanese class. The only class we had in Japanese was Japanese class, but the content of that class was the same as in Japanese school, such as classical Japanese and Chinese literature.

**Interviewee B:**

When I was in elementary school, we had a homework assignment like a survey. I had a homework assignment to ask why my ancestors came here. It was like asking them is faster than learning about it in a textbook. And we don't learn Japanese songs. They are all

Korean songs.

**Interviewer:**

What happens if you speak Japanese outside of Japanese class at school?

**Interviewee B:**

We got angry from teachers. But I did speak Japanese during club activities, didn't I? My club had a teacher who was passionate about Korean history, so when we spoke in Japanese, we'd get scolded. And we had an activity where we had to use Korean for a week. We had to compete with each other in our club activities.

**Interviewee A:**

To raise awareness of being a Zainichi, we'd always have statistics on how much Korean we used during homeroom. The use of the Korean language was enforced. That's why I became fluent. The teachers were practically always speaking Korean and not just 100% in Japanese.

**Interviewer:**

Your parents encouraged you to attend the Korean Ethnic School, considering your Korean background. What was the reaction from relatives or people around you?

**Interviewee A:**

I had friends who came from as far as Himeji (Hyogo prefecture) and Wakayama, which is a two-hour journey.

**Interviewee B:**

Japanese schools are many, right? Depending on your region, you attend a particular school. But Korean Ethnic Schools are scarce, so by high school, there might be only one in Osaka, and that's where everyone gathers. I was also part of a club that had morning practices, so some people had to take the first train to make it on time. Others took the bullet train to work every day. There are no dorms, and the practices would finish late, and then they would go back home. Sometimes they had morning practice the next day, so it was quite tough. But everyone goes to the Korean School because even if you live in Japan, there are things you can only learn at the Korean School.

**Interviewee A:**

As we grow up and become more aware of our roots, we start feeling that we want to have this foundation. So, everyone ends up wanting to go to the Korean Ethnic School.

**Interviewer:**

So, if everyone around you is also of Korean descent, does your sense of ethnicity become stronger?

**Interviewee B:**

Ethnicity becomes stronger, or rather, being a Zainichi Koreans is considered normal at schools, and you can go through life without facing prejudices. With a relatively small number of students, everyone gets along. In Japanese society, Zainichi are rare, so it's comforting to have other Zainichi around me. I also learned to speak Korean.

**Interviewee A:**

It strengthens our ethnic identity. We have been studying together for a long time, and since

Zainichi are a minority in Japanese society, having peers around us like that is genuinely reassuring. Growing up in such a community allows us to openly embrace our identity, and we've learned things that wouldn't be taught in Japanese schools, aside from history and language.

**Interviewer:**

Are there many classes at the Korean Ethnic School?

**Interviewee A:**

There are four classes, and there were 83 students in our year. But now, the numbers have decreased significantly. There are classes with only 40 to 60 students, and it's becoming very small.

**Interviewee B:**

Yeah, so with the numbers being small, we all get along well. There is no one I haven't probably talked to.

**Interviewer:**

Conversely, how do you perceive the gap between your experiences at the Korean Ethnic School and your current university in Japan?

**Interviewee A:**

I'm not sure how to say it, but at the Korean Ethnic School, everyone cares about each other, and there's a strong sense of community where we all work together. But I noticed that at Japanese universities, people tend to focus on themselves and are quite individualistic. So, they seem very self-centered. I think that's the kind of educational program we did. It was a kind of education program where it was not just one person doing it, but everyone was doing it together. I thought that was the norm, but when I went to a Japanese school, I found out that many of the students were on their own. There is nothing wrong with that. It's just a fundamental difference in thinking. Zainichi are so warm.

**Interviewee B:**

At a Korean Ethnic School, if others are not able to deal with something, I will help them. At a Japanese university, this would be the case among close friends, but at a Korean Ethnic School, even if you are not involved at all, you would help out, even if you are a senior student of a junior student. It's not that there is anything wrong with Japanese university students, it's just that they are fundamentally different from Japanese university students. I think it's because they are fundamentally different from Japanese university students, and their education is different from ours. I think it's like they have to accept it because of the difference in education they have received.

**Interviewer:**

Do you have any opinions on future ethnic education? If so, please share.

**Interviewee A:**

In the past, there used to be many people of Korean descent in Japan, but nowadays, their numbers have likely decreased. Probably the most significant reason for this decline is the high number of people naturalizing due to various issues involving North Korea. The fact that Korean Ethnic Schools are not eligible for Japan's free high school education and financial support is also a major factor. The tuition fees are high, and the school buildings are in poor

condition, which makes parents anxious about sending their children there. It's regrettable that the numbers are decreasing, but it's somewhat inevitable.

**Interviewee B:**

Since we don't receive any financial assistance for our schools, the tuition fees are high, and that's why many students attend Japanese schools for middle school. Many students transfer from high school as well.

**Interviewer:**

If you plan to have children in the future, how do you intend to pass on your own ethnic culture? Do you have specific educational methods or approaches in mind to address this need?

**Interviewee A:**

I want to send my children to Korean Ethnic Schools. But schools are decreasing in number. If they disappear, there won't be a place to learn this history. Rather than trying to convey it verbally to my children, I think it's better to have them learn. Probably there might not be Korean Ethnic Schools when we have children.

**Interviewee B:**

I think that if my children don't attend Korean Ethnic Schools, they won't be able to speak the language. I think it's better if they attend, but there are no schools. Even middle schools are gone now. Elementary schools have also disappeared.

**Interviewee A:**

Right. Of course, we want our kids to know what we've learned in Korean Ethnic Schools, but the possibility of such educational institutions disappearing makes it challenging.

**Interviewer:**

Do you feel a weakening of Zainichi identity or ethnic identity in recent times?

**Interviewee A:**

Yes, that's how it feels. It's concerning.

**Interviewee B:**

Yes, it certainly feels that way. It's been tough lately, hasn't it?

**Interviewee A:**

It's disheartening. The fact that elementary schools are disappearing is a shock.

**Interviewee B:**

Middle schools already disappeared, and they have moved to different locations. Elementary schools are still standing, but there's nobody there anymore. They're basically closed down, and the land is empty now.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think there might be a need to change your nationality in the future?

**Interviewee A & B:**

No, absolutely not.

**Interviewer:**

How would you teach your children about their Zainichi identity or Zainichi culture?

**Interviewee A:**

Well, if I have children, they might have different names, and eventually, they might ask why they don't go to Japanese schools and why their names are different. At that time, I'll talk to them normally. I'll tell them the same things our mothers told us. That's the only way.

**Interviewer:**

Are there specific traditions or values that you would like to pass on to the next generation?

**Interviewee A:**

Zainichi Koreans are a collective of cooperation, so the values of helping each other, and that kind of culture, are things I definitely want to pass on. I've gained the most from these 12 years of ethnic education, and I believe that the most valuable thing I've gained is this sense of cooperation. So, I want to pass it on.

**Interviewee B:**

I don't know who's in high school these days. However, whether it's alumni from my sports club or other alumni, they come to school regularly, even though they're not acquainted, and that's something I appreciate. The culture of cherishing one's alma mater and cooperating with fellow Zainichi in various ways is important. Because we are a minority ethnic group, we can naturally accept and be accepted by others, and the bond is strong. I want to teach them about this

**Interviewee A:**

For instance, even when you go to a restaurant, if you see another Zainichi who you don't know at all and talk with friends in Korean, just because you're compatriots, they might even pay for your meal.

**Interviewer:**

So, do you think that your experiences at Korean Ethnic Schools have significantly influenced your identity?

**Interviewee A:**

Yes, it has. I think that if I had gone to a regular Japanese school, I wouldn't have thought like this. I would have just considered myself a regular Japanese.

**Interviewer:**

What is the reason for cherishing your ethnic culture?

**Interviewee A:**

Being born in Japan as a Korean, in a way, we're a minority in society, and there might be a desire to hide that. However, I think it's important to accept that part of your identity without worrying about what others say. Instead of concealing it just because it's somewhat different from the people around you, it's probably easier and more enjoyable to be upfront about it.

**Interviewee B:**

If we can talk about it without feeling ashamed, maybe other people can talk about it too. Like, actually, I'm Zainichi. If we hide it, they probably never will.

**Interviewee A:**

We shouldn't hide it. Self-disclosure is essential.

## Interviewee C and D

### Interviewer:

If you happen to know the history of how your ancestors immigrated to Japan, please tell me.

### Interviewee C:

I haven't heard much about it, and I've never really heard the story of the first generation, but I know my grandfather's older brother was born during the war... yeah, my grandmother was born here, and I've never met my great-grandmother, so I don't really know.

### Interviewee D:

I haven't heard about it. Yeah, I don't know about this at all. I really don't remember anything about it. But I guess it's because I haven't had the opportunity to talk to the first generation.

### Interviewer:

When did you first become aware of your Korean roots? Please share your thoughts and feelings at that time.

### Interviewee D:

In my case, I already thought my name was different from the time I was in the kindergarden, the Japanese kindergarden. I knew my older brother was going to the Korean Ethnic School, so when I started going there, I already knew it. But I didn't really question it that much.

### Interviewee C:

I think I started learning 'Uri maru' (우리말 Korean) when I was a child, probably. I learned words like 'Omma' (엄마 mom) and 'Appa' (아빠 dad) from the very beginning, and my name was my actual name (Korean name), so it was like, 'My name is something different from others.'

### Interviewee D:

I don't remember much, but my friends have told me that they remember the first time they met me. I was going to a Korean elementary school, and at that time, I used to call my mother "okaasan" (Japanese for "mother") instead of something like 'Omma' (엄마 mom) and 'Appa' (아빠 dad). My friends were really surprised by that. I probably used to call her that. When I was in a Japanese nursery.

### Interviewer:

Regarding the ethnic environment within your family, how have you been exposed to Korean culture at home?

### Interviewee C:

I use Korean quite a bit, but not exclusively. Mostly, it's Japanese. 'Uri maru' (우리말 Korean), Words that start with 'uri' (우리 'us' or 'our' in Korean) are often in Korean. However, when my grandmother gets angry, she switches to 'uri maru (Korean).' She used to be a Korean language teacher, so I guess she uses it when she's really upset.

### Interviewee D:

There are specific words that are definitely not in Japanese. For example, it's not 'Chōsen gakkou (Korean school in Japanese)' but 'uri hakkyo (우리 학교 our school in Korean),' and



for the teachers, it's not 'sensei (teacher in Japanese)' but 'seonsaengnim (선생님 teacher in Korean).' In terms of percentages, I'd say over 90% is almost always in Japanese. Compared to regular Japanese households, we definitely eat a lot of Korean food. My mom always makes kimchi.

**Interviewee C:**

I always eat kimchi. My father used to have a restaurant serving Korean cuisine, but we had to close it due to COVID.

**Interviewee D:**

If the school organized an event, we had to participate. There were performances, and I watched traditional dances and heard folk songs.

**Interviewee C:**

When a child turns one year old, there's a celebration called 'Doljanchi (돌잔치 First - birthday party)' where everyone celebrates the baby turning one year old. But maybe during my time, it was very elaborate, but it's becoming simpler and simpler. Even in my family, we don't do memorial services anymore. I really loved Jesa because it brought relatives together.

**Interviewee D:**

My family didn't celebrate that. Jesa stopped last year. My mom said it was too much work, and even though we've been doing it all this time, Jesa have ceased. It's a lot of preparation, and I had to help for sure. Well, it's considered a woman's job. In our case, we used to host the Jesa at home, which might have made it even more tough.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the decreasing prevalence of Jesa (memorial service)?

**Interviewee C:**

Regarding sexuality issues, yeah, that's true. I think it might be rooted in the traditional Korean culture of male dominance and female submissiveness. I didn't think about it back then, but now I find it strange.

**Interviewee D:**

There's a very decisive video, and in the end, only women are cleaning up. In the beginning, men are just sitting there. They did almost nothing.

**Interviewer:**

Do you want to continue doing Jesa in the future?

**Interviewee C:**

I want to! I want to, and I think I would do it if men help out normally.

**Interviewee D:**

I want to do it. But I don't want to be the one to organize it in my family. It would be too hard.

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice due to your Korean roots? If so, how did those experiences make you feel, and how did you handle them?

**Interviewee D:**

As for discrimination, not at all. It's quite common not to be understood. Since going to a Japanese university, my friends have asked me, 'Are you Korean?' It's because there's no recognition of Zainichi, so I can't get people to understand at all.

**Interviewee C:**

When I work part-time jobs and such, I use my real Korean name for everything, without using a Japanese name at all. People often comment on how good my Korean is. There may be my Japanese name out there, but I don't use them, so I wouldn't know. It's not discrimination, but I do get noticed when I'm called by my Korean name, especially in places like hospitals.

As for hate speech, they often come in front of Korean University. Not every day, but from the three years I've been living here, it happened about twice. They are right-wing people from Zaitokukai. Those Zaitokukai people hire someone and have them shout in front of Korean University. The more people, the better. So, it's like hiring random people with money and not knowing anything, but they're just shouting.

They're hurting the proplr without knowing anything. That sucks. Yeah, I didn't know about this for a long time, but I recently found out about it. They would use speakers from their cars on Sunday morning. But the police are here, at least. They're watching to make sure they don't enter the school grounds.

**Interviewer:**

So, the police don't try to stop those cars?

**Interviewee C:**

I don't fully understand how the system works, but yeah. The school is aware of when they come. But I don't quite understand the system. The school knows when they're coming, and they advise us not to go outside during those times.

**Interviewer:**

The school is aware of the situation?

**Interviewee C:**

The school is aware. But I'm not sure why they know. The first time they came, they informed us, saying, "They'll come tomorrow." The most recent time, the second time, they came suddenly without any prior notice. Maybe the school doesn't know about it.

**Interviewer:**

If you don't mind sharing, what are they shouting during those times?

**Interviewee C:**

Like shouting things like 'Go back to Korea.' They're saying things without knowing the history. I believe they wouldn't say those things if they understood the history. Even if they knew, it's a fabricated story created by Japan. Sometimes they do this in places like Shibuya or Shinjuku.

**Interviewer:**

Do you encounter more people who are unaware of the existence of Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee C:**

Many people don't know anything about it.

**Interviewee D:**

They really don't know.

**Interviewer:**

When you encounter Japanese people who are unaware of or don't understand the concept of Zainichi Koreans, how do you explain or respond to them?

**Interviewee D:**

I just say I have South Korean nationality and leave it at that because it's too much of a hassle. But to close friends, I tell them everything; I'm a Zainichi Korean, I attend a Korean Ethnic School, and so on.

**Interviewee C:**

I'd explain everything. Maybe it's because they don't learn about it in school. Not learning it itself is weird. Because, in those Japanese schools where they study history, there is definitely the fact of colonization, but they don't teach it at all. And that's despite Japan needing to apologize to Korea for everything they did.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think Japan should formally apologize to Korea?

**Interviewee C:**

They should. I mean, there were forced labor and all that, and many of the tunnels and bridges in Japan were built by Koreans. Even the tunnel I mentioned, a lot of them were made by Koreans. It's a really grim history; we've studied it in detail. During that period, Koreans were treated like subhuman, and such things shouldn't be allowed. However, they haven't apologized for what they did, and they haven't settled any issues related to compensation, so it's Japan's mistake. It's a black history. Japan is trying to hide it as if it didn't happen, and because they don't teach it in schools, from the perspective of many Japanese people, they wonder why Zainichi Koreans are in Japan, even though the Japanese brought Koreans here in the past.

**Interviewee D:**

They need to teach history properly.

Interviewee C:

That's right; they need to at least teach that we are here because of this history. Japan is toast!

**Interviewer:**

How do you express your identity as a Zainichi Korean? How do you perceive your nationality, and what are your reasons for it?

**Interviewee D:**

When I talk to my Japanese friends, if they're not particularly interested in Zainichi Koreans, I just say 'I'm Korean.' But with close friends, I might say 'Zainichi Korean' and add a little ambiguity. Not Zainichi Chōsenjin (在日朝鮮人), not Zainichi kannkoku jin (在日韓國人). I find 'Zainichi Korean' to be the most convenient. It's a bit complicated, really. I feel a desire to identify as Zainichi Chōsen jin because I went to Korean Ethnic Schools. However, in terms of nationality, I'm Korean, so I tend to go with 'Zainichi Korean,' adding a touch of

ambiguity. How I introduce myself can vary depending on the friend."

**Interviewer:**

The term " Chōsen nationality " originally referred to the Korean Peninsula, not just North Korea. However, many Japanese now associate it more with North Korea. Did you feel any resistance to openly identifying as Chōsen nationality instead of changing to Korean nationality?

**Interviewee C:**

From a Japanese perspective, it only carries negative connotations, so I was a bit unsure about what people might say. However, I'm not Korean who living in Korean, and being a Zainichi Korean is complex. I came from a time before the division (between North and South Korea), so I can't say I'm from one or the other. But in school, we learn about both, and from a roots perspective, I have ties to North Korea. I've started to say 'Zainichi Chōsen jin' recently. We had classes at school that taught us about it, and it felt like saying 'Zainichi Korean or Zainichi Kankokujin (在日韓國人)' was avoiding something. I used to hesitate a bit, thinking, 'This person might be difficult to explain to,' or 'This person seems like they might discriminate,' and in those cases, I would say 'Zainichi Korean.' But lately, I've been making an effort to say 'Zainichi Chōsen jin' and consciously not avoiding it.

**Interviewee D:**

I've already naturalized to Korean citizenship, but if I hadn't, I would probably have been resistant to disclosing it. In my case, it's mostly saying 'Zainichi Korean' because explaining the other terms can be bothersome. If someone asks me, I'll tell them. I'm even happy when people show interest or ask questions. It was a bit of a hassle, but if someone is interested or asks, I'm happy to share. I'd be pleased if they learn about it.

**Interviewer:**

Even though explaining it can be cumbersome when you meet people who are unaware of Zainichi Koreans, do you still have a desire for others to know about Zainichi issues?

**Interviewee C & D:**

Yeah, we do.

**Interviewee D:**

Back in those days, I think they might have been scared about things like there used to be this image that Korean Ethnic Schools were kind of scary, like a place where fights happened. But it's completely different now.

**Interviewee C:**

Yeah, I heard they were feared back then. So, that kind of image of Zainichi Koreans might have existed among the older generation, like middle-aged and older. But during that time, there was a strong sense of ethnic identity, so if anyone said something discriminatory, it would lead to confrontation, I think.

**Interviewee D:**

It's often heard that when girls from Korean Ethnic Schools were discriminated against by Japanese school students, the boys would come and confront them. But there's none of that now.

**Interviewer:**

How do you think the decrease in those scary perceptions or the reduction in discrimination compared to the past is related to Japan's evolving globalized era or the weakening of ethnic identity?

**Interviewee D:**

But discrimination has decreased somewhat. There aren't many direct comments anymore. I think it's less than before. Also, sometimes people just don't notice. Back then, we would commute wearing Chogori, but now we wear tracksuits or uniforms similar to those of Japanese schools, so maybe Japanese people don't even realize we're Koreans. It has become less common.

**Interviewee C:**

Maybe. Japanese young people are generally not interested in politics. Probably because Korea is trending now, we don't get it directly from young people. But the invisible discrimination, like the free high school fee elimination, still exists.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the negative image of North Korea in Japan today?

**Interviewee C:**

That's Japan's fault. Japan is in the wrong. About the missile issue, those missiles will never fall on Japan. They're not fired at Japan specifically; they're aimed at the Pacific Ocean beyond Japan. They're not firing them at Japan as if to say, "We're fighting with you." It's more like they're conducting missile tests that would even reach the United States. So, they're probably just passing over here (Japan), but Japan portrays it as if it's aimed at Japan.

**Interviewer:**

I've heard an opinion that says the presence of Zainichi Koreans in Japan is preventing missiles from falling on Japan. What do you think about that?

**Interviewee C:**

Well, I think that might be true.

**Interviewee D:**

That's right.

**Interviewer:**

Is it acknowledged by North Korea that there are Zainichi Koreans in Japan?

**Interviewee C:**

Yes, they acknowledge it, and they even provide subsidies. If you have an entrance ceremony at a Korean Ethnic School, you might receive congratulatory letters from the top leader of North Korea. Some schools have connections with them. I've heard that they used to have exchanges in the past, or not exactly exchanges, but students from here (Japan) would go there. They used to have exchange programs. Basically, over there (North Korea), they see us as part of the same ethnicity, as fellow Koreans, so it's mostly because of Japanese news that everything gets portrayed negatively.

**Interviewer:**

So, do you not have any particularly negative feelings towards North Korea?

**Interviewee D:**

But, I think, can they just keep it quiet? Every time a missile is fired, even when I was in high school, teachers would tell us to be cautious, like "Discrimination might happen." That was a bit troublesome, so I'd like them to just keep it quiet. But, no, I don't have any negative feelings like that.

**Interviewee C:**

They didn't learn about that things about Zainichi Korean, in Japanese school. I really think it would change if we learned about it. If we also didn't learn about it, there would probably be nothing but a negative image, I think.

**Interviewee D:**

Well, it can't be helped, I guess.

**Interviewer:**

Was the reason for attending the Korean Ethnic School recommended by your parents?

**Interviewee C:**

Well, because everyone in my family is a Korean Ethnic School graduate, it felt like going there was normal.

**Interviewer:**

So, you didn't have any rebellion, like wanting to attend a Japanese school or something? Did you have any feelings of resistance or rebellion at that time?

**Interviewee C:**

I did have some rebellious feelings. My grandmother was like, "Of course," so I was a bit hesitant. Well, I didn't really have much intention of going to Korean Ethnic University at first, but I wasn't actively looking for a Japanese school either. It was more like I just ended up in that flow.

**Interviewer:**

How about you, D? Was it recommended by your parents?

**Interviewee D:**

Yes, it was.

**Interviewee C:**

Most students start to split into different schools from high school. If their parents are really against it, they might switch from Korean Ethnic School to Japanese school.

**Interviewee D:**

The reason people are against Korean Ethnic Schools, well, it's my situation too, but most of the time, Japanese schools are recognized as Article one school defined by the School Education Law, and these schools are officially recognized. In our case, our school is not officially recognized, and it's considered a "non-Article one school defined by the School Education Law. Honestly, even after graduating from high school, it's equivalent to junior high school graduation. Our junior high school isn't recognized either, so none of the schools we attend are officially recognized. Therefore, everyone, well, if they're thinking about their future employment, once they graduate, their highest level of education is a Japanese

university. So, for the sake of education (from high school onward), many students split from Korean Ethnic Schools to attend Japanese schools. Well, as long as you're going to a high school that grants an officially recognized high school diploma, there are students who got their high school graduation certificates that way.

**Interviewer:**

Do you mention the fact that you graduated from a Korean Ethnic School on your resume?

**Interviewee C:**

You can mention it, but recently, it depends on the company. If you write "Graduated from Korean Ethnic High School" on your resume, some companies might have a negative perception. I'm not sure how it is these days, but there are companies like that, so some students choose to attend Japanese schools starting from high school.

**Interviewee D:**

In our case, it was because my family was against attending Korean Ethnic University. Everybody in my family was against it. In my case, rather than worrying about my educational background, it was more like, both my mother and older brother were like, "If you're going to work for a Japanese company anyway..." I'm thinking about working for a Japanese company now, but in my third year of high school, I was considering becoming a teacher at the Korean Ethnic School. I discussed it with my mother and older brother, and they advised me that while pursuing a career as a teacher was important, it's also crucial to provide financial support to our own community. They told me that. So, even though I wanted to be a Korean Ethnic School teacher, they told me that if I wanted to live in Japanese society, it was okay until high school, but beyond that, I absolutely had to attend Japanese school.

**Interviewee C:**

There are various reasons.

**Interviewee D:**

Yes, it varies from person to person. Some might not go for financial reasons, or they might decide not to attend themselves.

**Interviewer:**

Given the various issues and controversies surrounding Korean Ethnic Schools in Japan, how do you view your experience of attending a Korean Ethnic School?

**Interviewee C:**

There aren't many Zainichi across Japan, but when you go to Korean University, Zainichi from all over the prefecture gather. So I can make many connections. In the future, when you work and live in Japanese society, you have strong connections with fellow Zainichi. It's a powerful bond, so if something happens later, you can really help each other. We are in a rather complex situation, so we think a lot about our identity and struggle. We can think about our identity even if we don't see immediate results. Additionally, I can understand Korean naturally.

**Interviewee D:**

I have gained opportunities to think about my identity, like when I went to North Korea for two weeks, or even before that. I learned why I am here and who I am, and that was a good thing. And another thing is that I can understand Korean.

**Interviewer:**

While you're currently attending a Japanese university, do you notice any differences or gaps between your experiences at Korean Ethnic School and Japanese schools? What are the main distinctions?

**Interviewee D:**

When topics related to Korean Ethnic School or similar issues come up, the differences in perspectives are too vast, so it's just too troublesome to discuss. It's basically just too much trouble to deal with, and, well, this is also a hassle. Also, it's tough that you can't share the experiences and stories from my Korean Ethnic School days with others. However, if I have friends who know Korean, I can communicate with them, but in general, everyone speaks Japanese.

**Interviewer:**

How did your parents, relatives, and friends react to your participation in ethnic education?

**Interviewee D:**

My family was the only one that attended Korean Ethnic School. All my relatives attended Japanese schools. But all our relatives recognized that we are Zainichi, and there was no special reaction to the fact that I attended Korean Ethnic School.

**Interviewee C:**

Hmm. Well, at our school, everyone is of the same background, and there's no discrimination within the school. In fact, there's a sense of solidarity because everyone shares the same ethnicity, so it feels quite protected within the school environment.

**Interviewer:**

What kind of subjects do you study at the Korean Ethnic School?

Interviewee D:

I think there are many subjects related Korea.

**Interviewer:**

Is the Korean Ethnic School a place where you feel quite safe?

**Interviewee C:**

Yes, it is. On the contrary, Zainichi going to Japanese schools... if they are the only ones from the Korean background, and if they use their real names (Korean names), they will definitely face issues from others, I think. They will probably suffer more and encounter more discrimination. So, the Korean Ethnic School is, I believe, a protected environment.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think there is a difference in the strength of one's identity between attending a Japanese school and attending a Korean Ethnic School? Do you believe that if you had gone to a Japanese school, you would still have such a strong sense of identity?

**Interviewee D:**



I think it would be completely different. I believe it's the process that makes the difference. In my case.

**Interviewee C:**

Well, I heard it from my mom since she's a teacher. In Ethnic Classes, they don't really aim to create people with a strong ethnic identity among the Zainichi Koreans. The parents might oppose it, but some students do come. It's really difficult because, first of all, they don't even know their Korean names. Many of them have grown up as Japanese until like yesterday, and if suddenly they were told today, they would react like shock and surprise, and many students feel this way. The main purpose is to expose them to various things, like language and culture, make it fun, and get them to feel even a little closer to their ethnicity. I think that's the goal they've reached, and they consider that quite an achievement.

**Interviewer:**

What are your thoughts on the current situation with the decreasing number of students in Korean Ethnic Schools? And what are your opinions on the future of ethnic education for Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee C:**

Firstly, Japan is also facing a declining birthrate. But ideally, I wish that once members of the Zainichi community get married, they would send their children to our Korean Ethnic Schools. It's because the current situation is that schools are disappearing. It would be better if each individual held onto their ethnic identity more strongly.

**Interviewer:**

Do you have any plans to naturalize in the future?

**Interviewee D:**

I have no plans to naturalize.

**Interviewee C:**

I feel like it would be weird to naturalize when I'm not Japanese. It would be unsettling, like I'm lying or something. But dealing with administrative tasks is quite a hassle. In Japan, the family typically adopts the father's surname, but among Zainichi Koreans, we follow Korean culture, so the children have the father's surname while the mother has a different one. So, our names are different from the usual, and it makes family identification difficult. The paperwork and processing take a lot of time. The father and mother have different nationalities, and their names are different, which makes it quite complicated. My father used to have Chōsen nationality, but he started traveling to South Korea more often due to work, so he changed it (naturalized into South Korean citizenship). However, my mother is probably firmly against it. When I asked her, she said it's just too much hassle.

**Interviewer:**

If you plan to have children in the future, how do you intend to pass on your own ethnic culture? Do you have specific methods or approaches that you consider important for their education?

**Interviewee D:**

I want to send my children to Korean schools. They are the first option, and if that doesn't work out, maybe the Ethnic Classes.

**Interviewee C:**

I will definitely send my children to Korean Ethnic Schools. But I'm concerned about whether the schools will still exist.

**Interviewee D:**

Most students live far away from the school, and due to this, the number of students attending is dwindling. Many parents are opting for the supposedly free education in Japanese schools.

**Interviewer:**

Are there any specific traditions or values that you want to pass down to the next generation?

**Interviewee D:**

As for Jesa, I don't think it will come back.

**Interviewee C:**

Our relatives are spread across Japan, and in the place where my relatives in Toyama are, there is something like a Jesa once a year. If it's still happening in the current situation, I want to connect with it, but it's not happening in my hometown, so I don't know.

**Interviewer:**

Finally, if you have any reasons for valuing your own ethnicity and the importance of passing it on to the next generation, please share them.

**Interviewee D:**

Simply, I'm glad I went to Korean Ethnic School. We've been taught at school to cherish ethnic culture and our own identity, and I want to preserve the Zainichi Korean community. I also believe it's something I need to pass on myself.

**Interviewee C:**

If we lose that ethnic culture, or if Zainichi society ceases to exist, then the people who pass on the history of the colonial era will also disappear completely. It feels like it's exactly what the Japanese government wants, so we must ensure that this history, which indicates the existence of that colonial era, is not forgotten.

## Interviewee E

### Interviewer:

Please tell us about the background of your family's ancestors and how you first learned about your Korean roots. Share your thoughts and feelings at that time.

### Interviewee E:

From what I've gathered, it was probably my great-grandparents' generation who came to Japan. They migrated to Japan, and while I'm not exactly sure about their specific place of origin in Korea, they likely came from what is now South Korea. They settled in areas like Fuse, Tsuruhashi (in Osaka), and around those neighborhoods in Japan.

### Interviewer:

What Korean culture were you exposed to while growing up in your family? And have you heard any memories or historical episodes related to your ethnic identity passed down to you by your parents or relatives?

### Interviewee E:

My father is a Zainichi Korean, but he can't speak Korean. My grandparents, on the other hand, can read Hangul (한글 Korean) completely and speak the language. However, they don't speak Korean when it's just the two of them. When my grandparents and I speak, we use Japanese, but when I'm talking to them about K-pop and I've learned some Korean words, they understand what I'm saying. When I was young, my family often went and gathered at my grandfather's brothers' houses in Ikuno (in Osaka) or my great-grandmother's house (in Osaka) to eat and spend together with my relatives. The food we ate that was primarily served was Korean cuisine. I had been going to Koreatown since I was very young, enjoying dishes like Korean pig's trotters (족발 jokbal), kimchi, and chijimi (Korean pancake). During New Year's, we used to have tteokguk (떡국 rice cake soup). When I was a child, I ate Korean New Year's dishes more frequently than Japanese New Year's dishes. I heard they were doing memorial services and stuff like that.

### Interviewer:

Are such events becoming less and less common?

### Interviewee E:

My mom said they used to do memorial services when she got married, but it became too difficult, so they stopped. I don't have much personal experience with it, so I don't really know. But for events like relatives' weddings, we wore Chima-Chogori. I've seen photos of them wearing Chima-Chogori, and my dad wore Chogori (한복, Paji-Chogori) when he was born. It looked very cute.

### Interviewer:

When did you first become aware of your Korean roots, and what were your thoughts and emotions at that time?

### Interviewee E:

I found out that I had Korean roots when I was in junior high. I became friends with someone who was half Zainichi Korean and Japanese, and I liked Korea too because K-POP was popular at the time. So, one day when I mentioned to my parents that my friend is half of

Zainichi Korean, my dad just said, 'Oh, you too,' like it was no big deal. I always had wondered why it was different when I saw pictures. No one had ever told me anything when I was young, but I later learned that there were discriminatory incidents in their parents' generation, so maybe that's why they didn't feel the need to say anything. It seems like my mom was a bit worried about it.

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice due to your Korean heritage? If so, how did those experiences make you feel, and how did you respond?

**Interviewee E:**

I've never really experienced ethnic discrimination. If anything, I felt like people often envied me. When I got to high school, students came from different areas, and when I saw other mixed-race students, I didn't feel like being a Zainichi or a half was anything special. In middle school, no one really said anything to me.

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever heard of any discriminatory remarks or hate speech, even if you haven't personally experienced it?

**Interviewee E:**

I haven't personally experienced it, but there was a situation around the Tsuruhashi area where various nationalities, not just Koreans but also Chinese, Filipinos, and people from different countries, live. While I was working at the gym, a lady with a Korean accent speaking Japanese came in, and I think there may have been cultural differences from her perspective, which reflected in her attitude. One of my co-workers made a comment like, "It's hard to communicate with her, she's definitely Korean." When I heard that, it made me think that perhaps Koreans are sometimes viewed negatively. But there are good people among Koreans, and I believe it varies from person to person. I also have Korean root, so I find it a bit odd when such judgments are made based on being Korean. I think it's important to recognize that being Korean doesn't define a person entirely.

**Interviewer:**

How would you describe your own identity as a Zainichi Korean? Do you see yourself primarily as Korean, Japanese, or something else in your life? How do you think about your nationality? Please tell me why you think so.

**Interviewee E:**

I might say 'Japanese.' Or rather, I feel like a 'half' in a way. I might be living with a bit of both, to be honest. I don't have a negative image of myself as a Zainichi Korean, and the environment I grew up in, including my friends, doesn't make me feel negatively about having Zainichi Korean. I often say something like, 'My dad is Korean, but I don't really speak Korean.' So, I'm like 'I'm a half with Korean,' when I do talk about it.

**Interviewer:**

When do you feel your own ethnicity the most?

**Interviewee E:**

I feel my ethnicity the most when I'm eating. I love things like kimchi, and during New Year's, we eat certain dishes. I used to go to Koreatown and buy ingredients, so I definitely

feel like I have some Korean influence. Although it's not necessarily Korean, I've been eating things like traditional Korean food since I was young. While many people started enjoying dishes like grilled offal at my age, I used to eat them in elementary school, and most others found it strange or said they hadn't tried it. Looking back, I think, "Oh, maybe there's some Korean influence in my habits." So, I often think, "Ah, I guess it's Korean."

**Interviewer:**

How do you explain the situation of Zainichi Koreans to people who have little understanding of them? How do you respond to individuals who lack understanding of Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee E:**

I haven't encountered many people who seem completely clueless about Zainichi Koreans. However, I typically explain it as just people of Korean descent who moved to Japan in grand-parents' generation and their children were born and raised in Japan. Sometimes, if the opportunity arises, I might mention that I'm actually of Korean descent myself, sort of like a "half." I don't find it too troublesome, and I generally think about what would be the easiest way to convey the idea.

**Interviewer:**

Could you tell us about your motivations for attending an Ethnic Classes, and your experiences there?

**Interviewee E:**

I started attending Ethnic Classes around the time I was in 2nd year of middle school. The reason I began attending was through friends. I was invited by my friends. But if I were alone, I wouldn't have attended. We learned some Korean, wrote our names in Korean, played musical instruments, and even wore Chima Chogori in class. But it was just for a bit since it was once a week.

**Interviewer:**

Could you tell me about how your parents, relatives, and friends reacted to your participation in Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee E:**

Well, my friends from extracurricular activities were quite understanding, but it was a bit embarrassing. I think some friends might have asked, "What are you doing in there?" It's not that I felt ashamed of being Korean or anything like that. It just felt something new for people who didn't know about Zainichi, but I felt that it was something important to me, so I continued to attend. It might have been a time when I was a bit embarrassed about doing something different from others.

**Interviewer:**

How did your parents react?

**Interviewee E:**

My parents' reaction was kind of like, "Oh, really?" It was a bit of an ambiguous response, like they weren't quite sure how to react.

**Interviewer:**

Through attending Zainichi Ethnic Classes, what changes or insights did you gain regarding

the history and culture of Zainichi Koreans and your own identity?

**Interviewee E:**

Well, some of my friends were really into writing in Hangul (Korean script). So, I thought, "I want to learn Hangul quickly." I also felt that if I have Korean roots, I should at least understand it to some extent. Like, what is my Japanese name in Korean, I would want to know it. So, there was a sense of wanting to know those things.

I didn't have much interest in it, but I was influenced by friends who value their ethnic identity, and having Zainichi friends around me piqued my curiosity and made me want to know more. I even started asking my grandparents about it.

**Interviewer:**

Has your experience in Ethnic Classes had an impact on you?

**Interviewee E:**

I wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn if I didn't attend. So, I didn't have much interest in it, if I didn't.

**Interviewer:**

While attending regular Japanese schools, did you have any opportunities to study about Zainichi Koreans or their history in classes other than the Ethnic Class?

**Interviewee E:**

I attended regular Japanese schools, and there weren't many opportunities to learn about Zainichi Koreans or their history in other classes, except during the time allocated for Ethnic Classes.

**Interviewer:**

So, do you think it would be beneficial for Japanese schools to include more about Zainichi Koreans in their curriculum?

**Interviewee E:**

I think it would be a good idea to provide some basic knowledge about Zainichi Koreans in Japanese schools, like a brief historical overview, especially in areas where there are many Korean residents.

**Interviewer:**

What are your thoughts on the decreasing number of Ethnic Classes and Zainichi Korean schools? What do you think about the future of these classes?

**Interviewee E:**

I can't speak in a very specialized way, but I personally have roots in Zainichi Korean, even though my family didn't have a strong Korean cultural background. While attending these classes, I learned more about my roots, so I think they serve as a good opportunity to discover one's heritage. So, I hope Ethnic Classes continue to exist as much as possible.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the changing situation where not only Zainichi Koreans but also newcomers' children can attend these Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee E:**

I view this as a positive change. Ethnic Classes weren't just created to strengthen ethnic identity; they were meant for people to learn about their roots and themselves. Even if the history is different, newcomers' children also have Korean roots, so I think it's a good thing that they can study together with those who have similar backgrounds.

**Interviewer:**

How do you plan to pass on the culture of Zainichi Koreans to the next generation? Are you considering sending them to ethnic education classes, or are there specific cultural traditions you want to uphold at home?

**Interviewee E:**

I think if my child is interested in learning about their own background and wants to attend Ethnic Classes, they should go for it.

**Interviewer:**

Even though you have Zainichi Korean roots, and your lifestyle is predominantly Japanese, do you still believe that it's important to pass on your Zainichi Korean heritage? How do you think about concerns related to this?

**Interviewee E:**

Yes, I do think it's important to pass on one's Zainichi Korean heritage, even if my lifestyle is predominantly Japanese. I don't have significant concerns about it. But I don't know much about Zainichi culture well enough to teach it myself, but I would like to make it more familiar, like cooking Korean dishes. I felt I learned too late, and if I had known earlier, it would have been better. So, it's better to pass on rather than hide about being Zainichi.

**Interviewer:**

Please provide a reason why I should cherish my ethnic culture.

**Interviewee E:**

Understanding what kind of ethnicity you are, I think it can help enhance self-awareness, and that's why I believe it's essential."

## **Interviewee F**

### **Interviewer:**

First of all, did you attend Ethnic Classes?

### **Interviewee F:**

Yes, I attended them. It started when my mother happened to notice that English camps were becoming popular in South Korea. She suggested sending me there, so I went. Before that, we used to visit Korea quite frequently, like twice a year, due to my father's job and other reasons. When I was in the fourth grade, I had an opportunity to go to Korea, and I needed to have a passport for that. I currently have a Korean passport, and it was when I was told that I needed to have that passport in my own possession that I first heard from my parents that I am "Zainichi."

### **Interviewer:**

So up until then, did you consider yourself as Japanese?

### **Interviewee F:**

Identity and roots, it's a bit complicated, you know? I often think about this word "identity," but you have to explain it to someone, right? Identity. But the thing is, who decides we need to explain own identity? It's like, who defines identity?

Identity and culture are different. Identity, to me, is something you recognize for yourself and what others expect from you or how they say, "Yes, that's who you are."

So, both roots and identity, or culture and identity, are different things. I believe that identity is crucial, but it's also something that constantly changes. Roots, on the other hand, are like the bloodline of Zainichi Koreans or who's in your family. It's one aspect of your ethnic identity. But a more significant identity, for example, might be your sexuality or where you come from, your regional characteristics. For instance, identity defines how you categorize yourself, or how others perceive you. That's also important. but it's crucial to understand that this notion of identity is something that keeps evolving, always changing. It can change based on who you're talking to or interacting with. Yes, it's something that keeps changing. It can change based on who you're with, how you're perceived, and who you're talking to. That's what I think.

So, when my mother told me this in the fourth grade, so why I had always thought I was Japanese because at that time, I didn't even know the concept of identity. I didn't really understand nationality and such at that age. I didn't really consciously identify as a Japanese person within myself. I mean, I live in Japan, so just living a regular life here, I didn't particularly affirm my identity as a Japanese person. Well, of course, being young might have played a part in that, I think.

When my mother told me I was Zainichi, it was the first time I became aware of this identity that I didn't know I had. But even then, my mother said, 'Don't ever tell anyone.'

At that time, my mother was a homemaker, and her work didn't seem to have any influence on this matter. But looking back now, she did express concerns about me attending a Japanese school and also having some problems with other parents due to Korean roots. I thought I didn't want her to go through any difficulties related to this, and she felt that around the age of 10, in the fourth grade, I was at an age where I could keep it a secret. That's what my mother apparently told me. However, I used to wonder why it had to be kept a secret. But occasionally, I would casually ask my friends questions like, "Do you think it's okay for me to marry a Korean in the future?" I was curious to hear their responses, but when they would say something like, "No," I was shocked and hurt by their answers.



I only realized when I was in the fourth grade that we had memorial services at our own home. We had memorial services every year, and my grandmother was really concerned about it. She said we absolutely had to do it, but I never thought of it as a Korean thing, personally. I don't go to other people's homes much.

I never thought that the food I was eating, which was closer to Korean cuisine, or the fact that I visited Korea frequently had any connection to my own roots. It was a moment where I started to realize that these things that had been part of my life at home were somehow connected to my identity.

So, when I was in the fourth grade, I had a very low level of awareness about this. I began to research and explore my Zainichi Korean background much later, around my third year of high school, so it's relatively recent for me.

I think I was in the 5th grade in elementary school, and my family was considering immigrating to Korea again. That's when I first started receiving intense training in the Korean language every day, and I began attending Ethnic Classes at that time.

**Interviewer:**

So, did you research how your ancestors came to Japan on your own?

**Interviewee F:**

I couldn't really ask my grandmother about this because my parents' households were both quite assimilated into Japanese culture. They lived in areas that were not typical neighborhoods for Zainichi Koreans and worked in places that were not the usual workplaces for them. They had to move or "become successful as Japanese" and "mold their families into Japanese households." That was the kind of attitude they had, so I had some resistance to asking about that part. I thought it would be completely different from my own understanding. So, I didn't ask about that, and, of course, I wasn't particularly close to my grandparents, so I didn't have many opportunities to ask. I only started to gradually discuss these things around the time I entered college, probably right before entering college, and there were some opportunities to talk about them. Of course, there were conversations before that, but my historical context probably hadn't caught up to them, so I would sometimes ask. My mother and father were relatively open people in this regard, so I didn't research it on my own; I learned from them. I only learned last summer, for the first time, that my mother held Chōsen citizenship. I didn't know that. They might just confuse me further, so they didn't talk about it. So, around my early twenties, I'd say, around when I was 20.

**Interviewer:**

You mentioned it briefly earlier, but I'd like to hear more. How were you exposed to Korean culture in your family?

**Interviewee F:**

In my case, Korean isn't used much in daily life, but both my father and mother can speak it to some extent. Our communication, between my mother and me, is mainly in very simple Korean, like expressions of affection or secret words. We don't use it in everyday conversation much. But when I was little and attended ethnic classes, if I wanted to say something like secret words in town, I tried really hard to say it in Korean. When there was a possibility of me going to South Korea, I was attending ethnic classes and studying Korean. But I haven't really studied it properly since then. There was a time in elementary school when I was really into BIGBANG, KARA, and Girls' Generation, but I haven't studied much since then. Others in my family, my grandmother often cooked Korean meals, but on my father's side, many relatives have naturalized as Japanese citizens, so there's a significant

influence from that. They have really assimilated into Japanese society as Zainichi Koreans, where they had to hide their true identity to live here. Maybe that's why there wasn't much sadness or regret about losing that identity for my family. They were more focused on their work and the people around them, at least in my father's household. But in my mother's family, there were relatively more open Zainichi Koreans living openly, even among relatives, so I think that had an influence. That's why there were many cultural aspects that persisted within the family. My mother's side of the family used to hold Jesa (제사 memorial services) every year, and my mother would certainly prepare some Korean dishes occasionally, but we didn't always have a fully Korean meal.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the fact that, as you mentioned earlier, Jesa is no longer being practiced in your family?

**Interviewee F:**

The culture of Jesa was really patriarchal, where women prepared the food and men just sat and ate. My mother had always disliked it. I saw it for a long time, and I strongly agreed with her. We both wondered why we had to continue such a harmful culture. We felt that it didn't have to be called tradition, so I think it's really good that it's disappearing. But my mother and I, we still have small memorial services within our family, but the more formal ones have disappeared. I've always disliked gatherings like that. In fact, I hated the idea of such a sexist culture persisting. So we thought we didn't need that. In the end, I think a lot about Jesa, like what is left behind and for whom is it good? Jesa has indeed played a part in shaping the identity of Zainichi Koreans, but behind it, there were women who had prepared and gone through hardships. So the fact that it's disappearing is not as painful as it might seem. For example, Jesa may have existed in the past, but the fact that it has been disappearing for many years, even decades, is also a form of transformation. It's complicated, but I think it's part of the natural process of change.

**Interviewer:**

So, next, about your identity formation. Have you faced discrimination or prejudice based on your Korean roots?

**Interviewee F:**

To be honest, there have been times when I was kind of confused, like, 'Oh, was that discrimination?' Discrimination, well, if you talk about discrimination, I think it's the classic concept of someone saying, "Oh, you're Korean. Don't come here," that's a very old-fashioned form of discrimination. Of course, prejudice and discrimination are not just about that. I started openly stating that I'm Zainichi Korean around high school, after I went to New Zealand, and I had never told anyone, except for one friend, throughout elementary and middle school. The first time I said, "I'm Zainichi Korean," I think it was just before entering college, maybe on Instagram. I started being open about it, and that's when I finally began to face such discrimination. But up until then, I've had a curious mind since I was in the fourth or fifth grade. I heard some like discrimination when I asked some question to some friends like 'Can you marry with a Korean?' and then they'd say, 'No, my parents won't allow it.' Now that I think about it, it's been ten years since then, but considering how I feel about it now and how I felt when I was in fourth grade, the proximity and perspective are entirely different. When I was in New Zealand, I didn't hear it from Korean friends, but I would hear it from Japanese or other Asian. They'd say, 'I know you are a fake Japanese.' Even now, I'm living in

Taiwan, my friends say, '你是假的日本人' (You're a fake Japanese), which is kind of a joke within our friendships, so maybe they think it's okay to say that. They probably wouldn't say it if they knew the history. We're friends, but for me, it's really crossing a line. And, also I met someone the other day, and I mentioned I'm Korean, and that's when the conversation started in Korean. But I think just because I say I'm Korean doesn't mean that there's this Korean-ness that's sought after in today's society. It's just not. People can be Koreans but live in France, and the existence of such immigrants has become quite common. In a place where that's become commonplace, I think it's strange that it exists. I didn't respond well in Korean, and that person said, 'Hey, you can't even speak Korean,' and it felt like I was being laughed at. I feel that subtle prejudice, ignorance of history, and things like that a lot. But I absolutely don't want to lower my acceptable threshold for such things. I find it strange to think, "Well, I haven't personally experienced discrimination," or "I haven't been subjected to violence," because this history hasn't been discussed until now. So it's natural for people to start saying things discriminantly as a result of not knowing the history. I understand that, but I believe that I shouldn't lower my tolerance for such things. I make sure to respond to such situations accordingly.

Lately, you encounter Japanese people who assume, "There's no discrimination against Zainichi people," or "There's been no discrimination recently." But I feel like "Wait, what are they saying." When you compare it to the past, it might seem that way, but when you actually search "Zainichi Koreans" on Twitter, you see some intense hate speech. I feel it incredibly ignorant.

**Interviewer:**

Do you feel that many people are unaware of Zainichi Koreans? If you meet someone like that, how do you explain the concept of Zainichi Koreans to them?

**Interviewee F:**

Having to explain to people who don't know about Zainichi Koreans ultimately falls on the affected party every time. For example, within a context where no opportunity or means of learning is provided to you, when you encounter such a person, being made to explain to them is quite cruel. And the idea that explaining is troublesome is probably something that every affected party feels. However, the difficulties that accumulate on them when dealing with such situations cannot be ignored. It feels unpleasant, so that's why I think education is essential.

**Interviewer:**

Next, how do you express your identity as a Zainichi Korean?

**Interviewee F:**

I feel somewhat embarrassed about not speaking Korean fluently. It can be triggered by someone pointing out, "Hey, you don't speak Korean," and that feeling of regret and frustration keeps accumulating. In an ideal scenario, if there were an environment where the history and roots of Zainichi Koreans were openly discussed, and everyone was aware of it, these internal conflicts shouldn't exist. So, in that sense, identity undergoes significant changes and is not something that an individual alone can determine.

For me personally, Zainichi Koreans, as well as my own experiences of living in countries that aren't my motherland, make me feel very like, when I talk about my Zainichi identity, I don't feel the need to express a typical Zainichi aspect, such as speaking Korean or eating Korean food. Instead, it's more about learning my history, hearing my parents' stories, and discovering my family's background. I think that's something I want to do in life as someone

born as a Zainichi Korean. So, I often contemplate how best to express my identity. I come from a family with four generations, and I still encounter very different customs when I go to Korea. It's hard for Zainichi to make an effort to get close to Koreans, and I don't think they need to. I want to maintain that sense of distance. Therefore, having many places where you can express your true self, free from obstructions, would be great. I wish for a society where such places are abundant.

**Interviewer:**

What experiences did you have in Ethnic Classes, and what insights or thoughts did you gain through those experiences?

**Interviewee F:**

Ethnic Classes, as I mentioned, were not held within the school but organized by the local community. It took place in a building in my region, I think, every Saturday. Different from ethnic classes in Japanese school, my actions in my private space were more personal and private. Therefore, there were fewer instances of someone saying something to me. Basically, we learned songs, studied Korean, and practiced playing traditional Korean drums. We even participated in the prefectural tournament. So, we practiced a bit and had some snacks. Plus, ethnic classes were mostly free."

I think at that time when I was attending ethnic classes, I wonder what my mother's thoughts were about passing down this culture to me. During those times, it was genuinely enjoyable to study Korean culture, and I wanted to go on my own. I was already aware of my roots, so I think I have already been thinking about relearning and embracing Korean culture as part of my identity. Maybe if I had kept in touch with relatives I knew from the past, I wouldn't have been as open and free as I am now. Because those people had, you know, naturalized or they had been living as Japanese for a long time, so they might have a different perspective. I don't think they would have viewed me talking about important things like this in a positive light. So, I believe that the voices around you are quite important.

**Interviewer:**

So, do you think that attending Ethnic Classes has had a significant impact on you?

**Interviewee F:**

In terms of language, I think it was great to learn Korean language back then. I believe that the memories of attending Ethnic Classes serve as a proof to my Zainichi identity. At the very least, I feel that I have had such an experience. The experiences of interacting and playing with other Zainichi people during my childhood were simply wonderful. I genuinely feel that having had the opportunity to have those experiences was valuable. Especially because I attended a Japanese school, I think if I hadn't attended ethnic class, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn about my roots. If I could have, I would have liked to attend a Korean school.

**Interviewer:**

Considering the current transformation and status of Ethnic Classes, what opinions do you have regarding the future of ethnic education and Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee F:**

It's absolutely necessary. It's crucial. Education is incredibly important. Learning about Zainichi history, having various ideas, and connecting sincerely and purely as Zainichi Koreans, Korean Ethnic School and Ethnic Classes are still necessary, especially in a society

like Japan, where there's a racially homogeneous.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think Japan is still a nation with a racially homogeneous?

**Interviewee F:**

No, I don't think so. But they act in a way that suggests they are, though. Despite the fact that there have been immigrants, especially people like the Zainichi Koreans who came from other countries to contribute to the labor force and the existence of the Ainu people, it's like Japan is moving towards erasing all of that and behaving as it's a racially homogeneous nation. So, issues related to the Zainichi don't even come up in history classes. Right now, it's more like international or multiculturalism on the surface, connecting through superficial cultural aspects. So, it seems like Japan's society is favoring the Japanese way of life. If you were Japanese, it would be very comfortable.

**Interviewer:**

Do you have any plans to change your nationality in the future?

**Interviewee F:**

I've been told by my parents that change my nationality. I know that nationality doesn't inherently determine one's roots; it's just a matter of citizenship. But I have this unexplainable reluctance to change it. I don't know why. I don't have to be so attached to the idea of being a Korean citizen. But I also have this really strong sense of pride in being Korean. So I don't think I'll change it.

**Interviewer:**

If you plan to have children in the future, how do you intend to pass on your ethnic culture to them? Do you have specific educational methods or approaches in mind that you consider necessary?

**Interviewee F:**

If I have children or nieces and nephews through relatives, I would definitely want to teach them the history and language. I want to pass on those aspects for sure. I couldn't get as many opportunities as I wanted when I was younger. I didn't understand Korean well when I was a child. I regret that, and I want to expose young children to it as much as possible. I hope they have the chance to learn when they want to.

## **Interviewer G**

### **Interviewer:**

First, could you please tell me about your family's background and the circumstances surrounding your ancestors' immigration to Japan? Additionally, when did you first become aware of your Korean roots, and could you share your thoughts and feelings at that time?

### **Interviewee G:**

Well, as for my family's background and the history of my ancestors immigrating to Japan, my great-grandparents came from Korea to Japan. I don't have detailed information on how they came to Japan. They came to Japan, I think, around the time of the war or before the war, probably for work as laborers. The situation in Korea had become quite challenging, and they came to Japan seeking better opportunities.

### **Interviewer:**

When did you first become aware of your Korean roots?

### **Interviewee G:**

I didn't have many specific points of realization here.

When I was a child, I was exposed to Korean culture without even realizing it. There were things like Jesa, memorial service, making Namul (나물), and other such activities. All my relatives lived in Osaka, so I had been visiting them since I was very young. There was no recognition that it was Korean culture.

### **Interviewer:**

But, you were living in Japan, so did you think of it as Japanese culture, or did you already know it was Korean culture?

### **Interviewee G:**

There was no recognition that it was Korean culture. Later, I realized, 'Oh, this is different,' and I understood. I used to live near Tsuruhashi (in Osaka), so I often got taken there. Back in the day, Tsuruhashi was like a desolate Korean market, and I'd go along to buy kimchi. We'd have lunch, eating kimbap and chijimi. We also had Korean food quite frequently at home. I had a Japanese name and had been living with it all along. Then when I was in 1st grade in elementary school, a teacher at school invited me to join the ethnic classes. Teacher knew that I have root in Korean.

### **Interviewer:**

How did the teachers know about it?

### **Interviewee G:**

Well, you see, I'm actually teaching at an Ethnic Classes now, so I understand how they know it. There's a roster with all the students, and at the time of enrollment, it's known if a student has foreign roots. The teachers are aware of this. There's information sharing among the teachers. That's how they know. So teachers who know about it might invite students to Ethnic Classes, and even the homeroom teachers might do the same.

Then initially, I didn't have a strong will to go because I was just a 1st grader, but I thought I'd go since my friends were going. So, I started attending because the teacher and my parents encouraged me. When I was in elementary school, among the 30 to 40 students in my class, about a third of them had Korean roots. So, of course, there were more Japanese kids, but

everyone knew the term 'Zainichi,' and teachers supported us.

**Interviewer:**

So, at that time, when you realized your roots, were there many friends around you with Korean roots as well, and did you not have any negative feelings about your own roots?

**Interviewee G:**

However, there was a period, maybe around the third or fourth grade in elementary school, when I couldn't quite embrace it. You know, kids around that age tend to want to be like everyone else. It was a time when we all wanted the same things. We were all the same, yet I would think, 'Why am I Korean?' or 'Why am I not Japanese?' There wasn't any clear difference, and perhaps it was because I didn't speak Korean that I questioned why it was that way.

**Interviewer:**

Then, how did you come into contact with Korean culture while growing up at home?

**Interviewee G:**

In my family, we had Jesa culture until around middle school. Lately, it has become more of a hassle and we stopped doing it, but we used to do it quite often, either at relatives' homes or in our own home.

**Interviewer:**

This is something that has come up in our previous interviews, but what do you think about the fact that Jesa is disappearing?

**Interviewer:**

How about language? Do you engage with the Korean language?

**Interviewee G:**

At home, we don't really use it much. Sometimes, my grandmother would say things like 'Aigoo (아이고 an exclamation)', but lately, I've been talking more with those from the Ethnic Korean school, so when I'm with them, we do use those simple words and expressions quite a bit.

**Interviewer:**

For Zainichi Koreans, what kind of place is Tsuruhashi?

**Interviewee G:**

Well, when I go shopping, I can find things like kimchi and Korean food products that you can't easily find in Japanese supermarkets. I also hear a lot of Korean spoken, and there's sometimes a Korean accent in the Japanese spoken there. It's a place where you can really feel the ethnic characteristics. It has become quite touristy nowadays, and I can feel that it's changing from how it used to be.

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever heard historical anecdotes about ethnic identity from your parents or relatives?

**Interviewee G:**

Discrimination was quite prevalent in my grandmother's and my mother's generation. My mother, for instance, wanted to go on a graduation trip with her friends, but since she had a

Korean passport, the moment they saw it, the trip was canceled, and she was excluded from conversations. So, when I decided to change my name, it caused a lot of worry. Also, my current grandmother, who is living in Japan, has nine siblings, and a couple of them repatriated to North Korea under the repatriation policy that was in place at the time. So, a few of her siblings went back to North Korea, and until about five years ago, we used to send them packages and we also received letters from over there.

However, life in North Korea seemed very difficult, and I realized that if my fate had been slightly different, that could have been my future. So, for me, North Korea is a country that feels both distant and close in a way.

Interestingly, many friends who attended Korean schools tend to refer to North Korea as the "Democratic People's Republic" (共和国). Even though originally they are all part of the same country, there's a tendency to lean toward the Republic side in their thinking rather than the South Korea or Japan. This is partly because North Korea supported Korean schools, which contributes to this way of thinking. I'm attending Zainichi organization, in there, I've observed that many students who are currently in Korean schools and organizations tend to have a more pro-Republic perspective. A significant percentage of these students are from Korean schools, and they tend to align more with the Republic than with the North.

**Interviewer:**

For example, what kinds of things do they do differently?

**Interviewee G:**

They refer to the North Korea as the "Republic" and don't usually use the term "North Korea." They call it the "People's Republic." When talking about South Korea, they may use the term "Nam Joseon (남조선 南朝鮮 South Korea)" in Korean. There's this word, "Urinala" (우리나라, meaning "our country"), and it generally refers to unified Korea Peninsula or North Korea. This perspective is fundamental to the thinking of students who attend Korea Ethnic Schools. It's something I've observed while interacting with them. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but I feel my perspective differs a bit. Many of them have a focus on reunification and contributing to the Zainichi community, and I've felt that some students hold these ideas. I also participated a bit and felt a strong sense of ethnicity from them. It's surprising. I think they have a strong sense of their ethnicity. They have strong ideologies too. When Korea Ethnic School students talk among themselves, Korean language immediately comes into the conversation, and it makes me think, "Wow, that's impressive." Some of the hardworking students may engage in demonstrations. But from my perspective, it's not about blaming the past; it's about wanting people to know. Those students have a strong sentiment that Japanese people have forgotten or don't know about the wrongs committed by Japanese people. It's a challenging perspective, in my opinion. So, even though we are both Zainichi Koreans, I think there are significant differences.

**Interviewer:**

Were there times when it was difficult to ask your mother about her experiences with discrimination or similar topics?

**Interviewee G:**

Certainly, it can be difficult to bring up. I can ask my mother about what it was like when she was attending a university in Korea, but it's challenging to delve into specific stories about discrimination.



**Interviewer:**

I heard that in Korea Ethnic Schools, they teach students about how their ancestors came to Japan as part of the curriculum. Did you learn about such topics in the multicultural class?

**Interviewee G:**

Oh, yes, I remember something like that. The teacher said something like, "Let's investigate our hometown."

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice based on your Korean roots?

**Interviewee G:**

When I was 18, about four years ago, I was attending a preparatory school. I had already changed my name to a Korean name, and that's when the teacher asked me questions like, 'Do you have Zainichi Korean roots?' or 'Do you have relatives in Korea?'

**Interviewer:**

Did your teacher not know much about Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee G:**

No, they didn't. So I replied something like, "I can't really talk about it right now. I can only speak simple words. I can only speak Japanese, and I go to Japanese schools." Then the teacher asked, 'You're pretty much Japanese, so isn't it meaningless to cherish Korea?' My mind went completely blank at that time because I had never heard that before. In hindsight, that teacher had quite strong beliefs. They brought up the Japanese Rising Sun Flag, which is still used today but was the flag used by the military during wartime. It was kind of strange because the week after I talked about my background, that teacher was wearing a T-shirt with a print of the Rising Sun Flag on the back. It might have been a coincidence, or they might have been trying to make a point, I'm not sure. But I was really taken aback, like, "What? People like this exist?" It felt so bad, and I didn't have that kind of awareness or knowledge at the time, so it was quite surprising.

**Interviewer:**

You mentioned changing your name earlier, so is it the case that your mother currently uses her Japanese name, while you are the only one using your actual Korean name?

**Interviewee G:**

Yes, that's right.

**Interviewer:**

What made you want to change your name? What was the reason behind that decision?

**Interviewee G:**

Well, this decision was quite influenced by my involvement in the Ethnic Class. It happened around the time I was in middle school, maybe in the third year, right before graduation. There was a teacher who was like the adviser for the ethnic class, they were quite dedicated. I heard that some of the previous graduates had their actual names called at their graduation ceremonies. When I was about to graduate from middle school, I started hearing from various people that living in Ikuno (in Osaka) was special and that being Zainichi was not well-known by the general public. Since I had already decided I was going to leave Ikuno, I

thought, "What would happen if I started using my Korean name?" I had been living with my Japanese name until then, but I was curious about what it would be like. So, I asked to have my Korean name called at the graduation ceremony and began using it from high school onward.

**Interviewer:**

What was the reaction of those around you when your actual name was called for the first time at your graduation ceremony?

**Interviewee G:**

But everyone already knew that I attended the Ethnic Classes, so there wasn't much of a surprised reaction. It was more of a matter-of-fact transition, and that's how I started using my Korean name.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think the absence of negative reactions from other students was due to the existence of the Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee G:**

Yes, I think it was because of the Ethnic Classes. The teacher's influence was quite significant. However, even though it wasn't outright discrimination, in high school, it was the family time that my first name was mistakenly associated with a Chinese name. It wasn't that I had any issues with that, but I was still adjusting to it in high school, so it felt a bit confusing. When I entered high school, I noticed that many students seemed to envy the fact that I'm Korean, and there was a trend in Korean culture at that time. But, living as a Zainichi and being born and raised in that context, there were still inconveniences. I sometimes got irritated because I felt like they were saying these things without fully understanding the challenges or difficulties that come with being Zainichi.

**Interviewer:**

Do you feel like people are not well-informed about history or don't have awareness about Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee G:**

I do feel that way. My hope is that people will become aware of this, especially starting with K-pop, where they can find out that such individuals exist. By using my Korean name and living my life openly, I've seen that some people have learned about Zainichi and that meeting me has changed their perception of Zainichi Koreans. There are friends who have said that my openness has changed their lives. I think teachers should explain these things. When other friends wonder why someone is attending the Ethnic Class, it's essential for homeroom teachers or university professors to provide a clear explanation. I believe that there is a noticeable difference between schools that prioritize ethnic education and those that don't.

**Interviewer:**

Are there any challenges you've faced while teaching Ethnic Classes and continuing with them?

**Interviewee G:**

There is a multicultural movement, and the formal name has changed to the International Club. Some school teachers ask questions like, "Is there a point in doing this?" and may not

be very enthusiastic. Some schools are not very cooperative, so it can be quite challenging. It's difficult because you can feel that the activities are tough.

**Interviewer:**

How do you express your identity as a Zainichi Korean?

**Interviewee G:**

I use 'Zainichi Korean' when talking to people who show interest, but for those who seem less interested, I tend to say 'Korean.' If they become more interested, I explain further. Of course, in events or lectures, and times like these interviews, I explain clearly.

There are still people with discriminatory beliefs, and I sometimes feel the fear of how they'll react, which makes it quite difficult to speak about.

**Interviewer:**

Do you not learn much Korean language in the Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee G:**

We did learn some basic greetings, but I don't remember much. In elementary school, it was more about playing, and in middle school, we did things like playing musical instruments and studying history.

**Interviewer:**

How often are ethnic classes held per week?

**Interviewee G:**

It was once a week. We also had summer camps and participated in 'Hagi Hakkyo' (하계 학교 summer school), where three local elementary schools gathered for joint activities.

**Interviewer:**

Has participating in Ethnic Classes and learning about history and culture influenced your identity as a Zainichi Korean? If so, how has it affected you?

**Interviewee G:**

It has definitely influenced me a lot. It's not so much that the studies had a significant impact but, rather, the time I spent learning, the encounters with the teacher, meeting friends, and fellow Zainichi, all of those have influenced me quite a bit. As a junior high school student, we talked about our roots and that, now looking back, created strong bonds, so I think the activities in the Ethnic Classes have played a role in establishing my roots.

**Interviewer:**

Given the current situation where ethnic classes and Korean Ethnic Schools are decreasing or closing down, how do you think about the future of Zainichi ethnic education?

**Interviewee G:**

Well, both Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes are decreasing, but I think one of the first things that needs to be addressed is the poor treatment of those who teach. The working conditions, pay, and treatment for educators are not commensurate with their abilities and knowledge. I have great respect for Zainichi teachers who possess teaching skills and a wealth of knowledge. I have learned a lot from them, even though I'm not proficient.

However, their jobs and salaries don't match their worth, and it feels like their dedication is being exploited. It's a very demanding job, but it doesn't receive the recognition it deserves. I believe that the declining number of people willing to take on this role is one of the reasons for the diminishing presence of multicultural education. It's something that is slowly fading with each generation. Moreover, Japanese education doesn't emphasize or promote it.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think that teaching about the history of Zainichi Koreans should be included in regular Japanese education?

**Interviewee G:**

I think it would be a good idea to include Zainichi education in the curriculum, perhaps in textbooks. Moreover, it's crucial for students to learn about people like us as part of extracurricular activities. If students learn about this during their elementary and junior high school years, they'll have a better understanding. Even if they make mistakes, it would prevent them from becoming the kind of people who engage in hate speech. It would become part of their normal knowledge.

**Interviewer:**

What are your thoughts on your future nationality? Do you have any potential to naturalize as a Japanese citizen? What factors would influence that decision?

**Interviewee G:**

I have no intention of naturalizing at the moment. It's one of my identities, and I respect it. I don't plan to naturalize. I want people to respect my identity, and I don't plan to marry someone who would ask me to naturalize. I want my identity to be respected.

**Interviewer:**

How do you plan to pass down the Zainichi ethnic culture? Would you consider sending your children to a Korea school, or do you have other approaches in mind?

**Interviewee G:**

I want to send my kids to Korea Ethnic School, especially in elementary school. For junior high, I'd leave it to my child's decision. I can create a cultural environment within our family as well. If I have children and want to raise them in Osaka, I think it's important because it's easier to feel our ethnic identity and have some form of ethnic education within daily life.

**Interviewer:**

Are there specific traditions or values that you want to pass on to the next generation?

**Interviewee G:**

There's quite a lot in terms of cultural aspects, like food culture. For example, the culture of enjoying grilled offal that started among Zainichi Korean, and traditional Korean dances, musical instruments, songs. I personally enjoy these things, and when I hear them, it really feels so ethnically rich and makes me appreciate it.

**Interviewer:**

For the last question, what are your thoughts on the importance of preserving Zainichi ethnicity for future generations and the reasons to cherish this ethnic culture?

**Interviewee G:**

The reason to cherish it is that it's part of my identity. There are various aspects to my identity, such as being a girl, being Korean, being born in Osaka, and more, but the Korean part has had a significant impact on my life and my choices. It's something that won't change until I die. I have an open-minded approach, and I want to continue being open about it. I hope for an environment where it's taken for granted, where nobody questions it. I even organize events and activities to make it more open.

I don't believe you have to absolutely reveal your Korean name or do things in a particular way. But I wish for a society where it's just normal. It takes courage to come out, and there are concerns about what to do if people react negatively or discriminate, but I hope for a society where such concerns are alleviated.

## **Interviewee H**

### **Interviewer:**

Next, please tell us your life story, or rather, the story of how your ancestors immigrated to Japan, if you know. Have you heard any memories or historical episodes related to your ethnic identity from your parents or relatives?

### **Interviewee H:**

I think I first became aware of my Korean roots when I was talking to my grandmother and maybe my great-grandmother out of curiosity. I don't remember the exact details of why our ancestors came to Japan, but what I do recall is that my great-grandmother came to Japan when she was around 14 years old, or at least that's what my grandmother used to say. She came to Japan and settled in the Tsuruhashi area, and from what I heard from my grandmother, life was quite tough for them. I also remember that my great-grandmother was often made to work hard to support their livelihood, and it was challenging. I heard stories about the difficulties they faced.

I also heard about discrimination. I don't remember the specific instances of discrimination my great-grandmother faced, but I do recall hearing that people used to mock her as "Korean" or that there were discriminatory policies in Japan, like fingerprinting, where they wondered why they were singling out Koreans for this. Discrimination is a sensitive topic, so I didn't inquire too deeply at the time, as I wasn't sure how to react or what to say.

### **Interviewer:**

When did you first realize your Korean heritage? Can you share your thoughts and feelings from that time?

### **Interviewee H:**

I didn't really have a moment of realization here. Maybe when I was younger, like in elementary school, there was a somewhat playful comment from my mother in the car, something like, "You're half Korean," and that part left an impression, and I remember only that. At that time, I didn't fully understand or feel happy about it. I didn't grasp the significance. Looking back, I was quite young at the time, and I had no concept of having Korean heritage within my family. We spoke Japanese at home, and my name was a typical Japanese name, just like my friends'. So, I used to think it was a joke or something. However, I might have found it cool to have foreign blood in me, even though I was still very young. As I grew older and began to be told that I had Korean ancestry, I started to become curious about things I had never questioned before. During the time I had various questions, maybe in middle school, I got heavily into K-POP, and I started to like Korea. I wanted to learn Korean myself and go beyond K-POP to explore more about Korean culture. At that time, for some reason I can't quite remember, things started to click in my mind, like 'Oh, I'm a Zainichi Korean, or I'm a half.' From that point on, I started actively researching about being a Zainichi Korean. Despite feeling a bit of embarrassment, I gradually began asking my grandmother questions like, "Are you really Korean, Grandma?" and delved into my family's history. But at the time, it was challenging because I had heard about discrimination, and I wasn't sure if it was okay to ask, and I didn't have the courage to ask my mother directly.

### **Interviewer:**

When you first realized you were a Zainichi Korean, did you hear stories about discrimination, and did you have any negative feelings about having those roots?

**Interviewee H:**

I didn't have any negative feelings at the time. I think it was because I didn't have much knowledge about the topic back then. My mother once shared some experiences from her school days, and in hindsight, she probably had reservations about discussing past discrimination. She mentioned that she only told close friends that she was Zainichi Korean, which made me think that I shouldn't share it with others when I was in elementary school. So, I didn't have a negative image, but I also didn't talk about it with anyone during my elementary school years.

It was during middle school, around the time I became fond of South Korea, that I started to want to share the fact that I had Korean roots with everyone. I became proud of it, partly because I was into K-pop at the time. One day, I found out that there was a Koreatown in Tsuruhashi, and I genuinely wanted to visit. So I went to there many times, I was excited to explore Koreatown. Being in middle school, I started researching about Koreatown on my own. I also heard that my grandmother used to live around Tsuruhashi, so I began asking her if she lived near Koreatown. Realizing that my roots were connected to that area made me happy, and I started visiting Koreatown actively.

**Interviewer:**

Can you tell me about the ethnic environment within your family and how you were exposed to Korean culture while growing up at home?

**Interviewee H:**

In the past, I never thought there was Korean culture in my home. I mistakenly considered it to be Japanese culture. However, as I delved into the concept of being Zainichi Korean, I began to realize that there were aspects of Korean culture in my family. Looking back, I remember hearing stories that make me think, "Oh, I heard about that." My grandmother used to buy kimchi in Tsuruhashi, and whenever she came to our house, she'd bring a huge amount of kimchi, along with namul, jokbal (족발 pig's trotters), chapchae (잡채), and we'd definitely eat those. My mom also often made chijimi at home. After becoming aware of my roots, I started seeking out Korean cuisine more actively.

**Interviewer:**

What about the language aspect? Did you experience Korean language within your family?

**Interviewee H:**

We don't really use Korean at home, we mainly speak Japanese. But when I was self-studying Korean and spoke to my grandmother casually, I was surprised to find that she could understand Korean better than me. I somehow felt a responsibility to learn Korean because I have Korean roots. So, at that time, I could speak, write, and read Korean for simple things.

**Interviewer:**

So, were there any other aspects of Korean culture that you noticed?

**Interviewee H:**

Well, I realized this when I was in my third year of high school, but I noticed that our visits to the graves were somehow different from the Japanese way.

**Interviewer:**

Oh, how do you do it?

**Interviewer:**

I probably didn't ask my grandmother directly, but I researched it on my own. When it comes to visiting graves, I think it involves cleaning the grave, offering prayers and offerings. In Japan, you would typically place your palms together in a gesture of reverence, but what I found was quite different. In my family's case, during a grave visit, we would lay out a picnic blanket or something similar, and then perform a bowing gesture that sitting on your knees with your hands on the ground, repeating this motion twice. Recently, I realized, 'Oh, this is more like the Korean way,' and I confirmed with my friends for many times. I also checked the names on the graves, and they had Korean place names and those Korean names were engraved, so out of curiosity, I observed it and thought, 'This is Korean.' I haven't done memorial services myself, but there were memorial service tools at my grandmother's house.

**Interviewer:**

Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice due to your Korean roots? If so, how did you feel about those experiences, and how did you handle them?

**Interviewee H:**

I've never personally experienced discrimination. I think it's probably because I didn't talk about it much with others. I often feel like people envy me. But I wonder if they might be mistaking that for newcomers. When I started attending an Ethnic Class in middle school, I didn't really face any discrimination or comments from my peers. I wasn't sure that my friends thought what to make of the Ethnic Classes at the time, and I don't think my classmates even knew about my Zainichi Korean background, as nobody ever asked about it. However, when I was studying abroad, I did get some questions about my background. People from other countries didn't know about Zainichi Koreans, which I understood, but it did surprise me when even Japanese people I met while abroad asked me questions like, "Can you speak Korean?" or "Is your mother a Korean citizen?"

**Interviewer:**

So, how did you feel at that time, and how did you explain your background?

**Interviewee H:**

I don't speak Korean perfectly, and I now have Japanese citizenship. So it's a bit complicated. Since I had never been asked such questions before, I found it a bit challenging, and it could be a bit bothersome to explain every time someone asked. Until I became aware of my roots, I grew up as a pure Japanese, so I used to think, 'Am I allowed to say I'm Zainichi?' I felt like my ethnicity was inferior compared to those who were Zainichi, attending Korean schools and such, and I don't have the confidence to openly talk about my roots.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think it's common to encounter people who are unaware of the concept of Zainichi Koreans?

**Interviewee H:**

Hmm, it's hard to say. When I was studying abroad, most of the students I met were not from Osaka, and some of them were not familiar with the concept of Zainichi Koreans. So, I did think that it's not well-known internationally. Even in Japan, I don't think young people are very interested in the topic, and unless they have Zainichi Koreans in their immediate circle or live near a Koreatown-like area, they may have fewer opportunities to learn about it. So, I think the number of people who are aware of it is gradually decreasing.



**Interviewer:**

How do you express your identity as a Zainichi Korean? How do you perceive your nationality, and could you explain your reasons for your perspective?

**Interviewee H:**

With people I meet for the first time, I don't really mention my roots, so I just consider myself a Japanese. But after I realized that I have roots, I've started to take pride in the part of my identity that's Zainichi Korean. So, I want to tell close friends that I have Zainichi Korean roots. When I was living as a Japanese person, I didn't really think about my identity because I had a Japanese name, lived in Japan, and my life was no different from those around me. I never really questioned who I was.

But having a different cultural background has become something I cherish. I take pride in my Japanese citizenship, and I'm grateful for being Japanese. At the same time, there's something my grandmother once said, which stuck with me. She told me, "If you love Korea so much and learn the language, there was no need for your mother to change her citizenship to Japanese." This made me think that my mother had made that choice for our well-being. Still, I realized that nationality is just a symbol, a label. While I have no complaints about my current Japanese citizenship, I feel that I could have been open to the idea of being a Korean citizen if that path were available.

So, I believe that one's identity can change depending on the situation and the people they are talking to. When I'm with my grandmother or a rare Zainichi Korean friend, my identity as a Zainichi Korean becomes more pronounced. Even though I have Japanese citizenship, I feel more connected to the concept of being a Zainichi Korean when I'm with people who understand and accept it. However, during my time studying abroad, if someone asked, "Are you Japanese?" I would reply, "Yes, I'm Japanese," so it's complicated. Identity can change depending on the circumstances, and that's something I've come to understand.

**Interviewer:**

Could you tell me about your motivation for attending Ethnic Classes, and your experiences there?

**Interviewee H:**

I started attending Ethnic Classes when I was in the 2nd year of middle school. At that time, I had just mentioned to a friend that I was 'half-Japanese and half-Zainichi.' When I also told the teacher about it, the teacher said, 'There's an ethnic class for Zainichi Korean. Why don't you come? Then I started attending.

**Interviewer:**

What was it like the first time you attended an ethnic class, and how did you feel going there?

**Interviewee H:**

At the time, there were very few students in the ethnic class, just me and a friend. I was a bit nervous at first, but I found learning Korean and Korean culture to be enjoyable. After we joined, two younger students also enrolled.

**Interviewer:**

What did you learn in the ethnic class?

**Interviewee H:**

We studied Korean using textbooks and games, played musical instruments, and greeted the teacher by saying 'Annyeonghaseyo (안녕하세요 hello).' And I joined a summer camp-like event, where I learned about the history of Koreans and played games. It was a bit uncomfortable at the time being the only student with Japanese citizenship. Everyone spoke Korean, and there were students with both Korean and Chōsen citizenship, which was quite surprising and made me feel nervous. Also, when I graduated from middle school, the ethnic class prepared Chima Chogori for us, and I wore it for the first time.

**Interviewer:**

Can you talk about any challenges or conflicts you faced during your time at the school?

**Interviewee H:**

I didn't face many conflicts or challenges during my time there. I started attending ethnic classes abruptly, so I was a little concerned about what my friends thought, and it was slightly embarrassing to do something different from others. But nobody said anything.

**Interviewer:**

How did your parents react to your participation in the Ethnic Class?

**Interviewee H:**

I don't remember much about it, but on the day I first went to the ethnic class, I mentioned that I got a Korean name assigned. They created it based on the characters of my Japanese name, and since I already knew my mother's Korean surname, I talked about my Korean name. I recall that my parents seemed pleased with that. My mother even attended the graduation ceremony, so while I can't say for sure what they thought about my openness, there didn't seem to be any negative reaction.

**Interviewer:**

What changes or insights did you gain about history, culture, and your identity as a Zainichi Korean through your participation in Ethnic Classes?

**Interviewee H:**

I may have learned a relatively small amount by attending Ethnic Classes, and I only went once a week, so I may not have truly mastered the Korean language, or learned a lot about being Zainichi. However, the experience of attending ethnic classes is what allows me to have confidence in my identity as a Zainichi. Without that experience, I think I might have been less confident about being Zainichi, maybe just identifying with Japanese nationality, so it's a clear and factual aspect of telling my story about my roots. It has had quite an impact on me personally.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the fact that Ethnic Classes are becoming less common?

**Interviewee H:**

I find it really unfortunate that they are decreasing. From the perspective of someone like me, who has a significant Japanese element to my Zainichi Korean identity, these experiences are extremely valuable. Such experiences help shape one's identity as a Zainichi, and I believe the decline in opportunities to learn is one of the reasons why the Zainichi population is decreasing.

**Interviewer:**

What are your thoughts on the transformation of Ethnic Classes for Zainichi Koreans into more multinational classes, akin to international clubs? Do you have any opinions on the future of ethnic education?

**Interviewee H:**

It's a bit tricky. Personally, I think it's okay for ethnic education to change and adapt to the contemporary context. I'd prefer to have an environment where people can learn about their roots rather than losing the opportunity altogether. Zainichi Koreans occupy a complex and unique position in Japan, and they have a rich history, so it's important to preserve and honor that history. Ethnic Classes were originally created by the first and second-generation Zainichi Koreans who wanted to reconnect with their homeland, so altering that form is challenging, and I understand that there are various opinions on the matter. However, I believe the most crucial aspect is to continue having places where people can learn about their roots. I have limited experience with it, so I can't speak about the technical details.

**Interviewer:**

If you plan to have children in the future, how do you intend to pass on your own ethnic culture? Do you have any specific education methods or approaches in mind?

**Interviewee H:**

I want my child to know about our Zainichi roots. If Ethnic Classes are available, I think it's a good choice. I'm the only one in my family who received proper ethnic education, so I want to give my child a chance to gain more knowledge. But I am almost entirely Japanese, and while I have some elements of Korean identity, it will likely be minimal for my future children. So, it's challenging to say how I will pass it on, but within my capacity, I would like to share what I can.

**Interviewer:**

Are there any specific traditions or values from your ethnic culture that you would like to pass on to the next generation?

**Interviewee H:**

There are no traces of Korean traditional culture left in my family, except for food culture, so I want to expose my child to that. I think visiting our ancestors' graves is also important. It's a place where I can really feel Korean culture. I also want to take my child to Koreatown.

**Interviewer:**

What is the reason for valuing your own ethnic culture?

**Interviewee H:**

Having a unique ethnic identity within oneself is something that's not common. It's not something you can choose, and it's not something you can become just because you want to. I was born in this era, so maybe I can take pride in it, but I feel that having an ethnic identity like Zainichi in my family lineage is something I should cherish. My grandmother recently said, 'I have pride as a Korean,' and the moment I heard that, I felt that I should treasure it.

## **Interviewee: Teacher 1 and 2**

### **Interviewer:**

I would like to know the content of the classes, events, and educational policies currently offered at this Ethnic Classes, as well as the purpose of these activities.

### **Teacher 1:**

Content-wise, the class covers Hangul (Korean language) and cultural education. In terms of cultural education, it encompasses subjects like social studies, history, physical education, and games. Games are also included in the curriculum. We intentionally include games as part of the class to provide students with an option when they don't feel like studying. We use games as a way to engage them in the learning process. The content of these games often revolves around traditional Korean games and activities.

### **Interviewer:**

Regarding the students currently attending this ethnic classes, what are the most common reasons that lead them to enroll in the class?

### **Teacher 1:**

Actually, there isn't a specific "ethnic class" in elementary school. It's more about the events and activities that take place within the school. For primary and middle school students, these events differ. Primary school students have their sports day, which is specifically for primary school students. We reach out to them within the school's scope and encourage them to participate in these events. The extent of their participation depends on how well the school is aware of these events. Some students have experience with these events from their time in primary school and continue participating in the ethnic class in middle school. However, the school's response to these events can vary.

### **Interviewer:**

I've heard before, but is it the case that anyone can join the current Ethnic Classes regardless of their roots?

### **Teacher 2:**

Yes, starting from this year, we're doing it in a way that even students without roots can come in. But until last year, it wasn't like that, so we also invited and tried to find students with roots. Some students, without being explicitly asked, would come forward and say, "I actually have roots," and we would welcome them with open arms.

### **Interviewer:**

In the interviews I've conducted so far, it seemed that the Ethnic Class has had a significant impact on these students in terms of expanding their connections with Zainichi compatriots and fostering a sense of belonging. Is that how the ethnic class serves as their place?

### **Teacher 2:**

It's more than just being a place. What I mean is, it's not a place exclusively focused on Korea. We're not doing it with an image like, "Let's do this together because we're Zainichi compatriots or Korean or Chōsen." Otherwise, others around them might say, "What are they doing?" or "They're just sticking together," which is something we'd like to avoid. We don't want it to be seen as, "They're gathering around something related to Korea." Instead, we want it to be a class where everyone can participate together. So, the ethnic class isn't about

us (the students with roots) doing something exclusively. It's more about doing it in a relaxed and inclusive manner. Otherwise, it can lead to differentiation by other students.

**Interviewer:**

So, it's about creating an environment where students without roots can also feel comfortable and participate?

**Teacher 2:**

Exactly, that's right. We also extend a warm welcome and engage with students who are not part of the Ethnic Class.

**Interviewer:**

Please tell me about the current policies of the Ethnic Classes and how the educational approach in Korean Ethnic Schools differs.

**Teacher 1:**

In our Ethnic Class, there are teacher who have attended Korean Ethnic Schools. So, in my personal opinion, I don't think the policy is different. The educational content might differ, but our main goals are nurturing identity, ensuring students can enjoy a school life with a sense of security, and making ethnic class activities enjoyable. I believe that's the policy. Well, within the framework of these various regulations, until last year, entry into the ethnic class was limited to students with Korean roots. However, as you (interviewer) mentioned earlier, the diversity has greatly expanded. There were many opinions questioning whether it's right to restrict it only to students with Korean roots. In the Ethnic Class, there used to be only teacher with Zainichi Korean roots, but now there are newcomer's teacher, including me. Also among teachers, we have newcomers who still hold Japanese citizenship, and some who have changed their citizenship from Japanese to Korean. There are many different types of teachers, and that's precisely why opinions started to emerge, both within the teaching staff and outside, that we no longer need to restrict it to those with roots. This perspective was accepted in the faculty meetings because times are changing, and we should adapt our thinking and educational content accordingly. So, things are changing. But teacher who taught at Korean Ethnic Schools before might think we could do more. The difference is mainly in the amount of time. We have ethnic classes about 35 times a year, which is approximately once a week.

**Interviewer:**

I also went to junior high and high school in Japan, and what I noticed is that the history of the Zainichi Koreans is not discussed or studied much in Japanese schools. My memory is that I learned only that Japan had colonized Korea. So, considering that there are so many people with roots in the Zainichi community, especially in areas where there are no ethnic Classes in junior high or high schools, I wonder if opportunities to learn about Zainichi Koreans might be limited. What are your thoughts on the fact that Japan doesn't teach much about Zainichi history?

**Teacher 2:**

Well, we do discuss in human rights class and such. It depends on the teachers and how far they go beyond the textbooks. But when we visit Koreatown...

**Interviewer:**

Did you visit Koreatown as part of an extracurricular activity?

**Teacher 2:**

Yes, we did. We went there. Before that, we studied the history of Koreatown. However, it also depends on the grade year. It's a big trend now, and the students want to go there. But before visiting, we didn't just play and eat; we really wanted to study, so we learned about the history of Koreatown. We watched videos and did print-based learning. We discussed how there is such history, and that's why we have what we have today. This kind of education is happening quite a bit now. I'm not sure about other schools, but...

**Teacher 1:**

Koreatown often used as a model, and there are quite a few historical documents available about it, so we talk about it a lot.

**Interviewer:**

What kind of response and interest do the students show regarding their participation in the classes and events in the Ethnic Classes?

**Teacher 2:**

In my perception, in elementary school, it's like the teachers say, "Come along," and the students go without necessarily expressing their own will. It may depend on the parents' wishes. But in middle school, they come based on their own will. So the students who come, they come by their own choice. Now, practically everyone is engaged in various schools clubs activities, and they adjust their schedules to attend. For 2nd-year middle school students, it can get tough, not just with regard to the ethnic class but for their own things too. Then they didn't come and attend sometimes. But they realize the importance of their own roots. And when they reach the 3rd year, I don't know why, but they come sincerely and seriously. When they become 3rd-year students, they seem to want to study. That's what I've observed. I'm not sure about other schools, but this is how the students in our ethnic class are. They start to feel proud of themselves and realize that their roots are not just in Japan but in different countries as well, which is a positive aspect. It's like they gain a sense of pride and happiness from it. So, they all come.

**Interviewer:**

In the past, it was common for the previous generation to live while hiding their Zainichi Korean identity. Do you think that the current environment allows individuals to openly express their ethnic identity?

**Teacher 2:**

Being open about it... Well, I think it depends on the region. If you stand out from the crowd in some way, it might not be accepted. So, there's a pressure to conform. However, what we emphasize in this middle school is the importance of preserving one's own identity. In each year's assembly in our school, starting from this year, we've had the opportunity to say that students without roots are welcome to attend. During the year's assembly, the first, second, and third-year students would stand up and wear Chogori (Korean traditional clothing) and speak about it. However, it also depends on the atmosphere of the surroundings, the atmosphere of the year group, and the school's overall atmosphere. Our school itself doesn't create an atmosphere of "What are you guys doing?" That's probably because we conduct the ethnic class to ensure that such an atmosphere doesn't develop.

**Teacher 1:**

I agree with that. It's completely different from one school to another, and even how the same

content is conveyed varies. Even if students don't gather at a particular school, you should still continue doing it and not just give up immediately. By consistently pursuing this approach, I believe ethnic education can be carried out. To achieve that, cooperation from the school staff is crucial, and without dedicated teachers, it's not possible. I strongly feel that the school's structure, how the staff consider, think about, and accommodate various aspects, is what makes ethnic classes possible.

**Interviewer:**

If Ethnic Classes were to discontinue, it would reduce opportunities for those without roots to learn about the Zainichi community, and for those with Zainichi Koreans roots, it would mean fewer chances to learn about their own ethnic culture. As the nature of the ethnic class is gradually changing, what are the issues you face in addressing these challenges?

**Teacher 2:**

One issue is the scarcity of teachers. There are very few who can teach about Zainichi things, and it's challenging to keep the class going, considering the adults' convenience. Furthermore, it's not just about students with Korean roots. We need to consider various aspects, such as children with Chinese roots and other backgrounds. It's quite challenging to cater to all these different heritages, and that's why we need to study and understand various roots.

**Interviewer:**

In the midst of having students with different national heritages, each comes with a unique history, including being refugees or Zainichi Koreans. From the perspective of Zainichi Koreans, the Zainichi community itself is shrinking, and while the ethnic class was initially created just for Zainichi Koreans. Therefore, some people from the Zainichi Koreans community feel it would be better to separate it and do the Zainichi education for them. Have you heard any opinions about this, and what are your thoughts on it?

**Teacher 1:**

Yes, in my view, it's about the convenience of adults. We want to educate students with Korean roots to develop their identity. However, some people perceive this education as a special privilege reserved only for those with Korean roots, which is a kind of bias or prejudice. I believe we should provide this education because of the historical context. Those with Korean roots have the right to education as residents of Japan, and that reality remains unchanged. There's a commitment to provide education for them, which is backed by laws. However, the issue is that this education is often perceived as creating a sense of "specialness" and, as a result, it can be challenging to create an educational environment that fosters friendship and learning among all students, regardless of their backgrounds. I believe this is due to adult convenience and is a significant challenge in the educational field.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel about the decreasing number of teachers and Ethnic Classes, including Korean Ethnic Schools and Ethnic Classes, and the changing nature of Ethnic Classes?

**Teacher 1:**

Regarding the diminishing number of Korean Ethnic Schools, I'm quite disappointed. I haven't personally experienced it, but it seems that Korean Ethnic School communities provide an opportunity to meet people with similar roots. This increases the chance to meet people with the same heritage and build relationships, which is something I value. However, I feel there are certain areas where the public school-based ethnic classes, like the ones at

primary and middle schools, fall short. They lack in terms of frequency, time, and the depth of content. Sometimes, it feels like the classes are just about touching the surface of the subject. So, I'm really disappointed about this. It's one of the concerns for the students as well. Some adults consider eliminating just 35 times ethnic classes, and that's what they think is best. I feel somewhat saddened by this perspective. Some people believe it's not necessary, and I hope more people understand the importance of ethnic education.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think the experiences in Ethnic Classes have a significant impact on the students? If so, in what way do you think it affects them?

**Teacher 1:**

This is a bit of a personal opinion as a parent. I have three children, and I sent my youngest child to a Korean international school. From being an ethnic studies teacher, I noticed a difference in the students' faces. The children attending ethnic classes seemed to be more themselves, and they were enjoying their time. I envied that. I felt that ethnic education was necessary. My two older children attended Japanese schools that didn't have ethnic classes. I had to teach them at home, but there were significant barriers to overcome. My son told me something when he was in the first grade. Even though he had been talking in Korean the entire time, he came home and said, "I can't understand what you're saying, Mom." It was a big shock to me, and he wanted me to speak in Japanese. I felt the pressure to teach Korean at home, but it was challenging. My youngest son, who is now in an international school is enjoying it. This is a different experience. I believe there is an impact, and the timing matters. It depends on the individual, but the timing plays a significant role. People are influenced by their surroundings, especially children. Their environment shapes who they are. If everyone around them says, "You're like this," or "You're like that," they tend to conform. The surroundings matter. I wanted to create an environment where it didn't matter, where they could be themselves. But my older son has been speaking a lot of Korean recently, even though he's in the 3rd year of middle school. I've noticed a significant change. I was so happy to hear that. So, yes, there is an impact.

**Interviewer:**

As the generation of Zainichi Koreans continues to grow, what are your thoughts on the dilution of ethnic culture and identity?

**Teacher 1:**

I actually think that it's the current situation in Japan. In this context, I am focused on ensuring that the Zainichi Koreans do not lose their ethnic identity and that they have confidence in their own roots. While it's a concern that some people may feel attacked or worry about the dilution of their ethnic identity, I believe we should continue to address these concerns and adapt to society while maintaining our roots. If we don't recognize the issues, I don't think we can make improvements. So, I think we should recognize the problems and adapt to them, even though the shape may change over time. Regardless of what we do, it might not be very noticeable. That's why I believe it's essential to maintain our confidence and identity.