Introduction

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In early twenty-first-century Japan, Koreanness has again become trendy. Although what the Japanese call “Korea booms” have occurred a number of times in the past fifty years, these enthusiasms have been transient and have not much affected the lives of people of Korean descent in Japan. Whether the same will be true of the current interest remains to be seen. During the twentieth century, however, when the stories in this volume first appeared, Koreans in Japan, commonly known in English as Resident or Zainichi Koreans, were more often objects of discrimination or ridicule than of envy or fascination.

During the twentieth century many members of the Korean community in Japan used fiction to document the experience of being Zainichi Korean. Some recorded their contemporary milieu, but others—particularly toward the end of the century—looked into the past as well. Although each author’s own perception shaped his or her work, we will be able to read these texts more perceptively if we have general understanding of the forces that influenced the lives of Resident Koreans as a group. With that in mind, I will use this introduction to give a brief description of pertinent historical events and political discourse, through which I will weave a discussion of how Resident Korean fiction writers, particularly those in this volume, fit into that history.

How and why did Koreans come to live in Japan? In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, before other countries in northeast Asia could do so, Japan “modernized”—that is to say, developed an industrial economy and edged its way into the community of advanced technological nations. It began to develop, and then attempted to exercise, military and diplomatic strength in the international arena. Simultaneously, and in a move decidedly related to its modernization efforts, Japan began to strategize about how to extend its interests in Korea. Less than a decade after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the event mark-
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After Japan’s establishment of a modern state, it coerced Korea into signing a treaty (1876) that gave Japan extraordinary powers in Korean affairs. In 1905 Japan made Korea into a protectorate, and finally, in 1910, Japan absorbed Korea as a colony.

As a result, not only did Japanese officials establish a presence on the Korean peninsula, but ordinary Japanese began to make their way there as well. Although the state did encourage migration, more Japanese seem to have moved on the basis of incentives given by local governments or independently; they hoped to improve their financial lot (Duus, 312). The numbers of Japanese in Korea increased steadily for most of the period of colonization, and by 1945, roughly 700,000 Japanese people lived on the Korean peninsula (Takasaki, xiv).

At the same time, Koreans began to come to Japan, eventually in great numbers. The vast majority of these migrants had been subsistence farmers, and the colonial government’s policies to rationalize and commercialize agriculture had made their previous way of life untenable. As a consequence, they went where they could find jobs (Weiner, 40–45).

With the annexation of Korea as a colony, Koreans became legally eligible to seek work in Japan, but initially the pace of migration was slow (Weiner, 53–56). Still, by the late 1920s the population of Koreans in Japan was growing by as many as 100,000 per year, and by 1938 it stood at roughly 800,000 (Weiner, 122). Between 1939 and 1945, the community expanded even further, accelerated in part by the forced conscription of Koreans as laborers for the war effort. By the end of the war and Korean liberation from colonial rule, approximately two million Koreans were residing in Japan (Weiner, 187–208). A great many of these people—most notably the conscripted laborers—hastened to return to Korea, so by 1948 the number of Koreans in Japan had settled at just under 600,000 (Wagner, cited in Kashiwazaki, 20).

Since the vast majority of Koreans came because of poverty, most worked as unskilled laborers for wages lower than most Japanese. However, some comparatively privileged Koreans made the trip to Japan for different reasons, the foremost being education. Tokyo, Japan’s political and cultural center and home to many institutions of higher learning, became the place to go. Many young Korean men who came to Japan to study became involved in politics. In addition they began to write all manner of things in Japanese, including fiction. Most of this intellectual class stayed in Japan only temporarily and wrote in Japanese for only a portion of their careers, so many scholars do not consider their literature together with that written by Koreans who eventually made Japan their permanent home, or with that by subsequent generations born in Japan.

Most of the writers included in this anthology are descendants of migrants who came to Japan out of economic desperation. However, the first major writers
of Korean descent in Japan—Kim Sa-ryang and Noguchi Kakuchū (Chang Hyŏk-chu)—came for very different reasons—Kim to study and Chang as a published author. They differ in many respects from the other writers in the anthology, but most particularly because they came to adulthood in Korea and were fully literate in Korean language and culture. It makes sense to include Noguchi in this volume, for he stayed in Japan and wrote in Japanese from the time of his initial sojourn; moreover, some of his work addresses concerns that were later taken up by Korean authors born in Japan.¹ Kim Sa-ryang, on the other hand, returned to Korea, took off for China in 1945, and eventually settled in North Korea; he wrote in Korean as well in Japanese. Yet his work, and particularly the story translated here, “Hikari no naka ni” (Into the Light), has had such an impact on subsequent Zainichi Korean writers that it is hard to imagine this volume without it.

One thought-provoking question about both authors is why Chang and Kim chose to write the sort of fiction they did, and why they wrote in Japanese rather than Korean. Although Chang Hyŏk-chu later underwent tenkō (a public, often coerced, conversion from leftist beliefs) and is best known as a colonial apologist, and for having later become a naturalized Japanese citizen, both he and Kim Sa-ryang began their careers with decidedly left-leaning views. As Samuel Perry relates in an incisive analysis of “Gakidō” (Hell of the Starving, 1932), the first story Chang published in a Japanese journal, Chang “made use of the idiom of proletarian literature, originally created to convey the perspective of workers to a bourgeois audience, in order to shape a new perspective on colonial Koreans” (Perry, 282).² That he would do so—or that Kim would publish the equally, though differently, political “Into the Light”—is not strange, given the times. Proletarian literature was ascendant in both Japan and Korea, and leftist intellectuals saw fiction as a potent tool in the revolutionary struggle. In the early 1930s, Japanese communists were, for various reasons, even appealing to Koreans to write about the realities of colonialism (Perry, 288).

By the time Kim’s “Into the Light” was published, there was even more to fight against. By then the comparatively lenient cultural rule of the 1920s had given way to a more oppressive form of governance. The 1930s saw a series of policies in Korea designed to crush communism and intensify the effort to make Koreans into loyal imperial subjects (Suh, 30). Measures included, infamously,

¹ To paraphrase Kawamura Minato, a preeminent scholar of this body of work, Zainichi Korean literature is usually categorized as written in Japanese by an author of Korean descent living in Japan concerning ethnic identity and issues faced by Resident Koreans as a result of their ethnicity (Kawamura 1995, 213).
² Perry has translated that story for a forthcoming collection of Japanese proletarian literature edited by Norma Field and Heather Bowen-Struyk.
the building of Shintō (that is to say, imperial) shrines at which citizens were required to pray, promulgating an imperial oath of allegiance that school children were forced to recite, and compelling Koreans to adopt Japanese names.

So why publish in Japanese, in Japan? Both Perry and Kawamura Minato, in his path-breaking book on Zainichi Korean literature, Umareta kara soko ga furusato (Home Is Where You’re Born), cite Chang’s desire to state his case to a broader audience. Not only was literacy still low in Korea and distribution limited, but works in Japanese might be translated into other languages, which surely was not the case for those written in Korean. Perry is particularly sensitive to this matter, noting that in addition to his high-minded objectives, Chang—like most writers of fiction—wanted to gain recognition for his efforts (Perry, 304–305). And what of Kim Sa-ryang? He defended writing in Korean when many Korean intellectuals, like Chang, were enthusiastic about writing in Japanese (Kawamura, 36), and his life ended with him attached as a writer to the army of the communist north. In the years since, many readers of his work, prominent Resident Korean authors Kim Tal-su and Kim Sŏk-pŏm among them, have criticized Kim for his decision to write in the language of the colonizers (Kawamura, 38–39). Given his stated position on writing Korean, and the seemingly nationalist content of much of his work (though he, too, wrote some stories that appear sympathetic to Japanese colonialism), it does seem hard to understand, unless, of course, as Kawamura provocatively entreats us, we question whether writing in Japanese necessarily constituted a betrayal of Korean pride and collaboration with Japanese colonialism (Kawamura, 37–38).

The very question of what it means (or meant) to cooperate with, or at least not resist, colonial rule is one that has continued to preoccupy Koreans since Liberation. We find complex musings on this question not only in colonial-era stories like “Into the Light,” but later stories by Resident Korean writers. For example, the two major authors in the late 1960s, who were boys during the war, Ri Kaisei and Kin Kakuei (Kim Hak-yŏng), each wrote stories that dwell on this problem. Most famously, in “Kinuta o utsu onna” (The Woman Who Fulfilled Clothes, 1970), the first Zainichi Korean work to win the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, Ri probes the ordinary life of a fictionalized version of his mother for some sign of resistance to Japanese rule. In recent years, as the South Korean government and other South Korean institutions have adopted a range of measures

to expose—and vilify—anyone who benefited from working with the Japanese (Jager), scholars in Korea and beyond have been working to undermine what they see as facile understandings of the very notion of collaboration.4

For Koreans in early postwar Japan, however, such matters were not at the top of their list of concerns. Japan was in chaos, with all the misery and possibility that the term implies. If that were the case for Japanese people, it was all the more so for Koreans, who not only faced poverty but a range of other problems. Under the Allied Occupation (1945–1952), not only was their legal status ambiguous, but their homeland was soon divided and at war. Unsurprisingly, they also continued to face discrimination in most facets of their lives in Japan.

As a result, survival was surely foremost in the minds of most Koreans. To this end, many became engaged in politics, forming a number of organizations to petition for Koreans’ rights as residents of Japan and to establish schools to educate their children in Korean language and culture. These groups did not start out affiliated with either government on the peninsula or even with explicitly leftist or rightist views. Eventually, however, the Resident Korean community began to divide into political camps, and by 1955 two powerful groups had emerged. Known as Sōren (affiliated with North Korea, the DPRK) and Mindan (affiliated with South Korea, the ROK), these two groups had emerged out of predecessor organizations (Yang, 77–83). In the 1950s, Sōren spearheaded a significant movement to “repatriate” Zainichi Koreans to the DPRK, an effort facilitated by the Japan Red Cross. Ultimately, there was an exodus of roughly 93,000 people (Morris-Suzuki, 2005). The promise of a socialist paradise and the migration of acquaintances or family members appear frequently in texts set in this period—and the ghosts of those migrants continue to haunt narratives of subsequent decades.

Amidst this turmoil, the man usually identified as the father or founder of Zainichi Korean literature, Kim Tal-su, decided he should write fiction. Kim had come to Japan as a young boy and worked a string of menial jobs before being admitted to Nihon University. He ultimately landed a job as a newspaper reporter. He first published in a magazine issued by one of the early Korean organizations, but after this group was dissolved, he managed to establish himself in the Japanese literary world (Kawamura, 114). Like many writers and intellectuals, he was for a time a member of Sōren, but then broke away from the organization and its

4 For example, Ted Hughes of Columbia University hosted a panel at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies titled “Assimilation, Collaboration, and National Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial Korea,” in which panel members looked specifically at this issue as relating to literature. Notably, Kim Chul of Yonsei University presented on Chang Hyŏk-chu and Kim Sa-ryang.
doctrine. In *Home Is Where You Were Born*, Kawamura Minato observes that Kim Tal-su’s struggle can be seen as the typical life history of the first generation. They did not return to Korea as Kim Sa-ryang did, nor did they become Japanese citizens as did Chang Hyŏk-chu. Rather they chose to continue living with the ambiguous status known as “Zainichi Korean” that truly straddles the borderline between Korea and Japan. It is for this reason that [the fiction of] Kim Tal-su is seen as the origin of Zainichi Korean literature (Kawamura, 114–115).

As might be surmised from this passage, many have read Kim Tal-su’s fiction as an account of his own life. Since the early twentieth century, the decidedly autobiographical *shishōsetsu*, or I-novel, dominated the literary world, except for that time when proletarian fiction was preeminent. As a consequence, it has not been uncommon for readers of all Japanese fiction to assume that what they read is a record of the author’s life, even when there are patently unrealistic elements in the text.

All this is not to say that Kim’s work is not a *shishōsetsu* and that it does not derive some of its appeal from an apparent reality born out of references to people and events known by readers to exist in the world around them. As Christopher Scott notes in an analysis of “Fuji” and a companion work, there is a good deal in Kim’s stories that encourages readers to consider his texts to be based on his experiences (Scott, 44–45). Scott criticizes Kawamura, however, and implicitly other critics as well, for reading Zainichi literature as a whole and Kim Tal-su’s work in particular “in the tradition of the Japanese I-novel, which sees literature as a transparent expression of an author’s true self” (Scott, 23). He goes on to expose the way that Kim uses fictional techniques to craft his texts. He argues that to read these stories as simply reflecting the reality of Kim’s life is to miss the way in which they work as fiction, and he contends, in a close reading of these texts, that they criticize the I-novel form and its centrality in the conception of the modern Japanese self (Scott, 56–57).

Most subsequent Zainichi Korean writers are presumed to have written *shishōsetsu* because their characters and the society they live in so closely resemble what the readers see as the “real world,” including what they know of the writers through the authors’ own nonfiction accounts of their lives. This is not to suggest that readers do not understand that there are fictional elements in the work, but rather that they accept the unwritten understanding of the mainstream of modern Japanese fiction, that such fiction is best when it does mirror actual or true experiences, whatever those might be. I agree with Scott that such thinking
overlooks important fictional elements of a text. At the same time, it gives the texts power in the real world, a power to participate in shaping what people think of history or how they act politically (Wender, 2005).

Another prominent fiction writer who emerged in the 1950s is Kim Sŏk-pŏm, whom I have sadly not been able to include in this volume. Kim was born in 1925 in Osaka, but he spent a good deal of his youth in his parents’ native Chejudo, and for these reasons Kawamura says he does not quite fit into either the first generation of Zainichi Korean writers, like Kim Tal-su, or the second. Kim published one of his most famous works, Karasu no shi (Death of a Crow), in 1957, was silent for much of the sixties, and then reemerged in the 1970s, both as a critic and a fiction writer (Scott; Kawamura).

Kim Sŏk-pŏm’s subject matter and approach differ markedly from most of the authors included in this volume, but his work should be considered when examining the writing of Resident Koreans in postwar Japan.

In fact, Kim’s presence is large, not only because of his fiction, but because of his critical writing. In the early 1970s, for example, he published a number
of essays, later compiled into the volume *Kotoba no jubaku* (The Curse/Spell of Words), that surely helped establish Resident Korean literature as a genre and a genre in which a certain resistance to the Japanese language was of the essence.

He did this work in the context of a profound shift among Koreans in Japan, a change that occurred amidst political upheaval the world over. The legal status of Koreans in Japan following the end of the war and the liberation of Koreans from colonial rule is quite complicated, but officially they were stateless until 1965. Up to this time their alien registration cards identified them as having come from the region of “Chōsen” (Korea). In 1965 Japan and South Korea normalized relations, and favorable legal status was given to Resident Koreans who chose to acquire ROK citizenship rather than retaining the noncitizen status of Chōsen. It thus became possible for them to apply for a new status as permanent residents of Japan. By this time the number of Resident Koreans who had been born in Japan, and were mostly acculturated to it, surpassed the number of their parents’ generation, and more and more were marrying Japanese.

Scandals also rocked the community. First, in the Komatsugawa Incident of 1958 a young Korean man confessed to murdering two Japanese women but denied that he had also raped them. This story not only attracted major press coverage, but served as the basis for Oshima Nagisa’s film *Kōshikei* (Death by Hanging, 1968). Then in 1969 came the spectacularized crime of Kim Hŭi-ro, who shot several *yakuza* members and planned to turn himself in, but in the process took a whole inn hostage, then went on television, armed with a rifle, and complained of the discrimination he had faced his entire life.

Finally, there was a shift in political consciousness. The groundbreaking case of *Pak v. Hitachi* (1970–1974) involved a young man, Pak Chŏng-sŏk, who had been hired by Hitachi Software only to be “unhired” when he revealed that he was Korean. In a significant legal outcome, the court recognized that discrimination was the reason for his dismissal. At the same time, the case gave birth to a new kind of social movement. It was one detached from the Korean organizations Sōren and Mindan, focused on single-issue activism, and included not only Koreans but also a great number of Japanese.

These events, though seemingly negative, forced the public to see that Koreans existed in Japan and that they had been, and were continuing to be, unfairly treated, both legally and socially. It also forced many ordinary Japanese to acknowledge that these Koreans, who had been born in Japan and were for the most part fully acculturated to Japan, were in the country to stay. While the recognition provoked anxiety or fear in certain segments of the Japanese population, there were many Japanese who were sympathetic to the Koreans’ cause.
We should recall that this was how the civil rights movement proceeded in the United States and the decolonization struggles around the world. Indeed, there was even direct contact between activists for Korean rights in Japan and those working for minority rights in the United States.

It is not surprising, then, that in 1972 Ri Kaisei became the first Resident Korean writer to capture the Akutagawa Prize or that Kin Kakuei has received a number of prominent literary awards. Both of these writers began by penning semiautobiographical fiction, though each deviated from the start in various ways (through form or character or language). Nonetheless, much of the interest they attract arises out of the sense, as it did with Kim Tal-su, that what they write is based on actual experience and reflects the authors’ emotions and ideas. Of greatest concern to critics in the early days was politics, and because Kin’s writing focuses more on the internal turmoil of his characters, they almost always found his work to be overly Japanized culturally and not critical enough of the Japanese state (Wender, 55). By the 1980s, however, attitudes had flip-flopped. Kin was now seen as having been the one to suggest that Koreans in Japan had a right to think about things other than politics.

The 1980s was also an era of marked political change. Best known of all Resident Korean political struggles was that against the requirement that aliens—even permanent residents like Koreans—be fingerprinted and carry at all times a passbook bearing their fingerprints. This struggle ultimately resulted in 1993 in the revocation of the fingerprinting requirement for permanent residents such as Koreans. The movement was the culmination of organizing efforts that involved not only Koreans, but also Japanese who were engaged in a new, community-focused activism. At the same time, as the economic level of Resident Koreans rose, and South Korea achieved “little tiger” economic status and began, albeit slowly, to democratize, an increasing number of Resident Koreans began to travel to Korea and study there.

I have discussed in Lamentation as History the fact that I see the Osaka-centered works of Chong Ch’u-wŏl and Kim Ch’ang-saeng as being intertwined with the antifingerprinting movement and the larger community-based movement of which it was a part. In particular, I contend that this fiction enables us to see the way that gender could affect the choice to identify locally rather than nationally (Wender, 2005). As for travel to Korea, the work of Yi Yang-ji more than that of any other author suggests the manner in which this new trend affected young Zainichi Koreans’ sense of self. Both her Akutagawa Prize-winning novella Yuhi

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5 In 1967, Ōshiro Tasuhiro became the first Okinawan writer to win the Akutagawa Prize.
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(Yuhi, 1989) and “Koku,” the work excerpted in this volume, consider the fate of women who study in Seoul and are tormented by the complex relationship between blood, language, culture, environment, gender, and ethnicity.

With the 1990s we approach what in Japan has come to be known as the rise of the “New Zainichi.” There are, of course, multiple causes for this new interest in a hybrid Korean-Japanese identity, among them a Japanese desire to be or present Japan as multicultural, the burgeoning South Korean popular culture that has emerged with increasing democratization and sustained economic prosperity, the decline of North Korea and its influence on Koreans in Japan, and the emergence of a new kind of cultural production by the generation now coming of age.

I say “cultural production” because film has become at least as important as fiction in bringing the New Zainichi Koreans into public view. A couple of these films are actually directed by a second-generation director, named Sai Yôichi, and are based on the work of the solidly second-generation Yang Sôk-il. However, these older men may be categorized among the “new” because of the genres in which they work—Sai in film, and Yang in the popular fiction sometimes referred to as “hard-boiled.” This new work has reached much broader audiences than was the case for the work of the Resident Korean writers who preceded them.

Representative of the truly younger set are Yû Miri and Kaneshiro Kazuki, both born in 1968. While both have won literary awards—Yû received the prestigious Kishida Prize for drama and both authors, the Akutagawa—each has become a public figure to a degree inconceivable even a decade earlier. Kaneshiro’s first book, GO!, with its colloquial language, fast pace, and decided cynicism about political matters, was very successful as a novel, but his real rise came when the book was made into a film with lots of humor, flashy editing, appealingly choreographed violence, and heartthrob Japanese actors playing the leading roles. Yû Miri began to gain name and face recognition (The New York Times described her good looks by calling her an Asian Meryl Streep) through her fiction alone. Yet it was her outspoken response to the brutal murder in 1995 in Kobe of one child by another and her memoir about bearing a son out of wedlock that catapulted her into the realm of the (in)famous.

Kaneshiro calls himself “Korean Japanese,” and Yû, while she never denies her Korean heritage, has often shunned reference to her writing as part of the Zainichi Korean tradition. These forms of identification are no doubt genuine, but it would be imprudent to read Kaneshiro or Yû without considering how they are being packaged and are packaging themselves in the very carefully produced world of contemporary Japanese culture. It is easy to criticize them for embracing commercialism, but we should also remember that it is precisely commercialism
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that allows them to speak to a much broader audience than their predecessors. Indeed, the film version of GO! has made its way onto the international film circuit and is available on DVD with English subtitles, and Yū’s Gold Rush, a novel inspired by the Kobe murders, came out in English translation in 2002. No other full-length work of fiction by a Resident Korean author has appeared in English.

The Zainichi Korean culture of the present, one example of which closes this book, exists in a different universe from the fiction that initiated the genre and begins this anthology. By providing works that span this time, I hope readers will gain a sense of the various ways that members of the Resident Korean community have used literature to enrich their lives. Nonetheless, this volume does not pretend to cover the diversity of Zainichi Korean literature, nor indeed is such a thing possible or desirable. In addition, I do not wish readers to approach Zainichi Korean literature as a subset of Japanese literature or of world minority literatures. Instead, I hope that these works will, in their great variety, encourage contemplation of why it is that certain texts move us and what it is we want to do with those texts.

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