

Chongryon's Enduring Legacy: Uncertain Future of Resident North Koreans in Japan

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Abstract of Thesis

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“This Master’s thesis seeks to understand the future of the organization of Chongryon, the North Korean homeland oriented organization in Japan, and their influence in the Zainichi community of Japan. Chongryon dominated as the main civil society group of the Korean community in Japan during the mid-twentieth century. However, in the twenty-first century their membership is declining and they have faced many conflicts with the law in Japan, leading to speculation that the group might cease to exist in the future. Through an examination of Chongryon’s own website as a primary source to assess the group’s public image and stated core values, as well as a thorough examination of the history of the organization through various challenges in the mid to late twentieth century, this paper argues that the staying power of Chongryon will outlast the current issues, even if it has reduced influence in the Korean community. The group has endured despite crackdowns on their illegal activities and seizure of assets by the government, and the threat of their continued ability to funnel money to the North Korean government despite reduced relevance to the Zainichi community means that the Japanese government should not underestimate Chongryon going forward.”

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In late 2014 and early 2015, the Japanese authorities raided several homes and offices of top members of the organization known as Chongryon, due to suspicions of illegal activities linked with North Korea. Chongryon is one of two residence organizations of Koreans in Japan, called Zainichi, which is linked to North Korea and functions as its *de facto* embassy in Japan in the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Since its foundation in 1955, Chongryon has officially declared that it would have no direct interference in Japanese internal affairs, but through the decades scandals have linked Chongryon to misdeeds linked to the North Korean government, from the abduction of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s to smuggling between the countries and funneling money to P'yŏngyang.

In Japan today, echoes of Cold War conflict remain among the small community of the Korean minority. After more than six decades since the end of the Korean War, there remains split between loyalty to North Korea and South Korea. Those Koreans who allied with North Korea founded the organization called The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, or Zai-Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai in Japanese, usually abbreviated to Chōsen Sōren, and or in Korean Chae Ilbon Chosŏnin Ch'ongryŏnhaphoe, abbreviated as Chongryon. Hereafter, this paper will refer to the organization as Chongryon, in keeping with the usual convention when writing about this subject in English. Chongryon has endured through four generations of Zainichi, in part due to their Korean ethnic schools perpetuating the ideology of political association with North Korea among the Zainichi, as well as teaching Juche philosophy, as well as the ethnic unity of Koreans who must maintain their own, separate community from regular Japanese society. They are the

homeland-oriented Korean organization in Japan, and their approach is to focus ethnic education on learning about the homeland and revitalize ethnic culture.¹ Both traditional Korean culture like dances and clothing are taught in schools, but for Chongryon, there is also an emphasis on Kim Il Sung's philosophical teachings and the need for Koreans who live in Japan to support the "Motherland," North Korea, financially and patriotically. Despite its staying power, as time has passed, the loyalty to the organization and to North Korea has decreased. The organization for South Korea is called The Korean Residents Union in Japan or Zai-Nihon Daikanminkoku Kyoryū Mindan (在日本大韓民国居留民団) in Japanese, abbreviated to Mindan. At the time of this writing, estimates show that of the more than 600,000 Korean residents in Japan, about 65% are members of Mindan, and about 25% are members of Chongryon.²

Although they are few in number comparatively, the fact that anyone who lives in a developed, industrialized, democratic country like Japan could feel allegiance to North Korea in the present day when information is readily available about the abuses of the regime may come as a surprise to many in the West. This paper seeks to outline why loyalty to North Korea still motivates members of Chongryon to engage in activities which defy their own pledge to non-interference, and to what extent the organization's ideology continues to disseminate to its students. Building on scholarship on the Zainichi community and particular Chongryon, this paper draws upon newspaper articles to examine the actions of Chongryon and their conflict with the Japanese state. In addition,

¹ Eika Tai, "Korean Ethnic Education in Japanese Public Schools," *Asian Ethnicity* 8, no. 1 (February, 2007), 7.

² Blair McBride, "Young 'Zainichi' Koreans Look beyond Chongryon Ideology," *The Japan Times*, December 16, 2008, accessed April 7th, 2015. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2008/12/16/issues/young-zainichi-koreans-look-beyond-chongryon-ideology/#.VSIAWPnF_gc.

the Japanese language edition of Chongryon's official website will be used as a primary source to examine Chongryon's ideology and outlook of their position in the Zainichi community.³

I argue that although Chongryon's ideology of pro-North Korean nationalism is perpetuated by their education system, they are not able to meet the needs of the younger generation of Zainichi, which is why their numbers are decreasing. In addition, though Chongryon claims that they will not interfere with Japanese internal affairs, they are engaged in the illegal activities for the North Korean state, making much of their official policy suspect. The recent raids and the bankruptcy of the organization in recent years has led to the potential end of Chongryon's ability to influence the Zainichi community or its ability to send money back to the North Korean regime. However, in the face of these setbacks, Chongryon has continued to endure and operate and maintain control of their headquarters, and so it is unlikely that the organization will cease to exist or to be a key player in North Korean-Japanese relations. Taking the continued existence of Chongryon into account, the Japanese authorities will have to find a way to work with the organization in order to avoid giving the North Korean government an excuse to back out of talks with Japan, while also preventing them from continuing illegal activities.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first outlines a brief history on Chongryon and its history. The second section covers Chongryon's education system, how their schools train students to become part of the greater Chongryon apparatus as adults, and explores the reasons why parents would or would not want to send their children to a Chongryon school instead of a normal Japanese school. The third section will address how

³ In this paper, I rely on the Japanese language version because I cannot read Korean.

nationalism shapes the organization's practices. The fourth section examines the specific issue of repatriation to North Korea from the 1950s-1980s, Chongryon's role in convincing people to "return" to North Korea, particularly their role in sending Japanese wives of Zainichi husbands to North Korea, and what responsibility Chongryon has in the suffering these people endured once they arrived. The final section will address the current struggles which Chongryon is having, including close observation and crackdowns by the Japanese authorities, bankruptcy and the sale of Chongryon's headquarters in Tokyo, and assess the state of Chongryon's future problems.

Chapter 2: History of Resident Koreans and Chongryon

The history of Korean residents in Japan will be given in brief in the following paragraphs. The first generation of Koreans residing in Japan was brought during the colonial era for cheap labor.⁴ They were brought by the colonial government, many against their will. By the end of World War II, the number of Koreans in Japan was approximately 2.3 million.⁵ This was a large population whose future had to be determined. When Japan regained sovereignty in 1952 with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, they were forced to relinquish all claims to Korea and Taiwan, but the Treaty itself was not explicit about the fate of those Koreans who still remained in Japan.⁶ Thus, the decision fell to the Japanese Government. Koreans were told nine days prior to when the treaty went into effect that they would lose their Japanese nationality.⁷ Though about three-fourths of the Koreans in Japan would eventually return to the Korean peninsula, many remained in Japan due to the devastation that the Korean War had caused, or because they had no family back in Korea to receive them.⁸ As such, a large number of Koreans remain to this day in Japan, many second, third or even fourth generation residents of Japan.

Not having the rights of nationals led to a great degree of unfairness in the treatment of Koreans in Japan. Social benefits, job opportunities in civil service and other rights were denied to them since they no longer carried Japanese nationality.⁹ Though the Japanese government interpreted the San Francisco Peace Treaty to mean that Koreans

⁴ Teruki Tsunemoto, "Rights and Identities of Ethnic Minorities in Japan: Indigenous Ainu and Resident Koreans," *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law* 2, no. 1 (2001): 131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology and Identity*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, 121.

could not carry Japanese nationality so that Japan would no longer be interfering in Korean affairs,¹⁰ this was not the clean break it appeared on paper. During the colonial era, many Koreans worked as part of the mechanism of Japanese expansionism. Koreans, and other colonials like Taiwanese, were also convicted as Japanese war criminals, and 23 Koreans were executed as war criminals.¹¹ None of the Koreans' families were ever given survivors' compensation by the Japanese government.¹² Even though colonials were part of the war apparatus and the building of the empire, Koreans' loss of national status meant a loss of the social contract with the government which had employed them or otherwise used them. The challenges of resolving the issues of WWII were difficult, but many of the colonial subjects who were ostensibly helped by the post-war peace treaty fell through the cracks in a system meant to care for society afterward.

It should not be assumed that all the Koreans were upset at the time to lose their imperial subject status, despite the loss of privileges and rights which accompanied this change. Sonia Ryang argues that nationality was seen by both the Korean residents and the Japanese government "as more than merely a functional institution."¹³ The benefits of becoming Japanese nationals could not be considered necessary if it meant the loss of one's essential Koreanness. Both Koreans and Japanese can claim relatively high homogeneity within their populations,¹⁴ though the degree of homogeneity is often in contradiction with the actual diversity present within the countries, but the concept of homogeneity allows the

¹⁰ Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 120.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

concept of a nationality which comprises one's "essence." As such, national identity is more than where one resides, and nationality may be held more precious than "rights."

In the aftermath of the Treaty, Koreans in Japan faced three choices: become citizens of one of the Koreas, become naturalized Japanese citizens, or remain Korean residents of Japan, and retain their statelessness.¹⁵ None of these actions were without political consequence, nor were they designed by the Korean people in question. Jinseok Choi argues that those who chose to remain Korean residents and call themselves *Chosenseki*, using the terminology "Chosen," the name of Korea dating to before Japanese colonization or the division of the Korean peninsula to describe nationality, a term which is still widely used in North Korea and among North Koreans in Japan, did not always do so out of loyalty to North Korea, but from the political atmosphere after the war.¹⁶ Taking South Korean citizenship would have erased the historical context for their presence in Japan at all, and also have been a demonstration of legitimizing the existence of the Republic of Korea, and the division of the peninsula.¹⁷ In the wake of the end of the colonial era, those Koreans left behind in Japan were the unfortunate victims of the colonial spread of Japan, and it was the view of many that Japan was not made to account for the wrongs it had committed against Korea and the Korean people. Furthermore, both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were new states, which might not have inherent legitimacy in the eyes of the *Zainichi*, who had already experienced their country colonized by a foreign power for more than thirty years, and now saw it being divided along an arbitrary border by foreign powers. The Korean people in the Peninsula

¹⁵ Jinseok Choi, "Zainichi Chōsenjin and the Independence Movement in Everyday Life," *International Journal Of Korean History* 17, no. 2 (August 2012): 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

had little agency in shaping their new fate, and the Koreans in Japan were also presented with a choice not of their own design.

The Korean community in Japan was awash in both a nationalist and internationalist ideology, both of which drew focus away from Japan and back toward Korea, in keeping with the idea that the Koreans would not remain there. Politically, many of the Koreans in Japan aligned with the Left after the end of World War II.¹⁸ They had suffered under the Japanese imperial rule and were hoping for a change to the political systems of all of East Asia, and particularly in Korea. As such, when the dust settled after the Korean War, most Koreans in Japan chose to align with North Korea and Kim Il Sung, although according to Sonia Ryang, about 98% of them had originally come from the South.¹⁹ This shift in geographical alignment is not wholly unexpected given political leaning of the majority, though it is often remarked upon by scholars on the Zainichi community. Many of the Koreans in Japan saw Kim Il Sung as a more legitimate leader than Syngman Rhee, who would become South Korea's first president, for the reason that Kim Il Sung had actually fought the Japanese.²⁰ His revolutionary credentials made him more appealing to the Leftists than the leadership in South Korea, many of whom were either people who had collaborated with the Japanese colonial government, or had not even lived in Asia for decades, as was the case for Syngman Rhee.

In the early days after the war, Korean Leftists in Japan allied with the Japanese Communist Party, because they subscribed to the "domino theory" that all of East Asia

¹⁸ Sonia Ryang, "Poverty of language and the reproduction of ideology: Korean language for Chongryun," *Journal Of Asian And African Studies* 28, no. 3-4 (1993), 230.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

would erupt into simultaneous revolutions headed by China.²¹ In the early days Korean nationalism was seen by Leftists as a secondary concern to the spread of communism across Asia. Their physical location was a determinant of which revolution they would fight for, such that the global communist struggle superseded national and ethnic ties, unifying all communist fighters in the struggle. Staying in Japan and fighting to bring communism to Japan would not mean integrating into Japanese society, but in transforming Japanese society, so even though they remained, the Koreans were not committing themselves to Japan as it existed, but in how it could become in line with an East-Asia wide communist revolution.

Several events changed the position of Koreans in Japan. The first significant step was the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Since the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which stripped Koreans in Japan of their Japanese national status, several changes have been made to the residency status of Koreans. There have been opportunities for Koreans in Japan to apply for permanent residence status, in 1952, 1965 and 1981.²² Permanent residence is not equivalent to carrying Japanese nationality, but it does allow certain rights and privileges. Also, in 1991 there was a special measure enacted as a result of an agreement with the Republic of Korea which allowed eligible Koreans to apply for permanent residence status, a measure which made the deportation of Zainichi Koreans almost impossible.²³ These show that there has been some provision by the Japanese government to accommodate the Zainichi community and accept that for many, “returning” to Korea is simply not an option, because as second or third generation Zainichi, many of

²¹ Ibid.

²² Tsunemoto, 132.

²³ Ibid.

them are monolingual in Japanese,²⁴ and would therefore find difficulty in trying to assimilate to Korean society if they were to move to Korea. However, since Korean residents of Japan do not have Japanese nationality, they lack many rights, including political representation.²⁵ This reality has caused trouble for many Koreans, as they also face discrimination in society, being barred from certain educational opportunities, employment or even marriage prospects.

One option for circumventing the limited rights and discrimination is to become a naturalized Japanese national. Despite the previously mentioned cultural opposition by many Koreans to becoming naturalized Japanese citizens, by 1995 as many as 194,724 Koreans had become naturalized Japanese citizens.²⁶ Although naturalization has the means to ensure less discrimination for an individual if their Korean heritage remains unknown, the choice is not without consequences. Though those who chose to become naturalized citizens state that they do so for various reasons, like education and employment, the risk they take is to be rejected by the Korean community.²⁷ Losing the community into which one was born can be traumatic, even for the benefit of finding work or being able to attend university. Another concern is the loss of Korean identity. Naturalization is seen by some Korean residents as a means of forced assimilation.²⁸ The view is that one cannot become Japanese without losing their Korean culture in the process. Some policies have helped lead to this conclusion. Many assert that the Japanese government insists on naturalized citizens taking Japanese names,²⁹ in effect erasing their

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 132n16.

²⁸ Ibid., 132.

²⁹ Ibid., 132-133.

Korean identity. The government denies that this is still a policy, particularly after the 1984 amendment to the Family Registry (*Koseki*) Law, which ensures that there is now no legal definition of a “Japanese name.”³⁰ Even so, the tension surrounding Japanese naturalized citizenship remains in the Korean community in Japan.

In the aftermath of the Korean War, the Zainichi community became divided between those who supported the Republic of Korea (ROK) and those who supported the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The Leftists had to resign themselves to the fact that the “domino theory” of the spread of communist revolutions across Asia would not pan out, and they subsequently decided that instead of working for the revolution in Japan, they would struggle only for the fatherland, North Korea.³¹ In 1955, the leftists founded Chongryon.³² At the time of the founding of Chongryon, the leftists severed their connection to the Japanese Communist Party, as they had declared that they would not interfere with Japanese domestic affairs.³³ From this point onward, Chongryon and its membership would concern themselves primarily with North Korean development.

Chongryon is a large umbrella organization with several sub-organizations comprising the whole, which has been highly influential in the life of the Korean community in Japan. The functioning of Chongryon is that of a political organization built upon a base of popular support.³⁴ It survives and supports itself financially mainly due to “donations, membership fees, and the shares held in several affiliated commercial enterprises.”³⁵ The tremendous wealth of Chongryon has long been suspected to have been

³⁰ Ibid., 133n17.

³¹ Ryang, “Poverty of Language,” 230.

³² Ibid., 230-231.

³³ Ibid., 231.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

shared with P'yŏngyang, or even cultivated for the express purpose of supporting the DPRK regime, but Chongryon oversees many enterprises within Japan and for the sake of its membership. Under its umbrella are several different organizations: “Youth League, the Women’s Union, the Young Pioneer, the Industrialists’ Association, the Teachers’ Union, the Scientists’ Association, the Artists’ Union, and so forth,” as well as running many Korean ethnic schools.³⁶ With so many organizations under it, Chongryon has the capacity to become embedded in every aspect of its members’ lives. Its influence has waned since the 1950s and 1960s, but Ryang estimated in 1993 that the organization was still influential among about one third of the population of Zainichi.³⁷ This is still a substantial portion of that population, and its influence has been a key element in the shaping of the Korean residents’ community.

Education is one of the key elements for Chongryon’s perpetuation of its message throughout the community.³⁸ They have programs from preschool through university, and they can staff the schools with people who went through the Chongryon curriculum as well.³⁹ Furthermore, when students graduate, they can come to work for Chongryon, fully immersed in the organization’s “ethos.”⁴⁰ Thus Chongryon’s system attempts to cultivate its members through childhood and into adulthood.

One important question in regard to Japanese government-Chongryon relations is why Chongryon, a North-Korean affiliated organization, was allowed to function for so

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

long without much scrutiny.⁴¹ One of the reasons is that the Japanese government, like many Zainichi Koreans themselves, believed that all of the Korean residents would eventually return to the Korean peninsula.⁴² In the scheme of post-war Japanese politics, the small community of Koreans who remained was not a major factor for those in power. The ethnic organizations which formed after the Korean War were of little concern to the Japanese authorities.

In fact, Chongryon did have a friendly relationship with the Japanese authorities for most of its existence. For much of the period of the 1955 system of political dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Chongryon enjoyed friendly relations with the leadership of the LDP.⁴³ The organization was exempt from local taxes, and it is even suspected that Chongryon played the role of middleman between certain LDP leaders and *yakuza* criminal syndicates.⁴⁴ If this is true, then the Japanese authorities had a stake in looking the other way regarding the less savory aspects of Chongryon's functioning, and it is not surprising that they remained free to act without government interference for so long. The easy relationship started to crumble in the 1990s, not only when the LDP briefly lost control of the Diet and electoral reforms ended the 1955 system, but as famine ravaged North Korea. It has long been suspected that Chongryon-owned credit unions were laundering money to support the regime in North Korea, and when the famines struck, Chongryon struggled to raise the requisite capital necessary to help, which led to bankruptcy of many of these credit unions, and their seizure by the Japanese government.

⁴¹ Apichai W. Shipper, "Nationalisms of and Against Zainichi Koreans in Japan," *Asian Politics & Policy* 2, no. 1 (January, 2010): 64.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mark E. Manyin, *Japan-North Korea Relations: Selected Issues* (CRS Report No. RL32161) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003), 14, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/27531.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ This was the beginning of Japanese governmental scrutiny of Chongryon and its various enterprises, which will be discussed in greater detail in the final section of this paper.

Chongryon has also been the self-appointed representative of the North Korean state in Japan for decades, functioning as the de facto embassy of North Korea, since the two countries do not have diplomatic relations. This role has long been accepted by the Japanese government, as well as Chongryon's official policy, making it a political organization as well as an ethnic organization. In addition to its pseudo-diplomatic role, Chongryon has functioned as a community for the Zainichi as well. The following paragraphs will examine Chongryon's self-stated purpose and activities for the benefit of Korean residents. The Japanese language version of the Chongryon website will be used to assess the public face of the organization.

There are some considerations to be taken into account when using Chongryon's website to examine their operations. Certainly it cannot be disputed that for much of the mid to late twentieth century, Chongryon was a major factor in the lives of most Zainichi Koreans, but Chongryon has a bias in its presentation which should not be overlooked. As an organization with such close ties to the DPRK, a pro-North Korea slant is present throughout the website. Another factor is that using the website published by the organization itself, there will naturally be a bias in favor of Chongryon. When reading the Chongryon website, it is important to remember that while the information is useful to understand how the organization regards itself, what is not mentioned or alluded to is just as important as what is said directly. An organization like Chongryon, which is associated with North Korea, a country whose ruling regime is known for its carefully constructed

⁴⁵ Ibid.

presentation both to its own people and to the outside world, must be examined for similar subterfuge.

Another consideration is the use of language. Chongryon's ideological teaching uses words which are ideologically loaded.⁴⁶ To a lesser extent this can be seen in the language employed on the Japanese language page of Chongryon's website. Certain words are used repetitively, including the word "*dōhō*," in Japanese and "*tongp'o*" in Korean (同胞) which can mean "fellow countrymen" but also "compatriot," "brethren," or even "brothers." The word is often paired with either "Zainichi" or "Chosen Soren," (the Japanese abbreviation for Chongryon) speaking to the brotherhood of the Korean residents united through Chongryon. Another commonly used word is "Kofuku" in Japanese and "kwangbok" in Korean (光復) meaning "liberation," or "restoration." The term comes from Korean, and is not a commonly used Japanese word. Because the word is rarely used in Japanese, using it sets apart Chongryon's rhetoric from everyday Japanese speech and thereby maintains their distance from regular Japanese society by incorporating words of Korean origin into their ideological speech even in Japanese. Their use of Korean is similar, according to Ryang.⁴⁷

One of the main sections of the website is a description of the history of the Korean community in Japan, "Introduction to Soren," (総聯紹介) using the Japanese name of the organization. This section primarily deals with the colonial rule of Japan over Korea and the ways that this came to shape the current state of the Korean community in Japan. Though Chongryon does not keep a record of its membership, its website does state under

⁴⁶ Ryang, "Poverty of Language," 234.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 233-234.

the “Introduction to Soren” section, that about 600,000 Korean compatriots live in Japan today.⁴⁸ This number is corroborated by other sources, but what Chongryon fails to mention is that not all of those people associate themselves with the organization. The page then goes on to describe the ways in which the Korean people came to Japan. In Chongryon’s rhetoric, the cause of Korean people living in Japan is Japanese imperialism, that is, that Koreans came to Japan in great number while Korea was still a colony of Japan.⁴⁹ This is largely supported by historians, as many of the first generation Zainichi were in fact brought to work in Japan during the colonial era, seeking better job opportunities or to fill labor shortages in Japan proper. The section introduces history of the colonial era, and mentions the 1919 March 1st Movement, which was brutally suppressed by the Japanese regime.⁵⁰ This section is written in a rather inflammatory manner, casting the Japanese as brutal villains who massacred the helpless people who had committed no crimes, describing grisly details like bayoneting people or strangling them with ropes.⁵¹ The brutal suppression of Korean independence movements is well documented, and a Korean organization expressing anger at this incident as well as others is not unexpected, since both Korean governments also remember the atrocities committed by the Japanese. Ideologically, the oppression seems never to have ended, as Chongryon continues this trend into their writing about the present as well. In the section called “Trampled Rights” (踏みにじられた権利) it is stated that of all the countries in the world where Koreans reside, Japan is the worst country for suppressing the ethnic rights and

⁴⁸ Chongryon. “Colonial Rule of Japanese Imperialism,” (日本帝国主義の植民地支配).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

acting with discrimination toward the Korean community.⁵² A characterization of good and evil permeates the writing on Chongryon's website when discussing relations between the Korean community and the Japanese authorities, drawing on history to make their case. A stark divide exists between the Zainichi and Japanese society in this worldview.

In the rhetoric presented on the website, Chongryon depict themselves not only as the best element of the Zainichi community, but often write as though there is no Korean community outside of the organization. They state that the DPRK declared in their Nationality law, which was modified and supplemented on March 23, 1995, that Zainichi residents of Japan are overseas citizens of North Korea.⁵³ However North Korea may view the residents of Japan who have Korean heritage, not all people in the community are necessarily Chongryon followers, especially in the present day. According to *The Japan Times*, in 2008 Chongryon had lost significant percentage of the Zainichi community, with Chongryon members comprising only twenty-five percent of the Koreans in Japan, whereas Mindan comprises a full sixty-five percent.⁵⁴ These numbers represent a huge favor of Mindan and South Korea among the Zainichi in the twenty-first century, but Chongryon's writing remains trapped in time.

Chongryon also denies the validity of the "Permanent residency agreement" signed by the Japanese and South Korean governments in 1965, which declared all resident Koreans in Japan to be South Korean nationality (韓国国籍).⁵⁵ Not to include the community in question in the agreement decision-making body was certainly not the

⁵² Chongryon, "Trampled Rights." (踏みにじられた権利). Last modified 2015. <http://www.chongryon.com/j/cr/index9.html>

⁵³ Chongryon, "To Protect the civil rights," (公民権を守り). Last modified 2015. Accessed April 18, 2015. <http://www.chongryon.com/j/cr/index9.html>.

⁵⁴ McBride, "Young 'Zainichi' Koreans Look beyond Chongryon Ideology."

⁵⁵ Chongryon, "To Protect the civil rights," (公民権を守り).

utmost in democratic policy on the part of Japan and South Korea, but this continued official resistance to South Korean citizenship on the part of Chongryon and its members is notable. Most of the Koreans in Japan today are descended from people who came from regions which now belong to South Korea, making the connection to North Korea more about ideology than history or birthright. In continuing to do so, they continue the temporally fixed mindset which stagnates the Korean community in Japan in a twentieth-century Cold War mindset which regards communist or *Juche* ideology to be supremely important, and does not take into account more contemporary issues of globalization or the political situation of Northeast Asia, particularly the growing concerns of possible nuclear or cyber-attack from North Korea against South Korea or Japan. Chongryon remains static in its interpretation of political entities like the governments of Japan and South Korea, not even acknowledging the fact that in 1965 South Korea was an authoritarian country, but now it is democratic. Perhaps for Chongryon this designation does not matter, since North Korea is certainly not democratic. Even so, the writing style of the website strikes a reader who is not part of the organization as quaintly outdated at best, and pathetically propagandistic at worst.

When it comes to their purpose for existence, Chongryon claims to have the well-being of Korean residents of Japan as their primary goal. Chongryon asserts that their main objective is to protect the livelihood and ethnic rights of the Zainichi community.⁵⁶ The website details the history of Chongryon-led initiatives to expand the rights of Korean people in Japan starting from the end of World War II. They assert that all the rights enjoyed by the Zainichi community today came as a result of the struggle of the mass

⁵⁶ Chongryon, “Ethnic Dignity and Life Rights,” (民族的尊厳と生活権).

mobilization waged by the organization.⁵⁷ In their rhetoric, they have been the voice of the oppressed Koreans, and the main actor in the struggle to achieve more rights in Japan. Mass mobilization is the only way that the Zainichi community can ensure the protection of their rights, when they come together and work united (implied to be united with Chongryon specifically) as evidenced by the struggle for ethnic education, the website claims.⁵⁸ By establishing themselves as the gatekeepers of the movement for expansion of rights and better treatment in Japan, Chongryon argues that Zainichi who choose not to be part of the organization are not going to see their lives improve, and that they will not have a hope of a better life. They seek to be the sole representative of the Korean community in Japan, and they have been successful in this attempt to some degree, for certain periods of modern history and through the spread of their institutions. They have many more schools than their rival Mindan, and can therefore spread their indoctrination to the next generation more widely, while also forming communities where Korean people can celebrate their heritage. This is not insignificant for a minority in a country like Japan where homogeneity is so heavily the perception and philosophy of the dominant society, and providing Korean cultural heritage education is not inherently a bad thing. Furthermore, connection to one's own cultural heritage is all the more important when, as Chongryon regards its members to be, one is an "overseas citizen." There is no need for Chongryon students to learn how to integrate with Japanese society, since "their" country is actually North Korea.

The services which Chongryon provides to the community are detailed on Chongryon's site under the section "Compatriot Daily Life Guide" (同胞生活ガイド). One of the main ways that Chongryon provides support for their community is through

⁵⁷ Chongryon, "Unity is Surely the road to Victory" (団結こそが勝利への道).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

“Comprehensive Compatriot Daily Life Consultation Centers” (同胞生活相談綜合センター), called Comprehensive Centers for short.⁵⁹ Being able to use these centers enables Chongryon to form a place which will be the center of the community. These centers are places in which people can come for consultations regarding a wide variety of issues, from legal troubles to welfare issues to taxation consultation and even including rituals like weddings.⁶⁰ As such, the consultation centers present themselves as both useful resources for Zainichi who find themselves in trouble or in distress, but it can also function as a community center where people can connect to their roots and where happy occasions occur. Providing services to the community is a laudable goal, and when Chongryon is able to help their members with problems and help them to navigate complicated legal matters, this is a good use of their resources and money. The question remains, however, whether the main objective of the organization is helping their community to thrive, or illicit activities which support the North Korean regime.

The most controversial aspect of the website is that what Chongryon promotes is the homeland trips to North Korea, and there is a page dedicated to such trips with information about how to schedule a trip and what documents one needs and other information. These trips could provide the source of much of the controversy surrounding the organization. As with other occasions, any problems involved or possible concerns about traveling to such an isolated and authoritarian country are not addressed. This is a particularly interesting section to examine for omissions. The growing international

⁵⁹ Chongryon, “Soren’s Compatriots Daily Life Support,” (総聯の同胞生活サポート). Last modified 2015. <http://www.chongryon.com/j/life/index.html>.

⁶⁰ Chongryon, “Consultation Content in Compatriots Living Consultation Center,” (同胞生活相談センターでの相談内容). Last modified 2015. <http://www.chongryon.com/j/life/index3.html>.

scrutiny of North Korea by the international community with things like the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights⁶¹ in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or Japan's own troubled attempts to discuss the kidnapping victims, might make traveling to North Korea both difficult and politically disastrous move. Since Chongryon has recently gotten into trouble over concerns about their smuggling to and from North Korea, visitations to the country could put an ordinary person under watch by Japanese authorities, but no allusion is made to any of these possible issues.

In addition to international scrutiny, Chongryon requires that anyone who travels to North Korea through the organization must have a North Korean passport, which can be obtained through Chongryon.⁶² This could prove to be a problem for the many Chongryon members who now carry South Korean passports, even those who are sympathetic to the ideology of the organization. Yet again, the organization displays a rigid adherence to old divisions and does not account for the ways in which society and their community has changed with the passage of time.

The history of Chongryon has not been without controversy, and the website does not ignore some historical issues in this regard. In regard to the conflict which the organization has had with the Japanese government, it states that the Japanese government considers Chongryon a subject of security concerns, "a suspect organization to which the Anti-Subversive Activities Act applies," (破防法適用容疑団体) and states that some of

⁶¹ For more information see the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/CommissionInquiryonHRinDPRK.aspx>

⁶² Chongryon, "Homeland Visit and Overseas Travel," (祖国訪問・海外渡航). Last modified 2015.

<http://www.chongryon.com/j/life/travel.html>

its members are surveilled and tailed by the Japanese authorities.⁶³ This kind of language may read as paranoia, but especially in recent years, increased raids on the organization and the homes of prominent, high ranking members have occurred. Chongryon acknowledges that the Japanese government considers it suspect, but takes issue with this scrutiny.

They maintain that they are in compliance with the law and that these assertions by the Japanese authorities are slanderous, and in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶⁴ In each instance of searches or arrests of members, they have protested their innocence, and yet the appeal to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seems a bit dramatic, considering the organization is linked to a state which has proven itself to be unstable and involved with illegal activities. Japan is not a society which is welcoming of multiculturalism, and as such the Korean community is under some prejudice, which they rightly protest. Prejudice against Koreans may account for some of the scrutiny which Chongryon faces, but the Japanese authorities would be naive not to respond to tips that Chongryon was aiding the North Korean government with some of its illicit activities.

One issue in particular significantly contributes to the problems which Chongryon and its members have had with the Japanese government and the public: the abduction of Japanese nationals by the North Korean state. The Zainichi community, and Chongryon in particular due to its status as the *de facto* embassy of the DPRK, have long been identified with the North Korean abduction issue in Japan. Indeed, North Korea's plan for abducting Japanese nationals came after the failed 1974 assassination attempt on South Korean President Park Chung-hee, which had been carried out by a Korean resident of

⁶³ Chongryon, "Trampled Rights." (踏みにじられた権利).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Japan and sympathizer to North Korea, Mun Se-gwang.⁶⁵ Though the assassination attempt on Park was unsuccessful, it did result in the death of Park's wife, Yuk Young-soo. After the tragedy, the South Korean government became more suspicious of Zainichi Koreans, and applied stricter background checks on Koreans from Japan seeking to enter the country, as well as expanding security measures against North Korean spies.⁶⁶ This caused North Korea to try to find a different source of recruits for spies than using Zainichi sympathizers, and the idea was hatched to kidnap Japanese citizens and steal their identities, while also learning from them the subtleties of Japanese language and culture.⁶⁷ Whether or Chongryon was involved with the abduction plan, one of their number was the catalyst for the plan. Ahn Myong Jin, a former North Korean spy who defected to the South had said in an interview that he believed that Chongryon members helped with the abductions, "but only a few."⁶⁸ Once again, Chongryon denied the allegations and claimed that they were part of an attempt to defame the organization.⁶⁹ None of this is addressed on the website. Denunciation of the assassin might be asking too much, as Chongryon would likely not want to draw attention to such a serious incident, nor to link their name with the event in the reader's mind, even if they were trying to be reassuring.

The allegations against Chongryon in the matter of abduction caused a backlash against the whole community, but most Chongryon members were not involved, and the abduction issue was a shock to many of the ordinary members of Chongryon. In an interview with the Japan Times, a woman known only as Chin stated that when she heard

⁶⁵ Williams, Brad, and Erik Mobernd. "Explaining Divergent Responses to the North Korean Abductions Issue in Japan and South Korea." *Journal Of Asian Studies* 69, no. 2 (May 2010), 508-509.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 509.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Shipper, 67.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the reason for the abductions: “They said they did it to teach spies Japanese language and culture, but I wondered why when there are Japanese-speaking Koreans in Japan. It shook my faith in North Korea.”⁷⁰ Even members of the organization were shocked to learn of the kidnappings, so the lack of greater reassurance on the matter on the website, whose primary audience would be their own members, would not go amiss.

An astute reader could determine why the Japanese government would have reason to worry about Chongryon, since their connection to North Korea could make them dangerous to the domestic security of Japan. The website mentions increased hostility from the Japanese public and the authorities as a result of several scandals: “The Korean Airlines Missing Incident” of 1987, “Pachinko suspicion incident” of 1989, North Korea’s “Suspicion of having nuclear weapons incident” of 1994, and in particular the early 2000s reaction to North Korea’s admission that they had kidnapped several Japanese nationals.⁷¹ These incidents are listed, with quotations, but they are not described, assuming the reader is already familiar with these issues. Also unaddressed in this list is the fact that the threat from North Korea to its neighbors, particularly South Korea and Japan, is not inconsequential. Especially in light of Kim Jong Il admission in 2002 at his meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi that North Korea had kidnapped Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s, the fears that Chongryon or some of its top members were involved in these incidents would make them targets for surveillance. Though they address the conflict with the government in this regard, Chongryon takes a defensive position and only addresses the wrongs done to them by the Japanese government, and make no assertions about the involvement or lack thereof of any Chongryon members in the kidnappings. This

⁷⁰ McBride, “Young ‘Zainichi’ Koreans Look Beyond Chongryon Ideology.”

⁷¹ Chongryon, “Trampled Rights.” (踏みにじられた権利).

is to be expected, since they are unlikely to confess to any involvement in wrongdoing, especially if there actually was a connection between Chongryon and the kidnappings, but the omission does not make the organization look sympathetic to someone who is not already inclined to support Chongryon.

Continuing the theme of victimization, not only the Japanese authorities, but the public outcry against Chongryon and Zainichi Koreans in general is discussed on the website, but only in the context of the wrongs committed against the Korean community. Public fears about this unpredictable country can and sometimes do lead to violence. Innocent people should not be attacked or scapegoated for these incidents, and indeed there were several attacks of varying degrees on Chongryon members as a result of these scandals, from verbal harassment and assaults on students of Korean ethnic schools, to shooting or arson committed on or against Chongryon-run institutions.⁷² Chongryon is the face of North Korea in Japan and gives angry Japanese a target for their frustration or fears about North Korea. This is in many cases unfair, as schoolchildren are highly unlikely to be involved in any grand schemes like money-laundering or international kidnapping rings, and attacking them only further alienates a community which is already marginalized in Japanese society.

However, what Chongryon fails to do is to address the justifiable anger of the Japanese people in response to shocks like the kidnappings. The “Trampled Rights” section does not even offer a denial of any involvement by Chongryon in the issue, which is striking considering that allegations were made by a North Korean defector and former spy that Chongryon members were involved in helping to orchestrate the kidnappings.⁷³ If

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Shipper, 67.

Chongryon wants to make the assertion that they have been victimized by the Japanese authorities and public, they would do well to express some compassion for the kidnapping victims and their families, to boost their public relations platform and further distance themselves from the issue. However, if their target audience for the description on the website is Korean residents of Japan, they may not care how they appear to Japanese nationals. In light of present financial difficulties and more than a decade since allegations of helping North Korea to kidnap Japanese citizens, it would behoove Chongryon to consider their representation vis-à-vis the wider Japanese society in which they operate.

Chapter 2: Education and Chongryon's Ideology

Ethnic schools are the main way by which Chongryon is able to disseminate its teachings to the next generation. The schools keep students immersed in the Korean community and attendance in a Korean school limits a student's ability to assimilate into the general Japanese population. This section will give a brief history of the ethnic schools in Japan, and the effectiveness of Chongryon's ability to replicate its ideology.

The history of Korean ethnic schools has been tumultuous since the end of World War II. During the first year after the end of the war, the Zainichi community had established many ethnic schools, called *minzoku gakko*.⁷⁴ These schools were facilities where children could learn about Korean culture. However, during the Occupation period it was decided that the Korean ethnic schools should follow the curricula set by the Ministry of Education, with the exception of Korean language classes and extracurricular classes.⁷⁵ Already the freedom of education was being limited from the perspective of those who would become Chongryon supporters, according to scholars like Yoko Motani. When considering this argument, it should be noted that all governments have an interest in standardizing education, and ensuring that all students are learning skills which would be useful in for qualifying for university and finding a job is not inherently bad, nor should it be assumed that the policies of the government was intentionally trying to hurt the Zainichi community. Their specific needs as a minority community were likely not entered into the calculus of educational standards in the late 1940s and early 1950s. With standardization the needs of certain communities are often overlooked in order to present a single national

⁷⁴ Yoko Motani, "Towards a More Just Educational Policy for Minorities in Japan: The Case of Korean Ethnic Schools," *Comparative Education* 38, no. 2 (May, 2002): 229.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.

narrative, and Japan, whose people have long deemed themselves to be a “homogenous nation” would be particularly prone to such a narrowed focus when it came to education standards.

This was followed by a period from 1948-1955 of Korean schools being shut down by the Ministry of Education, and continued until 1965.⁷⁶ State authority pushed for an assimilation model of education of minority students, but the Zainichi community did not acquiesce to its decisions without a fight. The struggle to make the Korean students attend Japanese schools was fraught with opposition from Korean parents, who viewed these decisions as a means of suppressing Korean culture.⁷⁷ From the beginning the conflicting interests of the state and the Zainichi community caused problems for minority education.

Though the government had attempted to keep the Korean students from receiving a culture-specific education, there was ultimately a victory for the Korean families. Despite setbacks in the earlier days, the Zainichi community has managed to reopen Korean ethnic schools since 1956.⁷⁸ The opening of Korean ethnic schools has allowed Chongryon to set up an education system for their members which perpetuates its ideology and produces workers for the cause, thus allowing the group to continue on for four generations of Zainichi Koreans. Chongryon has established schools from kindergarten to university level across Japan.⁷⁹ These schools help to create an insular environment where the ethnic Koreans are exposed not to mainstream Japanese society but to the North Korean regime’s propaganda. According to the testimony of scholar Sonia Ryang, who was herself educated

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 231.

⁷⁹ Roland Beurk, “North Koreans in Japan remain loyal to Pyongyang,” *BBC*, October 27, 2010, accessed March 16, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-11534233>.

by Chongryon, the organization often runs itself similar to the North Korean or other socialist states, where career decisions and appointments are made for the members who are taught to “unconditionally and gladly” take their appointment position,⁸⁰ so the insular world perpetuates itself beyond school and into the adult world. The Korean schools serve as a beginning to the perpetuation of a Korean community and in the case of Chongryon schools, the dissemination of North Korean values and loyalty.

That there was a drive for control over the curricula was not unreasonable or unexpected. Sonia Ryang argues that all education in a modern state is ultimately subject to state authority and control over the content of the curricula.⁸¹ The state has a stake in ensuring that the people under its control are educated to be good citizens. What makes the Chongryon schools unique, according to Ryang, is that they are not oriented toward pleasing the Japanese state, though they exist within the physical borders of the Japanese state, but rather they are controlled by the North Korean state.⁸² Thus, the Chongryon schools operate outside of direct influence of the authorities of their physical space, and instead are rooted in a national and ethnic connection to the “homeland.” This creates a strange paradox whereby the students of Chongryon schools live in Japan, but their minds and loyalty are oriented toward North Korea, which though far away has stronger control over their education.

Control over the curricula is rooted in the North Korean state. The schools use textbooks which Chongryon publishes, which are edited by teachers who visit North Korea specifically for this reason.⁸³ It is North Korean standards and textbooks, and not Japanese,

⁸⁰ Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 17.

⁸¹ Ryang, “Poverty of Language,” 231.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 232.

⁸³ Ryang, “Poverty of Language,” 231.

which form the schools' curricula. Coming from North Korea, these texts are naturally censored according to the state's interests. The censorship and oversight are much stronger in certain areas than in others. Topics unrelated to the North Korean state, like English, Japanese and math, are not heavily censored.⁸⁴ These topics could easily conform to Japanese Ministry of Education standards, strengthening the argument that Chongryon schools not be un-accredited as regular schools under Ministry guidelines. On the other hand, topics which are particularly relevant usually pertain to Korean history and especially the personal history of Kim Il Sung, both his childhood and his revolutionary activities.⁸⁵ They exist outside the specific constraints of the Japanese standards of education, but that does not mean that they could not be of some concern. Factually, much of what North Korean children in North Korea as well as at Chongryon schools learn about their leader is murky or unverifiable, which for the sake of historical accuracy can be problematic. Not all students appreciate these lessons. The Japan Times interviewed a Ms. Ryu, in 2008, who described her attitudes toward her instruction on Kim Il Sung: "I'm grateful that I learned my language and made lots of friends, but I wasn't into studying the life or ideas of Kim Il Sung. Koreans should learn more about how to live in Japanese society."⁸⁶ Her attitude shows that being educated with Chongryon does not mean that all students internalize their lessons in total.

Chongryon schools have long had a degree of relative freedom to choose their curricula. This is not to say, however, that the Chongryon schools are not completely free of the influence of the Japanese authorities.⁸⁷ The curriculum of these schools is similar to

⁸⁴ Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 25.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ McBride, "Young 'Zainichi' Koreans Look Beyond Chongryon Ideology."

⁸⁷ Ryang, "Poverty of Language," 232.

Japanese schools with the exception of added emphasis on Korea-specific topics. In addition to Korean language, history and geography, these schools teach many of the same subjects as Japanese schools, including Japanese language, mathematics, English, natural science, history, geography, physical education, music, and art.⁸⁸ As such, one could argue, the concerns that the Korean schools are not meeting the standards of the Ministry of Education are not well-founded. Even though the same subjects are taught that would be taught in a Japanese school, the Ministry of Education does not classify these ethnic schools as regular schools (*ichijoko*) but rather as miscellaneous (non-academic) schools, (*kakushu gakko*) the same classification as technical schools such as cooking or sewing schools.⁸⁹ This has long been seen as discriminatory in the scholarship on Chongryon, but the merits and lack thereof of this policy are debatable.

Some scholars, like Motani, argue that such a designation would be fair if it could be demonstrated that the Korean schools do not prepare students with the same degree of educational readiness for university and other post-education future pursuits, but that this is not demonstrated by the facts. Certain factors, like Korean ethnic school graduates' ability to pass entrance exams to Japanese colleges and universities, could show that this is not the case. Their ability to pass these exams is especially important in light of the fact that students of miscellaneous schools are not automatically designated qualified applicants to Japanese universities like graduates of regular schools.⁹⁰ To some extent this is irrelevant to Chongryon, because they run a university, Korea University, which furthers their curriculum centered on North Korean citizenship. However, not every Korean

⁸⁸ Motani, 231.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

resident of Japan will complete the track of Chongryon education from preschool to university, and so the ability of students to qualify for other routes to higher education must be considered. In order to qualify for a Japanese university entrance exam, the students of Chongryon schools have to take another exam.⁹¹ The individual university must permit students from non-academic schools to take their entrance exams, and so Korean students from ethnic schools who wish to attend Japanese universities are at the mercy of their target university's benevolence.

However, Motani's theory that ability to pass entrance exams demonstrates the equal merit of Chongryon schools does not take into account some of the issues which come from having a school which operates largely outside of the oversight of the Japanese government. While it is true that Chongryon's students learn almost the same subjects as Japanese schools teach, the fact that they also teach Korean history and geography cuts into the time allotted to teach Japanese history and geography.⁹² Having more subjects taught will necessarily cut down the amount of time that can be dedicated to each topic. Though they receive Japanese history education, Chongryon would prioritize it below that of Korean history and geography, meaning that students who wish to qualify for Japanese schools would come into classes with less general knowledge about Japan than their Japanese classmates.

Although Chongryon uses Korean in a specific way to ensure that its students are properly prepared to participate in the running of Chongryon when they graduate, the push for all the students to learn Korean only extends so far. Sonia Ryang's work has demonstrated the limitations of Korean education, since the majority of Chongryon

⁹¹ Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 24.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

students use Japanese at home and when they are not at school.⁹³ This divide between school language and home language leads to a division of vocabulary, which means that students are more comfortable expressing certain concepts in Korean, and others in Japanese. Efforts by the schools to enforce that Korean language only is spoken at school has, Ryang argue, lead to a split between the language of school and public life, Korean, and the language of the private domain, Japanese.⁹⁴ Students find it easier to describe things they learn in school, like Korean history, in Korean, but at the same time, find little use in learning the Korean words for foods or utensils.⁹⁵ In school, they have little cause to talk about common, everyday things or the media and popular culture of Japanese in which they are immersed, so they do not go to the effort of learning to say these things in Korean. Their Korean is often only used for formal school situations, and as such many find it easier to speak in formal level Korea than in casual Korean.⁹⁶ This limits their ability to communicate naturally in Korean to native speakers, because their speech, while technically proficient, lacks the nuance which is characterized by the shift in honorific language and casual speech.

Furthermore, other subjects are slightly different from the curricula of Japanese schools. For example, Japanese primary schools teach moral studies, while Chongryon's schools teach "childhood of Father Marshal Kim Il Sung," and while Japanese middle schools teach moral and social studies, what Chongryon teaches is "revolutionary activities of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung."⁹⁷ These different topics are not relevant to the ordinary

⁹³ Ryang, "Poverty of Language," 234.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 25.

Japanese pedagogy, and time spent focusing on them is diverting time from more specific topics which relate to Japan, or culturally specific ideas about morality which have been deemed essential for a proper Japanese education. Pedagogy includes more than the transmission of facts, and a different style of moral education can make for a stark difference, even apart from value-laden arguments about which format is “better” or “right.” As such, it cannot be stated that the Chongryon schools are exactly like the Japanese regular schools. There are legitimate claims of discrimination against the Korean community in Japan, but that the Chongryon schools are not considered the equals of their Japanese counterparts is an unfortunate, but not wholly unjustified reality of the education system in Japan.

Other problems for the Korean schools is the issue of funding, and why the Japanese authorities would allow schools which preach loyalty to North Korea to exist within their borders. There is one answer, proposed by Ryang, which answers both of these questions. The fact that these schools operate autonomously from the Japanese school system provides some benefit to the Japanese state: it means that the burden of educating these students and financing these educations is not the responsibility of the state nor does it need to be accounted for in the state budget.⁹⁸ The ideological bent of the Chongryon schools can be overlooked if it means that the burden of paying for the students’ education is covered either donations from the North Korean state, which sent money to help establish these schools when they first opened in 1957 and every year from then on until 1980, (though these have become more sporadic since 1980) or by the parents of the students.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ryang, “Poverty of Language,” 232.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The Korean community itself takes on the burden of funding the education of their children, permitting the Japanese state to disengage from the issue.

Money is not the only reason for the tolerance of the Japanese state toward North Korean schools within its borders. Another feature of Chongryon's educational ethos contributes to the hands-off approach of the Japanese state. Chongryon declared in 1955 that they would practice non-interference in Japanese internal affairs, and in keeping with this pledge, teaches pupils in its schools not to do anything which would trouble the Japanese authorities, and to follow all the social conventions of Japanese society, up to and including giving up seats on public transportation to the elderly.¹⁰⁰ As such, Ryang argues that the Japanese government can overlook the pro-North Korea bent of the schools' education, because the graduates they produce go on to become mild-mannered residents who cause little trouble for the state.¹⁰¹ Such a reason could seem minor or unimportant in the shaping of policy regarding something as fundamental as education, but it bears consideration. I am persuaded that the financial motivation of the Japanese state not to have to allocate funding for students who are attending Korean schools is a major factor in tolerating the schools' existence, but also that the Japanese cultural emphasis on harmony ensures that so long as Chongryon students are not stirring up controversy or conflict, they can be tolerated.

Not receiving funding from the central government is not all bad for Chongryon. There are benefits to the Chongryon schools and to the organization not to have Japanese government funding. The main benefit is that as "self-financing *kakushu gakkō*,"¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 233.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan*, 25.

Chongryon's schools do not face regulation or inspections from the central government or local education authorities.¹⁰³ They do not benefit from funding from the central government, but the schools do benefit, in a manner of speaking, from the freedom to teach as they see fit. Considering their loyalty to North Korea, the ability to have a school which does not require alignment with Japanese standards is very beneficial to the Chongryon organization.

There has not been an entirely hands-off approach to the Korean ethnic schools by different elements of the Japanese state, nor a monolithic response to them from all of actors who make up the state. Some financial help from government sources has been made available for Korean schools. In the late 1980s-1990s, some local governments began to offer scholarships which could be applied to private schools, which would include Korean ethnic schools, as well as some aid to the Korean schools themselves.¹⁰⁴ The central state remained relatively unburdened with the cost of funding Korean schools, since the money was coming from local level government.¹⁰⁵ The funding was not substantial, however. In one case, the Osaka local government did allocate some funding to Korean schools, which was useful because about one third of the Korean population in Japan was concentrated in Osaka, though the funds were not equitably distributed among the schools.¹⁰⁶ The local government may have decided that since such large numbers of Koreans resided within their jurisdiction, it would be equitable in regard to ethnic education compared with Japanese education to designate some monies to their upkeep, and thereby improve the well-being of the whole region, but a bias against the North Korean-aligned

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ryang, "Poverty of Language," 232.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 233.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

schools still showed. In 1987, 124,030,000 yen was allocated to the Paekdu School, which had South Korean affiliation, and only 551 students, while 20,800,000 yen was distributed to 15 Chongryon schools with a total of 4,740 students.¹⁰⁷ As such, the aid from those branches Japanese government inclined to help the Korean population was not necessarily beneficial to Chongryon, even when it was offered. Ryang does not speculate about the reasons for this uneven division, but it likely stems from a prejudice against North Korea.

This support from local governments has not continued uninterrupted, as international conflict has made support for a pro-North Korea organization unpopular. The *Chosun Ilbo* reported in 2013 that the city of Yokohama announced that it would no longer provide annual subsidies to Chongryon, which would have amounted to 2.5 million yen from the city's budget.¹⁰⁸ Like the case in Osaka, the funding itself was not hugely substantial, but its loss is a blow to Chongryon's public relations in the city. This decision would affect three schools, a secondary school and two primary schools.¹⁰⁹ The amount of money was not the motivating factor in cutting the funding, but rather the political situation behind the decision. North Korea's actions have created fear within the Japanese community which Chongryon, as the de facto embassy of the DPRK, must tackle as Japanese people and organizations react to the tension. Mayor Fumiko Hayashi "said she is halting the subsidies as long as the issues of 'North Korea's nuclear weapons development and abduction of Japanese citizens remain unresolved.'"¹¹⁰ Negative public reactions to North Korea have a ripple effect on Chongryon and its members, which in the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ "Yokohama Stops Subsidies for Chongryon Schools," *The Chosun Ilbo*, October 31, 2013, accessed March 13, 2015, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/10/31/2013103101641.html.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

past decade has grown stronger as nationalist attitudes in Japan have increased. While increased sentiment against Chongryon grows, local government feel pressured to do something, or possibly the individual members of the governing bodies are acting according to their own consciences. Either way, Chongryon is losing support from local communities, spelling a trend which could add up to significant losses in the future.

In 2010, the Japanese government opted to exclude Chongryon-affiliated schools from “subsidies which make high school education free in Japan.”¹¹¹ This could make ethnic education cost-prohibitive to certain parents. The decision of the central government encouraged seven regional governments, which included Saitama and Hiroshima, also to cut funding to Chongryon schools.¹¹² Not only the central government, but regional and local governments across Japan are growing increasingly unsympathetic toward Chongryon, a trend which will put a greater financial burden on families of students. The lack of funding is also detrimental to the staff and faculty of some schools. Kang Moon Seok, principle of Kawasaki Choson Elementary School, told North Korea News in August of 2014 that due to loss of funding from the Prefecture and City, his staff had not been paid in months, but continued to operate the school as a “community service.”¹¹³ The loss of funding affects the teachers as well as the students, though those who are believers in the ideology they were taught will soldier on, as Mr. Kang and his staff have done.¹¹⁴

If the issue were solely about education, this would be clearly unfair, but as many of the schools receive funding from P’yŏngyang, hundreds of millions of yen, by the

¹¹¹ Beurk, “North Koreans in Japan remain loyal to Pyongyang,” *BBC*.

¹¹² “Yokohama Stops Subsidies.”

¹¹³ Kosuke Takahashi, “Chongryon School in Kawasaki Struggles to Survive Financially,” *NKNews.org*, August, 18th, 2014, accessed April 13, 2015. <http://www.nknews.org/2014/08/chongryon-school-in-kawasaki-struggles-to-survive-financially/>.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

estimate of the deputy-headmaster of one of these schools, the Tokyo Korean Junior and Senior High School,¹¹⁵ the concern of the Japanese government is understandable. Schools with a direct line to P'yŏngyang could prove to be security risks. At many schools, sending the students on trips to visit North Korea in their final year is traditional.¹¹⁶ These students' loyalty to the regime has been drilled into their heads throughout their education, and their ability to travel to North Korea could be a matter of concern for the Japanese government, especially in light of the several scandals of the early twenty-first century involving Chongryon members aiding North Korea in their nuclear program. Trying to undermine the schools could be just the first step in a long procession of steps to eliminate the threat of Chongryon.

Chongryon expects its members to be a part of its organizational life from childhood and through adulthood, but not all Koreans in Japan are that invested in participation. Korean families in Japan are caught in a bind if they wish to have their children educated about their specific Korean identity. If they wish their child to pursue higher education outside of Korea University, or at least to have the opportunity, attending a Korean ethnic school, deemed 'non-academic' by the Ministry of Education, will be a detriment to the child.¹¹⁷ Though some universities do overlook the regular school preference in the Ministry of Education's guidelines and allow students from Korean schools who pass the entrance exams to enroll, most of the prestigious universities in Japan still follow the Ministry guidelines,¹¹⁸ cutting off the best avenue of success from Korean students, and perpetuating the social hierarchy which prevents the Korean community from

¹¹⁵ Beurk, "North Koreans in Japan remain loyal to Pyongyang," *BBC*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Motani, 232.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

achieving the greatest success possible in Japanese society. The alternative, sending their children to a regular school, comes at the expense of having any formal ethnic education, unless one lives in a region like Osaka where there are many Zainichi and many public schools offer ethnic classes (*minzoku gakkyu*).¹¹⁹ If there are no ethnic classes, it is likely the child will not learn Korean, or much about Korean history. Most Zainichi nowadays have Japanese for a native language rather than Korean,¹²⁰ so education in Korean is important for keeping it alive in the community. Even those who do have ethnic classes are unlikely to derive the same benefit from them as they would at a Korean ethnic school, because they are usually only held once a week and only cover the basics of Korean language and culture.¹²¹ The prospects are grim for a family trying to decide the best for their children when the dominant society does not value their cultural uniqueness.

Unbridled loyalty to the regime is not necessarily the output of these schools. Though they teach students to revere the Kim family, according to the BBC, many do not regard Kim Il Sung or his successors to be their “Dear Leader,” but see their immersion in a North Korean education as a hope for the future unification of the Korean peninsula.¹²² Taking this into account, it should not be assumed that all people who attend Chongryon schools do so for the purpose of indoctrinating their children in the philosophy of North Korea. Education in Japan for Koreans can be a difficult process, as children are often bullied and discriminated against because of their ethnic identity.¹²³ Keeping children in

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 232.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 231.

¹²¹ Ibid., 232.

¹²² Beurk, “North Koreans in Japan remain loyal to Pyongyang,” *BBC*.

¹²³ Ryang, “How to Do or Nor Do Things,” 235.

schools specifically for Korean children can act as a bulwark against that kind of discrimination.

Another reason parents might choose to have their children educated at a Chongryon facility is that ordinary Japanese schools usually do not cover ethnic education of or for minority students. Parents who seek to keep their children engaged in Korean culture might have little choice but to put them in a Korean school,¹²⁴ where they would not only learn Korean language and history, but could perhaps learn traditional Korean musical instruments or dance¹²⁵ which would keep them immersed in Korean culture in a way that merely studying about Korea might not. They would not receive much instruction in Korean-specific history or culture if they were to attend a Japanese school.

Chongryon's approach to issues of education come from their particular ideological perspective. This approach targets the students who are of Korean heritage and seeks to keep them grounded in their own ethnic culture and history. This approach has some support from Western pedagogical studies, which demonstrate that students learn and succeed in environments in which their ethnic identities are valued and the knowledge the students can bring to the classroom are respected and not ignored.¹²⁶

The problem of education for Korean students in Japan stretches beyond the issue of Korean schools or Japanese schools. It has been shown that Korean students perform more poorly in school on average than do their Japanese counterparts.¹²⁷ Their rates of enrollment are also lower than those of Japanese students. Korean students enter high

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Beurk, "North Koreans in Japan remain loyal to Pyongyang," *BBC*.

¹²⁶ Ruth Ahn, "Korean Students' Minority Schooling Experience in Japan," *Intercultural Education* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 2012): 251.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 250.

school, which is not compulsory in Japan, at lower rates than do Japanese students, with data from 2012 showing that the rates of high school matriculation of Korean junior high students were 76.5% for Osaka, whereas the total junior high population matriculation rate was 90.7%.¹²⁸ Students who do not pass high school are far less likely to advance in society, leaving a large portion of the Korean population at risk of unemployment.

Part of the problem for Korean students comes from the discrimination which they face when they are attending Japanese schools. Discrimination, as mentioned above, is a major contributing factor to problems in school and lower matriculation rates for minority students.¹²⁹ When facing discrimination at school a student is less likely to be engaged in the material and more likely to feel self-conscious and uncomfortable in the school setting. Knowing that they are different from others can make it hard to form bonds with other students, who might already have internalized the prejudice of the wider society against the Korean students. When it comes to the discrimination which Korean students face, it can take two forms: macro level and micro level.¹³⁰ Both the macro, societal level discrimination and the micro, personal level discrimination can cause problems for students and prevent success in school.

Macro level issues of discrimination encompass those things which affect the whole of the Zainichi community. Korean students are required to carry alien registration cards, and the children know that their prospects for jobs and marriage will be restricted when they grow up, causing them distress, according to a teacher interviewed by Ruth Ahn in her study published in 2012.¹³¹ Societal level discrimination can act as a deterrent to

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 253-254.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹³¹ Ibid.

students from attempting to excel in school, since their efforts will likely not yield any productive results. This phenomenon of lowered sights for the students from marginalized communities is not unique unto minorities in Japan. As for carrying alien registration cards, this is a constant reminder that they are different from their Japanese classmates, and are not truly part of the Japanese community. These macro-level discriminations can get into a student's mind and poison attempts to better themselves.

The micro level of discrimination can be just as insidious to a child's potential success in school. Having one's identity as a Korean revealed to classmates can lead to further discrimination, causing stress to students who have been "outed" as minority students and not Japanese.¹³² Being something other than what everyone else is can be detrimental to a child's ability to function as part of the group if they are not accepted by their peers. There have been some attempts by schools with larger Korean populations, like many in Osaka, to make Korean students feel pride in their heritage. However, some efforts to increase students' confidence, like posting Korean names before *tsumei* (Japanese name) for each Korean student on the attendance roster have backfired, according to Ahn.¹³³ Encouraging students to take pride in their Korean name and Korean heritage will only work if taking pride in being Korean will not lead to discrimination from classmates. Another problem facing students at the micro level is that discrimination is so heavily a part of Japanese society that even if it is not stated out loud, many people, including teachers, might harbor discriminatory opinions and hold their opinion against a student.¹³⁴ If a teacher has lowered expectation for a student, they may not put effort into teaching

¹³² Ibid., 254.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

them or helping them to excel, and so their lowered expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy. With such concerns, it becomes clearer why parents might choose to have their child educated at a Chongryon affiliated school instead of in a Japanese school, because at least at a Korean school, their child will not automatically be presumed to be a subpar student.

With all these factors in mind, Chongryon members are making different choices than in the past. As more scandals have broken and Chongryon has faced greater ire from the Japanese society, and as funding has declined for their schools, the ordinary members have had to make a choice about education. “Enrollment has dropped from a high of 46,000 pupils in the early 1970s to about 15,000 in recent years.”¹³⁵ Something will have to change if Chongryon hopes to use education to perpetuate its membership.

Chongryon’s ability to replicate its ideology to the next generation relies on the schools which they operate. Though the schools exist to make good North Korean overseas citizens who will be part of the greater Chongryon apparatus as adults, parents may have different motivations for sending their kids to Chongryon schools. Going to a Korean school will prevent bullying about their Korean identity, and these schools are best equipped to teach ethnic identity to the students. Many people still feel a strong pull of ethnic pride and nationalism, whether as a part of their education, or from living as a Korean in Japan.

¹³⁵ McBride, “Young ‘Zainichi’ Koreans Look beyond Chongryon Ideology.”

Chapter 4: Nationalism and Financial Support of North Korea

Chongryon indoctrinates its members and students with North Korean nationalist ideology. Why is there such a strong feeling of devotion to North Korea when so many factors could mitigate positive feelings it could evoke? One possible answer is summed up in Chongryon's style of nationalism, which falls into a particular category: overseas nationalism. They are able to develop a great sense of love and patriotism for a country where they do not live,¹³⁶ and as such they are capable of appreciating its national virtues in a way in which the ordinary people who live in the home country might not. People who live in North Korea are privy to and must live with the realities of their authoritarian rule and failing infrastructure, especially since the famine era of the 1990s.

In contrast to the lived reality of their brethren in the DPRK, Koreans in Japan are vulnerable in their country of residence, as they are not considered by the Japanese government to possess political rights.¹³⁷ Lack of protections in one's country of residence will not instill a great sense of loyalty to that nation, nor establish a strong sense of engagement in political issues in the country of residence. This vulnerability pushes many to become radically nationalist toward their "home" countries.¹³⁸ Those Zainichi who feel an emotional attachment to North Korea benefit from their distance from their "homeland," and from the fact that they live in a democratic nation where they need not fear suppression or imprisonment for speaking openly about their home country.¹³⁹ Though they do not have the same political freedoms and rights as Japanese citizens, Japan remains a democracy which means that Koreans in Japan benefit from the democratic principles of

¹³⁶ Shipper, 56.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

their country of residence even as they find themselves invigorated with national fervor toward a decidedly undemocratic nation.

For people living in foreign lands who feel out of place and want to connect to their own homeland and heritage, any connection to their homeland is appreciated and embraced. Ethnic associations like Chongryon form an important core of the connection to the “homeland” for long-distance nationalists, and energize them further into nationalist feeling for the home country.¹⁴⁰ Having a community based around national identity enabled the Zainichi community to flourish despite minority status and lack of rights in Japan in the early years after World War II. For first generation Zainichi Koreans, there was a drive to join ethnic associations, and Chongryon in particular, which functioned as an institutional arm and cultural extension of the government of North Korea and as such to be connected to the perceived “homeland.”¹⁴¹ As an aspect of joining Chongryon, one was confined to their ideology. Chongryon enforced certain norms and institutional norms in order to force conformity of the membership.¹⁴² Members would have to conform, or risk being exiled from the community.¹⁴³ In this way, peer pressure kept group members receptive to pro-North Korea policy and activities.

It should be noted that not all Zainichi Koreans have the same idea of what nationalism means, or to what it applies. The divide is largely generational. First generation Zainichi often engaged in long-distance nationalism, which involves the assumption that they will return to the homeland.¹⁴⁴ As such, they focused on the needs of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 116.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Shipper, 58.

one of the two Korean nations, depending upon allegiance. Chongryon had long engaged in this first sort of nationalism.¹⁴⁵ Long distance nationalist rhetoric still peppers their publications even after the older generations are no longer the majority of its membership or of the Zainichi community as a whole. Second generation Zainichi nationalism usually takes the form of diasporic nationalism, which depends on the assumption that they will live in Japan their whole lives.¹⁴⁶ This has been the reality for many of the Koreans in Japan, because although more than a million returned to either South or North Korea, there are still hundreds of thousands who remain in Japan to this day, not counting those who have taken Japanese citizenship. How an overseas nationalist functions and what role they play for the homeland is different from those of an in-country nationalist, as is the nature of their environment. Zainichi diasporic nationalism is rooted in an essentialized idea of what it means to be Zainichi, which is rooted in oppression and resistance, poverty and struggle.¹⁴⁷ A particular version of history and the experience of the Zainichi are enforced as the essence of the community, which pushes another kind of conformity on the community. This ideology was promoted not only within official organizations like Chongryon, but among the community as a whole.¹⁴⁸ This essential “Zainichi-ness” bleeds into a distrust of anything Japanese, and a disdain for Zainichi who are too Japanese, for example, those unable to speak Korean.¹⁴⁹ The diasporic nationalism is still oriented toward being an exile community, separate from its homeland.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Lie, 116.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 116-117.

The physical distance from North Korea and the isolation of the DPRK make it possible for Chongryon to further pro-North Korean stance among its members. One of the major pathways through which Chongryon's pro-North Korea teachings are transmitted is through the Korean schools they run. In Chongryon schools, teachers are able to tell their students that North Korea is a paradise on earth, and do so precisely because they have not been there.¹⁵⁰ Shipper argues that distance is exactly what allows people in Japan to see North Korea as a paradise. With limited or nonexistent contact with the home country for most Japanese Koreans, North Korea has been able to use Chongryon to disseminate propaganda to the wider Korean community in Japan. This is a compelling argument, explaining why there can be such a strong sense of loyalty or even affection for the "homeland" which few have ever seen. What is unseen and only perceived through carefully cultivated images passed down by the organization will remain much more beautiful in the North Korean overseas nationalists' minds than a gritty reality which might arise from living in North Korea and experiencing the true lack of political freedoms, or later, the famines. Distance enables a strong sense of nationalism because the exile community can construct a narrative of the homeland without having to fact-check. There is also a contrast between the idealized vision of North Korea and the reality of living in Japan as a non-Japanese, one who has no rights and who has also been raised to be mistrustful of Japanese culture.

One counter-argument to Shipper's position here is that while the Chongryon education enables students to visualize an idealized North Korea, the students are not isolated from other sources of information. Since many speak Japanese at home, they can

¹⁵⁰ Shipper, 61.

read Japanese newspapers, which would have a very different perspective on the DPRK than a Chongryon education. They can also easily access online resources like Human Rights Watch's page on North Korea,¹⁵¹ which can be read in both Japanese and Korean. In the information age, the argument that education in isolation from the home country promotes greater nationalism is not sufficient to explain nationalist fervor toward North Korea.

Chongryon provides more than a nationalist connection to the homeland which few have ever actually seen. A second argument presented by Shipper for the persistence of nationalist sentiment toward North Korea among Zainichi focuses on the lack of ability to engage politically in Japan. Since Koreans in Japan were stripped of status as imperial subjects and any suffrage rights within Japan by an amendment to the Election Law in 1945, and not granted Japanese citizenship under the San Francisco Treaty, they have little recourse to engage in civic organization in Japan.¹⁵² This prevents engagement in the community and government of their country of residence. Non-citizen residents of Japan cannot vote in elections or be elected to office, nor can they become members of district welfare commissions, boards of education, or human rights commissions.¹⁵³ This is a severe stunting of their ability to engage in civic process and gives them little recourse to be a part of the nation of Japan. Koreans and other minorities have no chance to engage in Japanese civic participation, which isolates them from Japanese policy-making which still affects their lives as residents of Japan. As such, many Zainichi turn to Chongryon, which offers them a way to engage in a community, albeit an insular community which is not part

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, "North Korea," last modified 2015, accessed April 11, 2015.
<https://www.hrw.org/asia/north-korea>

¹⁵² Shipper, 61.

¹⁵³ Ibid..

of the wider whole of Japanese society. This last point is irrelevant if their true “homeland” is perceived to be elsewhere, and Chongryon promotes North Korea as the ideal homeland of the Koreans who reside in Japan, as opposed to South Korea.

The South Korean allied organization, Mindan, is not a nonentity in the struggle of Korean nationalism in Japan. Unlike Chongryon, Mindan promotes South Korea as the true homeland of the Korean people in Japan.¹⁵⁴ As such, Japanese Koreans have two possible countries to which they can feel a nationalist attachment. During the Cold War, it would have been difficult to try to balance the two or try to envision one “Korea,” since the two countries were so politically opposed. In terms of ancestry, South Korea is in fact the homeland of most Zainichi Koreans, including a majority of those who are members of Chongryon.¹⁵⁵ However, for a long time Mindan did not reach the heart of its members in the same ways that Chongryon did. For one thing, Mindan operates only four Korean schools in Japan, one in Tokyo, one in Kyoto and two in Osaka.¹⁵⁶ Though two are concentrated in Osaka, a region with a high Korean population, the small number of schools cannot compete with the Chongryon schools in terms of influence or number of total students whom they can take in, as there are many more Chongryon schools. Further differences come from the fact that the majority of the students at the Mindan schools are not Zainichi Koreans, but the children of South Korean diplomats.¹⁵⁷ This process leads to a divide between the Japanese Koreans who were brought during the Japanese colonial era or are descended from those people, and the new transplants from South Korea who are mostly either diplomatic representatives or business leaders of that country. As for the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

large proportion of the Korean community which is not affiliated with either Mindan or Chongryon, they would generally attend Japanese schools.

Mindan members engage in nationalist promotion of their homeland in similar ways to Chongryon members. Money has been exchanged across the Sea of Japan between the South Korean government and Mindan, from the Park administration donating money for the new Mindan headquarters in 1977 to large sums of money from Mindan being used to support the 1988 Seoul Olympics and more than 500 million *won* from Mindan being used to strengthen South Korean defense from 1972-1983.¹⁵⁸ Although the economic and social conditions in South Korea are more free and open than in North Korea, and Japan has diplomatic relations with the ROK but not the DPRK, (for example, Mindan members not having to rely on repatriated families to act as conduits between the organizers and the South Korean government because travel between the two countries is easy¹⁵⁹) what is clear is that the Zainichi community in Japan has been instrumental in supporting both countries in the Korean peninsula. Exile communities' sense of nationalism has helped to support the two Koreas, both of whom were poorer and less developed than Japan for much of the latter half of the twentieth century, due in no small part to the devastation of the Korean War upon the infrastructure of the peninsula, and the fact that both countries had corrupt authoritarian regimes for leadership until South Korea democratized. Furthermore, the Korean nationals in Japan have been instrumental in supporting two countries who have been at war with each other since 1950, making Japan and the Korean diaspora community there an important base of funding and political support for two warring though ethnically identical countries.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Certain trends might predict that as time goes by Mindan will eclipse Chongryon in terms of importance among the Zainichi community. Mindan's significance among the Zainichi community has expanded greatly, to the point where they now comprise more than half of the total Zainichi in Japan, whereas Chongryon's numbers have fallen to approximately 25% of the whole. As such, Mindan's form of nationalism can reach a wider audience. Also, South Korean popular culture has become enormously popular in Japan since the start of the twenty-first century, with triumph of the Korean television drama *Winter Sonata*¹⁶⁰ in Japanese ratings.¹⁶¹ There is less cause for Zainichi to either be ashamed of their Korean heritage or to hide it when they become successful in mainstream Japanese life.¹⁶² As such, South Korea may become a draw for Zainichi nationalist sentiment.

Another aspect which separates Mindan from Chongryon is their deeper connection to Japanese society. Mindan members are far more likely to push for voting rights for Korean residents than are Chongryon members, since Chongryon's members consider themselves citizens of North Korea.¹⁶³ Mindan as an organization had begun to recognize by the late 2000s that their membership had largely come to see Japan as their home, and that Japanese politics and social issues were important for the Korean residents. Especially in 2009, when the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) which was seen to be more sympathetic to minorities, was in a position to oust the old LDP leadership,¹⁶⁴ Mindan members were

¹⁶⁰ 冬のソナタ (*Fuyu no Sonata*) in Japanese, 겨울연가 (*Kyōul yōn'ga*) in Korean.

¹⁶¹ Lie, 133.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Setsuko Kamiya, "Mindan Fights for Foreigners' Local-Level Suffrage," *The Japan Times*, August 27, 2009, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2009/08/27/national/mindan-fights-for-foreigners-local-level-suffrage/>.

¹⁶⁴ The DPJ did win control of the Diet from 2009-2012, but in 2012 the LDP returned to power with former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo returning to power.

exercising their limited ability to engage in the electoral process, such as making flyers for candidates.¹⁶⁵ Mindan did not push a particular candidate or party as an organization,¹⁶⁶ but they did put their weight behind the push for greater voting rights for permanent residents. This example demonstrates that Mindan's leadership has become more willing to balance between Korean identity and participation in Japanese society in recent years.

Some of these divides between the two communities are only relevant within the time frame of the end of the Korean War and the end of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War there has been a change in the way that some Korean residents view their respective nationalism, and a decrease in specific affiliation with a particular side of the North-South divide.¹⁶⁷ Problems existed for both Chongryon and Mindan communities, as the North Koreans residents began to learn some of the harsh realities of the regime and life in the DPRK, while South Koreans, who did have the option to return permanently to that country, found such a move difficult due to the fact that many in the third and fourth generations had become quite assimilated into Japanese society.¹⁶⁸ Ingyu Oh argues that the divide between the Zainichi community was based not upon North-South division, but rather was a result of a generational divide between the Cold War generations who look for reconciliation, while younger generations want to become Japanese citizens, or possibly even move to a third country.¹⁶⁹ This theory bears some weight, as the geopolitical strategic situation has had an effect on the fates of both Koreas, and the sheer amount of time spent in Japan by generation after generation has broken many of the ties of kinship and

¹⁶⁵ Kamiya, "Mindan Fights for Foreigners' Local-Level Suffrage."

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ingyu Oh, "From Nationalistic Diaspora to Transnational Diaspora: The Evolution of Identity Crisis among the Korean-Japanese," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 38, no. 4 (April, 2012), 653.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 653-654.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 654.

familiarity which would lead to a homesickness for the Korean Peninsula. If a third generation Zainichi Korean had only ever known life in Japan, and their parents had also known no other life, nostalgia for Korea would likely be absent from the younger person's mind.

The construct of identity for the Koreans in Japan, from the forced laborers to the nationals of either North or South Korea, has been one of change, and now new global factors face these communities.¹⁷⁰ Staying in the confines of the Cold War division would not be a response to changing global factors and market realities. The world is becoming more and more transnational, leading to a greater increase in diaspora communities, of whom the Koreans could be only one group. Japan, and both Koreas, continue to tout themselves as homogeneous nations, which is not accurate in terms of the actual population demographics, as globalization leads many to travel abroad in search of employment opportunities.¹⁷¹ Since these younger people have no experience of living in Korea, and many struggle with the Korean language, even if they were educated in a Korean school, there is little reason to suppose that they would limit their sights to moving to South Korea alone. North Korea is out of the question at this point since the repatriation program has ended, and realistically anyone with access to the internet can read news about North Korea, defectors' accounts, or the report from The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Even with a lifetime of Chongryon teaching, few in the 2010s would be interested in going there.

For many in the younger generations of the Zainichi Koreans, leaving Japan is not an attractive option, but it remains a possibility if Japan will not embrace a multicultural

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

society.¹⁷² Japan's inability to accept the multi-ethnic nature of its social make-up is a burden on the non-Japanese who reside there, not just Koreans but Chinese and immigrants from Latin America, as well as others. As such, there is a motivation for some Koreans who just want to go along to get along to become naturalized Japanese citizens. They would blend in, since there are virtually no physical distinctions between the Japanese and Japanese-Koreans.¹⁷³ Since multi-ethnic acknowledgement is often lacking in Japanese government or political speech, becoming Japanese would help some of those who struggle with discrimination to fit better into society. The nationalism of these individuals who consider Japanese citizenship is superseded by the need to thrive in the country in which they live, since staying there would ultimately be less risky than departing for a foreign country, even South Korea.

Nationalism is still a potent force in global politics, but in certain regards, nationalism is also unimportant in some peoples' lives as business ventures become more international, and as opportunities or lack thereof drive people abroad in search of employment. Those Koreans in Japan who are running their own businesses or who work for multinational corporations are being pushed abroad by the same global forces which turned Japan into a globalized society.¹⁷⁴ As business and other market factors shape people's lives, nationalism becomes only one of several compelling factors. I do not concede that nationalism is not an important factor in motivating human behavior in the twenty-first century, or that national sentiment is not important to younger Zainichi generations. However, as Oh argues, nationalism, or at least South Korean or North

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Korean nationalism is not the primary motivation for these third and fourth generation Zainichi Koreans.

When discussing nationalism in regard to the Zainichi community, Japanese nationalism cannot be overlooked, as Zainichi Koreans are often the targets of Japanese nationalist ire. The two types of Zainichi nationalism create a conflict with Japanese society. Japanese reactionary nationalism often arises from a reaction against perceived wrongs perpetrated by the North Korean government against Japan,¹⁷⁵ but there is also a strong trend among some Japanese against the so-called Korean wave as South Korean pop culture permeates Japanese television and music.¹⁷⁶ But when North Korea does dominate the headlines, it is Chongryon which bears the brunt of Japanese people's ire. Chongryon embodies the North Korean state for Japanese angry over issues like the abductions of Japanese citizens or North Korea's missile tests, by bringing an element of the enemy government to their own shores.¹⁷⁷ They provide an easy target for nationalist outrage. Since school children who attend Chongryon schools wear uniforms different from those of Japanese schools or Mindan schools, they are easily identifiable as Koreans.¹⁷⁸ When North Korea acts in a manner which threatens Japanese security, or in particular when North Korea admitted to the kidnaping of Japanese citizens, or when South Korea rises in prominence, Japanese nationalists feel threatened, and attacks against the Japanese Korean community increase.

The next section covers the way that Chongryon's nationalism contributed to the repatriation of 93,000 people to North Korea. The consequences of the nationalist

¹⁷⁵ Shipper, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Lie, 133.

¹⁷⁷ Shipper, 65.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 62.

sentiment to North Korea had on the lives of people who were influenced by the organization to return will be examined.

Chapter 5: Repatriation

North Korea has used Chongryon for its own benefit from the beginning. Chongryon had three important tasks assigned by the regime since its founding in 1950: promote pro-North sentiment among Japan's Korean residents, funneled money from Koreans in Japan to the DPRK, and establish businesses in order to generate cash for the government in P'yŏngyang.¹⁷⁹ In addition to all of these, during the mid-twentieth century, Chongryon played a huge role in the repatriation of Koreans to North Korea. From 1959 to 1984 more than 93,000 people moved to North Korea.¹⁸⁰ Was ideology the sole motivating force for the Korean Residents' Association in promoting homeland return? Furthermore, what consequences did this mass migration have for the ones who lived it, and how accountable should Chongryon be for the suffering endured by those who did go to North Korea? The role of Chongryon in this process is examined in this section.

Economic Motive of the North Korean Government

Sending repatriates back to North Korea was one of Chongryon's most important roles in helping the nascent North Korean economy to develop. Their support for the regime began with Chongryon's founding and the repatriation movement was one of their first successful beneficial acts. Individuals chose to go to North Korea for a number of reasons, and due in large part to the efforts of organizations ranging from Chongryon to the Japanese government to convince them that going to North Korea would be a good

¹⁷⁹ Max Fisher, "North Korea is Losing a Crucial Source of Income: Koreans in Japan," *The Washington Post*, October 25, 2013, accessed February 4, 2015.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/10/25/north-korea-is-losing-a-crucial-source-of-income-koreans-in-japan/>.

¹⁸⁰ Keun Woo Nam, "Rethinking the North Korean Repatriation Program: The Change from an 'Aid Economy' to a 'Hostage Economy'," *Korean Social Sciences Review* 2, no. 2 (2012): 220.

decision.¹⁸¹ But what of the North Korean state? Why did they push Chongryon to encourage people to return? Discussions of the repatriation program usually analyze the ideological components of the mass migration, patriotism toward North Korea and devotion to communism. One often overlooked aspect of the repatriation program to North Korea and studied by scholar Keun Woo Nam involved the economic benefit to the country that came from an influx of so many Koreans from Japan.¹⁸² Bringing so many people to North Korea helped to build their economy after the significant decline in financial aid from other socialist nations beginning in the late 1950s by gaining from the Japanese Koreans' "advanced technology, capital manufacturing machinery, and labor force."¹⁸³ This would prove to be a boon to North Korea, and the economic role of both repatriated Japanese Koreans and their relatives who remained in Japan would have long-term effects on the development of the economy.

In addition to the already mentioned reduction in foreign aid from other countries, North Korea had other incentives to bring in a large number of Koreans from Japan. Over time during the massive repatriation campaign, there grew to be an increase in emphasis on bringing skilled laborers back to North Korea, although the initial plans had not allowed them to make distinctions since the repatriation was seen as a humanitarian effort.¹⁸⁴ Even if the call to bring Korean residents to the DPRK must initially include all people, even unskilled laborers, there is an advantage to bringing in skilled laborers, namely that the North Korean state can benefit from their skills and knowledge without having to invest

¹⁸¹ Atsuko Aoki, "Japanese Wives of Resident Koreans and their 'Repatriation' to North Korea," *Acta Koreana* 13, no. 1 (June, 2010): 92.

¹⁸² Nam, 220.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 234-235.

time or money into their training. In some cases, the North Korean state took an active role in recruiting the right sort of people. For the July 1961 group of returnees, the government pressured Chongryon to recruit technicians specifically.¹⁸⁵ Not only did Chongryon follow this directive, but it is said, according to the Cabinet Intelligence and Investigation Office 1968, that the leadership also required that the technicians make reports of specific technicians, their skills and expertise, as well as the material goods they would be able to bring with them to North Korea.¹⁸⁶ Thus, through selective recruitment of useful people, the leadership was able to use technicians to help build up North Korea. Thanks to Chongryon's efforts, North Korea could make use of "cutting-edge" technology from Japan.¹⁸⁷ This was a major step-up in terms of industrial development for North Korea, since they could benefit from advances made in Japan without having to replicate the process on their own from the ground up. Japanese trained Zainichi Korean repatriates could prove to be a huge boon to their new country by sharing their expertise and bringing the means of manufacturing with them to North Korea.

Another economic benefit to the repatriation of Koreans from Japan was that they sometimes came with some degree of wealth and income so that they would not strain the North Korean economy, but would in fact benefit it. They came to help build the fatherland, providing a labor force, but they also came with various goods from Japan,¹⁸⁸ meaning they would not need to replace all their belongings with North Korean-made goods. In a centrally planned economy like North Korea's, having people immigrate who already owned various luxury goods meant that North Korean products could be distributed to

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 241.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 241-242.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 242.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 237.

“native” North Koreans. In addition to their personal belongings brought with them, many repatriated people still had relatives residing in Japan, who could continue to send them various items or goodly sums of money.¹⁸⁹ In this way, the repatriated people still had much of their upkeep supplied from capitalist Japan, and those who remained in Japan were able to contribute to the North Korean economy.

In addition to personal items, the repatriates brought with them many goods which would be beneficial for North Korea as a whole. Indeed, not just personal luxury items, but large scale machinery was brought by repatriated groups in 1960.¹⁹⁰ Items brought with repatriates in 1960 included vehicles, bicycles, sewing machines, typewriters, as well as machines which could be used for manufacturing.¹⁹¹ All of these supplies would be useful to a country still trying to develop, and particularly so if individuals would bring them along with them and allow them to be used for the development of a great socialist nation. We cannot determine for certain how much of these supplies and machinery brought by the repatriates were actually used once brought to North Korea, but their usefulness to the first seven-year plan can be strongly asserted.¹⁹² It can also be determined that North Korea sought to benefit from the repatriates’ supplies and expertise in the face of the loss of foreign aid during this period.¹⁹³ Chongryon had a particular role to play in this. They sent along with returnees particular items for the benefit of North Korea, and also called out some repatriates for bringing goods which were for personal or selfish

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 240.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 241.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

reasons and not to build the economy of North Korea.¹⁹⁴ The organization was able to use repatriates as carriers of goods deemed necessary for building up the country.

From 1967 until 1971, the repatriate program was halted. When it began again from the period of 1971 until it came to a stop in 1984, the North Korean state had to deal with a new reality. By this point the propaganda of North Korea as an earthly paradise was no longer convincing large numbers of repatriates to return.¹⁹⁵ As such, a new system was established. A program entitled Homeland Visit Groups was instituted which brought Koreans who lived in Japan to visit North Korea who had various skill sets, from arts and athletes to students, scientists and industrialists.¹⁹⁶ This last group was especially important for the new plan. Those Koreans in Japan who engaged in commerce and industry often had relatives who had come to North Korea, and when the Homeland Visit Groups began to bring people to North Korea, naturally these people would want to visit their relatives.¹⁹⁷ In order to do so, they were required to pay large sums of money to the North Korean government.¹⁹⁸ In this way, the North Korean government was able to extract revenue from the repatriates and their families still living in Japan. Banking on the bonds of family overcoming huge monetary obstacles, the North Korean government was able to turn a profit. Even after a decade of repatriates living in North Korea, they were still able to provide monetary benefit to the fatherland.

The exploitation of family members back in Japan continued into the twenty-first century. Those who have relatives who went to North Korea sent sums of money through

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 240.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 242.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

the mail.¹⁹⁹ The upkeep of many of its citizens is done by people who live in capitalist Japan, so that daily necessities are met not by the government but by others. Whether the regime factors support from relatives in Japan, and South Korea, into its economic planning at all, or whether they simply don't care about the poorest of their people cannot be determined, but the fact remains that many people in North Korea can only survive due to the benevolence of their relatives abroad. During the famines, Koreans in Japan also sent food items to North Korea, because there was no rice to be had, even if one had money.²⁰⁰ "In the 1990s, we had to send goods. Even if you had money, there was no rice so we sent sesame oil, sugar, rice and noodles and rice cakes," said Yang Yong-hi, a Zainichi filmmaker with brothers living in North Korea, in an interview with Reuters.²⁰¹ The regime's inability or unwillingness to care for its people puts strain on relatives who live outside of the country, allowing those at the top to continue to live lavishly off the donations from the relatives who remained behind in Japan.

Of course, their ability to live on money provided by relatives overseas depends on how much of the money sent from Japan actually gets to the recipients.²⁰² Lee Young-hwa, an economics professor at Kansai University, who sends about 200,000 yen a year to his relatives in North Korea, told Reuters that he believes that about half of the money goes to the government in "loyalty donations."²⁰³ In some cases, there is no guarantee that the money reaches the intended recipients at all.²⁰⁴ So in addition to letting people get by on donations from outside the country, the North Korean regime steals some or all of this

¹⁹⁹ "Sanctions noose makes it harder for Japan's Koreans to help their own," *The Asahi Shimbun*, March 28, 2013. accessed April 13, 2015. https://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201303280015.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

money. We cannot determine whether it is taken in the form of bribery and “loyalty donations,” as Lee asserts, or whether individuals down the chain of the postal system take money. Regardless, the regime not only uses Chongryon for financial gain, but exploits individuals, even those who are not supporters of the regime.

Regrets about Repatriation

The North Korean regime surely relied on the Japanese Korean returnees for economic development, and to have such large numbers of people return to North Korea rather than South Korea was a boon to North Korea’s standing in the eyes of the world during the Cold War. But what was life like for the repatriates once they actually made it to North Korea? Unfortunately, many of them learned very early in their return that they had made a mistake.

Despite the rhetoric they had been told before leaving for North Korea, many of those who were repatriated found themselves in a desolate situation once they arrived. They found themselves in a country which fell far below their expectations and the descriptions they had been given, and which lagged behind Japan in terms of economy.²⁰⁵ As if the economic disappointment were not enough, the North Korean people were also limited in terms of their ability to make decisions for themselves. This rude awakening for the repatriates was only the first in a series of insults and destroyed hopes and ambitions for a better life in North Korea. Though many had come with the expectation of working to build the fatherland, and had given up all they knew and had back in Japan, they found themselves upon arrival being relegated to the lowest echelons of North Korea’s strict hierarchy, and viewed with suspicion as “enemy elements from the capitalist world.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Aoki, 92.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Though they had been courted so thoroughly by the state, they were now declared its enemies, and limited in their opportunities. All Japanese returnees were made a part of the hostile class, the lowest of the three broad strata of North Korean society.²⁰⁷ Most of the returnees had not been rich by Japanese standards, but the wealth they brought with them to North Korea made them wealthy compared to their neighbors.²⁰⁸ Though much of North Korea's success was due to the Japanese Korean returnees, they were not treated well upon their arrival, despite the promises of Chongryon that North Korea was an idyllic country where everyone would be accepted.

In the face of this reversal of expectations, many of those who had come from Japan earlier tried to warn their friends and relatives back in Japan about coming to North Korea. Kang Chol-hwan recounts in his memoir *The Aquariums of Pyongyang* that when his grandparents, father, and uncle came to North Korea from Japan, they were greeted by other repatriates who had come earlier, who asked them why they had come, and insisted that they had written letters back to Japan telling others not to come.²⁰⁹ At the time, the Kang family was not in a position to listen to the naysayers, since they were “wearing rose-coloured glasses,” according the Kang's grandmother, and so deep was their faith in the North Korean regime when first they came from Japan, that nothing could dissuade them from their new home.²¹⁰ Although they did not listen at the time, the other people's warnings would come to prove true the longer they stayed in North Korea. This ominous sign at the beginning of their new lives in North Korea was not unique to the Kang family.

²⁰⁷ Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Real Lives in North Korea*, (London: Granta, 2010), 34.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Kang Chol-hwan and Pierre Rigoulot, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, Trans. by Yair Reiner, (London: Atlantic Books, 2001), 25.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

Many personal letters sent from North Korea back to Japan bespoke their miserable living conditions, though they had to do so in a coded way. One could not criticize the regime, so any warnings to others had to remain cryptic. One Zainichi returnee, Eiko Kawasaki (her Japanese name) had traveled to North Korea alone, and her family expected to follow her.²¹¹ She wrote her parents, whom she had planned to meet in P'yŏngyang a year after her repatriation, "When my younger brother gets married, I will see you," which was a coded message warning them not to come to North Korea, since her younger brother was still in elementary school.²¹² Kawasaki was able to escape and return to Japan after 44 years,²¹³ but not every repatriate was so fortunate. In order to spare family members the same hardships, repatriates had to craft ways to express their condition without alerting the authorities to their true intentions.

Any overt references to poor living conditions were censored by the authorities before being sent on to Japan, so people had to devise an indirect method of conveying their difficulties and the deficiencies with which they coped.²¹⁴ One would have to read between the lines, but there were signs of want. Letters back to Japan would often say that they required all their daily necessities, from toothpaste, clothing, and shoes to school or medical supplies.²¹⁵ Even money was sometimes no help, so people would ask their families to bring supplies with them rather than cash when they visited from Japan.²¹⁶ There is certainly much that can be extrapolated from these encounters and letters. The ones who came to North Korea found themselves not in a better situation than they had left

²¹¹ Ryuichi Kitano, "Defector seeks return of Japanese from North Korea," *Asahi Shimbun*, October 21, 2014, accessed March 12, 2015. http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201410210032.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Nam, 238.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

behind in Japan. Though they had faced discrimination in Japan, as repatriates from Japan, they faced discrimination in North Korea. Nor were their daily needs met while they were in North Korea, a situation which was in many cases worse than what they had experienced in Japan. These letters would eventually help to contribute to the decline of repatriation of Zainichi Koreans to Japan, as they helped to circulate rumors among the community that North Korea was not the dreamland they had been lead to believe.²¹⁷ In a sense, the letter writers were able to save others from similar fates in the Hermit Kingdom, but only once things reached a boiling point where the lack of basic goods became common knowledge.

The Japanese repatriates often found themselves in a precarious situation in North Korea. During the purges of the 1970s, many of them, even those who had been longtime members of Chongryon, found themselves sent to the gulags.²¹⁸ The organization's misinformation was detrimental to the people who were sent to North Korea, and their political clout was not sufficient to support their own people from being purged. Chongryon has never taken any responsibility for the hardships faced by the returnees, and their continuing official loyalty to the regime makes it unlikely that the repatriates, in particular those who have since escaped North Korea, will never receive an apology from the organization.

Japanese wives' repatriation

When it comes to repatriation issues, one cannot overlook the fact that not all those who sought to "return" were necessarily Korean. Many Korean men who came to Japan during the colonial era could not find a Korean wife, since men outnumbered women among the Koreans in Japan in that time, and so they either married or lived in a common-

²¹⁷ Aoki, 110.

²¹⁸ Demick, 34.

law arrangement with Japanese women.²¹⁹ The arrangements for wives and children in such marriages, often called *naisen kekkon*²²⁰ in Japanese, needed to be negotiated if the Korean husbands were to be repatriated. This section explores the ways that Chongryon responded to the challenge of carrying out repatriation when Japanese wives were part of their necessary considerations, assesses the validity of the information they dispensed, and questions the consequences of the organization's push for Japanese wives to repatriate.

The existence of *naisen kekkon* and children born from such marriages was a reality that Chongryon had to face as the repatriation issue came to the forefront, and demonstrates that as much as they considered themselves to be the representation of North Korea in Japan, and despite their pledge not to intervene in Japanese internal affairs, the reality of life is that people cannot be totally segregated along national lines, and Chongryon has always had to contend with integration of some Japanese into their insular Korean community. As the propaganda used by Chongryon to convince Japanese women to immigrate to North Korea is examined, it must be remembered that their integration into North Korean society, despite Chongryon's rhetoric promoting the repatriation of Japanese wives, was not universally approved in North Korea even early in the repatriation process. The Central Committee in North Korea, as early as 1960, wanted to suppress the migration of these women, since their mindsets were difficult to change once they arrived.²²¹ The contrast between what mixed families were told and the actual treatment they would receive upon arrival was quite strong, as we can determine from the testimony of the few Japanese wives who have escaped North Korea, which will be discussed later in this section.

²¹⁹ Aoki, 97.

²²⁰ "Nai comes from the word "Naichi," meaning Japan proper, and the "sen" comes from Chōsen, the Japanese word for Korea at the time. *Kekkon* means "marriage." Aoki, 95.

²²¹ Nam, 236.

Due to the sheer numbers of Korean men with Japanese wives, the Repatriation Committee of Chongryon would have to address the issues. They did so in 1959, in an internal document called “Administrative Guidelines for Returnees,” which pushed first for Japanese wives to acquire North Korean nationality, for children of mixed marriages who currently held Japanese citizenship to have it transferred to North Korean citizenship, and stating if a Japanese wife could not get North Korean citizenship, she ought to “submit their marriage certificate and two copies of their family register with one photograph.”²²² Chongryon, and the North Korean state, encouraged assimilation of any Japanese who were going to “return” with their husbands. This was in contrast to the agreement reached between the Japanese and North Korean Red Cross societies later that year, which “stated that it was not necessary for Japanese wives to acquire North Korean nationality.”²²³ The different organizations involved in repatriation had divergent ideas about how to engage with the issue of diversity of those seeking to enter North Korea.

It may seem strange that so many Japanese women would want to leave the land of their birth to travel to an unknown country, even if they were married to Korean men. Many of the Japanese wives were nervous about their futures in North Korea. Concerns about going to a country where they did not speak the language, or whose customs were so different from their own were primary among wives heading to North Korea.²²⁴ These sorts of dilemmas face any immigrant who must leave their homeland, but the Japanese wives heading to North Korea had particular concerns about their own situation. Whatever their personal political views, North Korea was a socialist country, with a different social

²²² Aoki, 102.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 104.

and economic setup than that of Japan,²²⁵ a situation which could aggravate their culture shock even further than language barriers or cultural differences alone. There were also fears for their families' futures to consider. Many women were initially concerned that their husbands and children would be ridiculed in North Korea for having a Japanese wife or mother.²²⁶ That way of thinking could stymie a decision to leave as a mother tried to decide what the best choice for her family was.

There were several reasons in favor of uprooting and moving, however. Some decided that they needed to go to North Korea for economic reasons, since North Korea was depicted in Chongryon publications in such positive terms,²²⁷ of which more later. Women profiled in both *Chōsen Sōren* and *Nihon to Chōsen*, Japanese language publications put out by Chongryon, often stated that their reasons for immigrating included uncertain economic prospects in Japan, as well as discrimination and uncertainty about their children's futures.²²⁸ This last concern provides something of a double edged sword for Japanese wives, as they knew their children could face discrimination in Japan due to their mixed ethnicity, but many of the wives still feared that their children would be discriminated against for the same reason in North Korea. These personal reasons served as motivation for the individual women involved, but there was a greater ideological motive for Chongryon to promote their stories.

Chongryon had an interest in making a perfect image of the decision to "return" to North Korea in order to convince women to immigrate. To that end, Chongryon was able

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 105.

²²⁷ Ibid., 104.

²²⁸ Ibid.

to construct a narrative of the ideal Japanese woman returnee in *Chōsen Sōren*.²²⁹ The Japanese wives in these narratives began as apolitical and indecisive who then became politically enlightened and desired to help to build North Korean nationhood.²³⁰ Though they were Japanese, through their ideological transformation, they could transform into proper citizens of North Korea who could productively build the country and who would endeavor to do anything to make North Korea strong.

The extent to which this attitude was held by real women is difficult to ascertain, but assuming there were Japanese wives who were revolutionized by dreams of helping to build a glorious and successful socialist state in North Korea, the question remained of what would become of them once they reached North Korea. Further rhetoric propagated by Chongryon assured hesitant Japanese wives that they would be fully embraced by the North Korean state.²³¹ As part of their December 1959 publication “For Making the Repatriation Possible for Our *Zainichi* Compatriots: Reference Materials, Questions and Answers Regarding Repatriation,” Chongryon included in the appendix a question about whether Japanese wives would be accepted with the answer that there would be no discrimination against Japanese wives, and Korean husbands must bring their wives along when they repatriate, citing Japanese family registration law which would allow women to change their nationality to that of their husbands.²³² Chongryon used legal as well as personal anecdote to promote a rosy picture of life in North Korea, and went to great lengths to reassure both husbands and wives in *naisen kekkon* that they would be welcomed to North Korea.

²²⁹ Ibid., 103.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

Still, concerns about their future in North Korea continued to plague efforts to bring Japanese wives and mixed families from Japan. So great were the concerns that in order to persuade hesitant people Chongryon began to include in their newspapers letters from Japanese wives already settled in North Korea.²³³ Many of these letters reassured their audiences that they had plenty of material goods, such as fully furnished apartments with toilets, or that mixed families were placed in neighborhoods together so that monolingual Japanese wives could converse with other Japanese women.²³⁴ The promise of material prosperity spoke to the concerns of those who feared for the future if they went to North Korea and offered a tempting incentive to those who feared for their economic future in Japan. The letters also attempted to dispel lingering doubts about the kind of reception the Japanese wives would receive once they arrived.

Chongryon promoted an idealized vision of the life that awaited the Japanese wives once they made it to North Korea. The reality of the situation, apart from the pleasant stories in Chongryon publications is difficult to know for certain, however, but thanks to the testimony of women who went to North Korea but later escaped, we know that for some, they realized they made a mistake as soon as the ferry docked.²³⁵ Yoshi Takeuchi, a Japanese wife who repatriated with her husband and who escaped North Korea after 46 years, realized as soon as she disembarked that she wanted to return home.²³⁶ Although few in number, the testimony of women who were able to escape North Korea offer a different perspective than the institutional rhetoric of Chongryon, and testimony like

²³³ Ibid., 105.

²³⁴ Ibid..

²³⁵ Anna Fifield, "Japanese Women Who Have Escaped from North Korea Find Little Sympathy at Home," *Washington Post*, September 15, 2014, accessed February 04, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japanese-women-who-have-escaped-from-north-korea-find-little-sympathy-at-home/2014/09/14/4a843e15-a3d1-40cd-bfb2-d2f886b67dfa_story.html.

²³⁶ Ibid.

Takeuchi's provides quite a contrast to the rosy picture presented in Chongryon's propaganda.

The propaganda of Chongryon is important to consider precisely because Chongryon's role in getting Japanese wives to immigrate to North Korea was a major factor in such high numbers of women deciding to do so. It cannot be overlooked, however, that individual members of Chongryon, along with other organizations like the Red Cross and a few unidentified individual people, engaged in some deception to prompt Japanese wives to go to North Korea.²³⁷ The main point of deception involved the idea that after a few years in North Korea, they would be allowed to return to visit Japan, though there was no official guarantee thereof from either country's government.²³⁸ The decision to leave would not seem so final if there were some reassurance that they could at least visit their homeland. Atsuko Aoki speculates that on the part of the individuals who made such assurances was a kind of optimism for opening of relations between Japan and North Korea which might have facilitated return visits to Japan, but any reassurances thereof were premature and ultimately harmful to the women who went to North Korea.²³⁹ Malice or an attempt to deceive may not have played a role in the reassurances, but they were still deceptions, and after decades in North Korea, only in 1997 did a small number of repatriated Japanese wives finally return home.²⁴⁰ Officially sanctioned or not, these faulty reassurances to the Japanese wives of their ability to come home is a legacy of Chongryon for the repatriation period.

²³⁷ Aoki, 106.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

For those women who did eventually return home, a harsh reality awaited. Though there has been a great outpouring of public sympathy for the abductees, those kidnapped and taken to North Korea, most people are hard-hearted when it comes to the wives who “willingly” left for North Korea.²⁴¹ This makes life in Japan difficult for the women, and leaves them virtually friendless, even in the land of their birth. Most of the Japanese women who returned home live in poverty, elderly now and unable to collect social security checks because they are ineligible, since they did not pay into the system.²⁴² One woman, Ueda Tsutae, believes that the government could do more to support the women: “Only 10 Japanese wives have escaped, so it wouldn’t hurt the government to give us a tiny bit of financial support.”²⁴³ This number is disputable. According the *Mainichi Shimbun*, 43 women were returned between 1997 and 2000, before relations between North Korea and Japan worsened, discontinuing the program.²⁴⁴ Still, the wives are few in number, but their understanding of North Korea could be useful, which might provide an incentive to the Japanese government to support them, if they could be persuaded. In addition to financial instability, communication can be difficult, as Japanese vocabulary has changed quite a bit in the past half century, making even watching TV a difficult enterprise.²⁴⁵ Adjusting to a new situation so late in life is hard enough, but to do so with virtually no help from the government or society is even harder.

There is little public sympathy for women who willingly left their homes to go to North Korea, even though for many of them, there wasn’t really a choice, and the

²⁴¹ Fifield, “Japanese Women.”

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ “Families of Japanese Wives Who Left for North Korea Hope for Results from Latest Probe,” *Mainichi*, July 04, 2014, accessed March 11, 2015.

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20140704p2a00m0na011000c.html>.

²⁴⁵ Fifield, “Japanese Women.”

combination of uncertainty about the future whether they stayed or went, as well as the positive image of North Korea spread by Chongryon helped to encourage the women to go, despite much of their promises ultimately proving untrue. Fumiaki Yamada, head of the Society to Help Returnees from North Korea, claims that the women were themselves kidnapped, in a way.²⁴⁶ This opinion is, unfortunately for the women who have returned, still in the minority. Even the families of those who return to Japan often reject them because they feel that these women had chosen their own fate.²⁴⁷ This is what happened to Ueda, one of the first women to return to Japan. When she called her mother, 93 years old at the time, after a 43 year separation, and told her that she had returned, her mother asked her “Why are you calling now? You should go back to North Korea.”²⁴⁸ Without even the embrace of family, the few Japanese wives who have come back are in sorry condition.

The distinct lack of sympathy for Japanese wives is in stark contrast to the treatment of the abduction issue, which is often considered to be of tantamount importance, and is a key concern of the Abe administration.²⁴⁹ If any progress is to be made in that regard, however, taking some advice from the Japanese wives who have returned could be useful to Abe. After decades of living in that country, these women know how the regime works, and what its primary goals are. According to Ueda, the main motivator for the North Korean regime is money.²⁵⁰ “I lived in North Korea long enough to know how things work,” Ueda said. “They want money from Japan — that’s why they’re negotiating — but

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

if the government gives them the money upfront, they won't get anyone back."²⁵¹ Sound advice, considering the ease with which the North Korean government extorts other countries into giving them aid.

Some are advocating on behalf of these women, however. One woman, who works as the secretary-general for an association for the free traffic of the Japanese wives between North Korea and Japan, Kazuko Tashiro, is the sister of a woman who left for North Korea.²⁵² In July of 2014, she told the *Mainichi Shimbun* that she hoped that an investigation by the North Korean government into the location of Japanese abductees would include Japanese wives.²⁵³

Chongryon has been silent on the matter of the returned Japanese wives. These women are not offered any sort of compensation from Chongryon, which is rather a blow considering that Chongryon was so responsible for the numbers of women who immigrated to North Korea. The harms which have been done to all the returnees, and especially the Japanese wives, are at least partially due to Chongryon, and their inability to face the consequences of their loyalty to North Korea are perhaps part of the reason why Chongryon's numbers have decreased. They cannot pretend that North Korea is a perfect "homeland" for the *Zainichi* when there is so much evidence to the contrary, and in order to survive Chongryon will have to take into account their role in the suffering of North Korean people, and perhaps begin to make amends.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² "Families of Japanese Women." *Mainichi*.

²⁵³ Ibid.

Chapter 6: Chongryon in the Future

As the previous sections show, Chongryon has been a useful asset to the North Korean government as they have created a population of “overseas citizens” whose contributions to building the nation of North Korea have been varied through the decades since the organization’s founding. They have sent tens of thousands of repatriates to North Korea and have continued to financially support relatives in North Korea. Those Chongryon members who remained in Japan and their children have been educated by North Korean standards and infused with nationalist sentiment toward North Korea. The organization has also provided a pool of people who could assist with illegal activities, not the least of which are the alleged Chongryon members who helped with the kidnapping of Japanese citizens. The situation for Chongryon has rapidly declined since the start of the twenty-first century, however, as the actions of the organization as a whole and individual members have come under suspicion in relation to North Korean activities. How will the organization fare as problems like searches by the government of offices and homes, loss of funding for their schools, anti-Korean Japanese nationalist activist grow bolder, and the organization’s bankruptcy arise?

Like any organization, Chongryon is going to have to face the future and decide how they will continue to function. On the website, they have addressed the changes in Japanese society as a whole, and in demographics for the Korean community in Japan.²⁵⁴ They acknowledge that there are differences between the newer, third and fourth generations, than from their parent generations, as well as the increase in inter-marriage.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Chongryon, “21st Century Milestones of the Zainichi Korean Movement,” (21世紀の在日朝鮮人運動の里程標), last modified 2015, <http://www.chongryon.com/j/cr/index5.html>.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

As they do acknowledge these changes, they continue their rhetoric of promoting their organization as a guiding light for the Zainichi community of the future, as they will continue to promote ethnic unity through their capacity as a service organization, and meet the requests of each subsequent generation.²⁵⁶ This assertive statement is couched in vague language. As with many other sections of their self-introduction, they do not elaborate on the details of just how they plan to carry out their plan to continue to be the center and guide of Zainichi life. They blame those who have strayed from the ethnically based pro-North Korean nationalism for the continued problems of the community as a whole, and continue to preach that if all Zainichi would work with them, there would be a more prosperous future for the children.²⁵⁷ Blaming the ones who have not participated in the Chongryon community is unlikely to win the hearts and minds of the seventy-five percent of Zainichi who are not actively involved in Chongryon. If the organization hopes to be central to the whole of Koreans in Japan, in much the manner they were in the 1950s, they will have to change with the times. At this point, there seems little hope that Chongryon, with their pro-North Korea stance, will not likely be able to recruit members from outside the community they still have.

They have increased their focus on children and on women, giving greater emphasis to the Youth League and Women's League in hopes of meeting the needs of these two communities.²⁵⁸ The success of such a shift in emphasis will likely depend on their ability to meet the actual needs and desires of the women and youth they want to serve. They will have to meet their target audience where they are, because just like with the non-

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

Chongryon Zainichi, these women and children will not stay with the organization if it fails to meet their needs.

Also conspicuously absent from the section is any description of the many conflicts which the organization has had with the Japanese authorities or with other elements of Japanese society, not the least of which is the anti-Korean Japanese nationalist group Zaitokukai (在特会).²⁵⁹ This group has orchestrated protests against Chongryon and the Zainichi community in general due to their perception that Korean residents are afforded special privileges within society. However, Chongryon has several problems with the law which might supersede attacks from right-wing Japanese nationalists. As we will see, there are many problems which have arisen in the twenty-first century for Chongryon, which have made the regular running of the organization difficult to maintain.

Suspicion of illicit activities has dogged Chongryon for the past decade and a half. That their credit unions were raising funds to support North Korea during the famine has long been a concern, but greater scandals emerged in the early 2000s. Of particular concern is the fear that Chongryon has aided or is aiding the North Korean government in their nuclear missile program.²⁶⁰ The North Korean government has used overseas residents of Japan to help with their economic development in the past, so it is reasonable to assume that some in the organization are helping North Korea to this day. The involvement of Chongryon in the nuclear program in North Korea takes a chilling turn with the case of Kim Sang Gyu, a former Chongryon official who confessed in 2003 to being an agent of North Korea and conducting a spy ring for North Korea.²⁶¹ This was followed by the

²⁵⁹ Full name: Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai (在日特権を許さない市民の会), in English Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi.

²⁶⁰ Shipper, 66.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

testimony of a former North Korean missile scientist who told a U.S. Senate hearing that 90% of the material for the missile program had been smuggled into the country by the Chongryon passenger ships from Japan.²⁶² The situation following these two incidents was tense for Chongryon. They denied that they shipped material for the missile program to North Korea, and claimed that their vessel Mangyongbong-92 transports export goods and humanitarian aid, which is within compliance with Japanese law.²⁶³ The problem for Chongryon is that no matter how much they deny these allegations, they are now linked in public consciousness with North Korea espionage and the nuclear weapons program, whether this suspicion is justified or not. This suspected link between Chongryon and such dangerous activities provoked anti-Chongryon sentiment among Japanese people.²⁶⁴

Apart from personal attacks, Chongryon has faced government scrutiny as well as a result of the allegations of connections with North Korea's missile program. In 2003 the Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro brought an end to Chongryon's tax-exempt status.²⁶⁵ They face a great deal of scrutiny into their operating procedures, and less willingness on the part of the Japanese government to allow Chongryon to function autonomously. As the twenty-first century continues, Chongryon has faced further scrutiny by the Japanese government, which continues to the present day.

At the turn of the millennium, Chongryon began to face far more scrutiny from the Japanese authorities than they had experienced in past decades. As tensions grew between North Korea and Japan, and Japan's security ally, the United States, Chongryon, as the

²⁶² Mark E. Manyin, *Japan-North Korea Relations: Selected Issues* (CRS Report No. RL32161) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003), 6, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/27531.pdf>.

²⁶³ Shipper, 67.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

representation of North Korea, became a target of investigation. On November 29, 2001, the Japanese government began their first ever raid on the Chongryon headquarters, pushing through hundreds of protesters to do so.²⁶⁶ The officially given reason for the raid was a search for documents linked to a multi-million dollar embezzlement scheme, though the political atmosphere at the time toward North Korea was suspected as a factor in the raid.²⁶⁷ In the early 2000s, concerns about North Korea's nuclear program increased the scrutiny on Chongryon. This was before North Korea officially admitted to the abduction of Japanese nationals, but the increased tension regarding North Korea was still about to reach a fever pitch. One of the reasons for the raid was that there were concerns that the Chongryon-run credit unions, which had lost as much as \$8 billion during the 1990s, causing half of them to fail and the Japanese government to pay \$4.2 billion to protect investors, had been funneling money to North Korea.²⁶⁸ This is not a far-fetched suspicion, because during the 1990s North Korea was struggling for support after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was devastated by the famines which followed the loss of Soviet support and food aid.

The 2001 raid was just the beginning. After the raid on the Chongryon headquarters followed the arrests of several high-profile Korean residents.²⁶⁹ One of the men arrested, Kang Young Kwan, had been working in Chongryon's finance department for the past 40 years, and had told the *Asahi Shimbun*, in regard to a question of whether the organization sent large amounts of money to North Korea, "I ignore such matters. Such things could

²⁶⁶ James Brooke, "Raid Exposes North Korean Support Network in Japan," *The New York Times*, December 1, 2001, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/01/world/raid-exposes-north-korean-support-network-in-japan.html>

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

never happen.”²⁷⁰ Despite their blatant connection to the North Korean state, and their status as its de facto embassy in Japan, Chongryon’s official line is usually that they are following the laws of Japan and are not supporting the regime or defying the U.N. sanctions on the country.

There were some positive motions made by Chongryon during this period. In 2006, there was an attempt to make peace between Chongryon and Mindan, as the two organizations came together to announce that they would work to reconcile.²⁷¹ This came in the wake of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine Policy” toward North Korea, which had the intention of cooling tensions with economic aid and other friendly overtures rather than the hardline stance of Kim’s rightwing predecessors.²⁷² The two organizations were also undergoing decline of membership, with Mindan listing its membership at 500,000 at the time and Chongryon still avoiding giving a clear number, as is their wont.²⁷³ At this point, the two Korean groups had no reason to fight each other. They were both struggling to survive. This proposed reconciliation was short lived. 2006 was a difficult year for Chongryon as North Korean missile tests angered many throughout the region. As a result of the missile testing, Mindan retracted their official reconciliation in July, 2006, just two months after signing the agreement with Chongryon.²⁷⁴ Mindan’s President Ha Byeong Ok stated on the occasion: “We will never forgive (North Korea’s)

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ “North and South Koreans in Japan to Reconcile after Decades of Hostility,” *AAJTV*, May 17, 2006, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.aaj.tv/2006/05/north-and-south-koreans-in-japan-to-reconcile-after-decades-of-hostility/>.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Kaho Shimizu and Akemi Nakamura, “Mindan Tells Chongryun Honeymoon Is over after North’s ‘Brutal’ Launches,” *The Japan Times*, July 7, 2006, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/07/07/national/mindan-tells-chongryun-honeymoon-is-over-after-norths-brutal-launches/>.

brutal act,” and all five of Mindan’s then vice-presidents resigned to atone for having negotiated the secret deal with Chongryon.²⁷⁵ The attempted reconciliation between the two organizations was short-lived, and the failure of this attempt will likely deter any future prospects for the long-term. True unity between the Zainichi will have to wait.

Further problems for Chongryon’s ability to supply money to North Korea came in 2006. After North Korea’s first nuclear test, Japan banned most financial transactions to North Korea,²⁷⁶ making it difficult for the Koreans in Japanese who have relatives in the DPRK to be able to help their relatives. Being unable to help their families in North Korea is discouraging for the individual family members to say the least, but being unable to take money to North Korea at all would prove to be a turning point for the organization.

Also in 2006 Chongryon faced growing suspicions that its members had been involved in the abductions. On March 23, 2006, an Osaka business firm associated with Chongryon was raided in a search for evidence of a connection between Chongryon and the kidnapping of Hara Tadaaki in 1980.²⁷⁷ This came as a result of a North Korean spy’s confession that two Chongryon members had assisted a North Korean agent in Hara’s kidnapping.²⁷⁸ The confession gave the Japanese authorities reason to suspect Chongryon, despite not knowing whether the suspected Chongryon member accomplices were willing or coerced.²⁷⁹ The link to the abduction issue in Japanese public discourse was exacerbated by the Japanese media, which relied mostly on police reports to connect Chongryon with the kidnappings.²⁸⁰ In Japanese media procedural norms, official sources are often

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ “Sanctions noose makes it harder for Japan’s Koreans to help their own,” *The Asahi Shimbun*.

²⁷⁷ Shipper, 67.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

privileged over other sources of information, making it difficult for Chongryon to withstand the allegations. Even so, Chongryon leaders denounced the raids in the *Asahi Shimbun*, stating that they were orchestrated with the direct purpose of “manipulating public sentiment” against Chongryon and Korean residents in general by connecting them to the abductions.²⁸¹ The leadership of Chongryon has continued to protest raids and assert their innocence.

The financial problems and crackdown by the Japanese government would culminate into great financial loss in the early 2010s. Since that time, Chongryon’s financial situation has fallen drastically, with the organization declaring bankruptcy in 2012.²⁸² Not only was the group hit financially, but they have been forced into further humiliation. The Japanese government ordered Chongryon to sell its headquarters in Tokyo and use the cash, in the amount of 5 billion yen, to pay back debts it took out from the Japanese government in the 1990s to help send monetary aid to North Korea during the famines.²⁸³ The sale of the headquarters has been a fraught affair from the beginning, as there has been more than one auction to settle the new ownership of the building. The Tokyo District Court decided to auction off the headquarters in order to facilitate paying off the debt, but the winner of the first auction was the Saifukuji Temple in Kagoshima in 2013, but they were unable to raise the requisite amount of funds before their deadline.²⁸⁴ This failure on the part of the temple to secure the appropriate funds would not let

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Fisher, “North Korea is Losing a Crucial Source of Income.”

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Takaaki Nishiyama, “Supreme Court Upholds Sale of Chongryon Headquarters,” *Asahi Shimbun*, November 04, 2014, accessed March 12, 2015.
http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201411050063.

Chongryon off the hook just yet, as the Japanese authorities were determined to see the building sold. Another auction was held.

The second auction awarded the headquarters to the second highest bidder: Marunaka Holdings, after it was discovered that a Mongolian company which had initially offered more submitted documents which contained errors.²⁸⁵ This sale to the second bidder has not gone unchallenged. Chongryon argues that the sale is unfair because they could get a better price than what Marunaka offered at the auction, based on the 5 billion yen offer of the Mongolian company.²⁸⁶ The higher Court to which they appealed said that their complaint is not valid, because Marunaka would have won the auction if the district court had not allowed the Mongolians to bid with faulty paperwork, and therefore the sale would stand.²⁸⁷ If it had been allowed to go through, this blow would have not only been felt by the Korean residents of Japan, but by the North Korean government itself, because funding from Chongryon would likely decrease as a result of the bankruptcy, but as later revealed, Chongryon would not submit so easily.

The situation for Chongryon seemed dire at the end of 2014, but early in the next year, reports arose which suggested that the organization would not lose its headquarters building after all. The firm which bought the headquarters building transferred ownership to a real estate company based in Sakata, Yamagata Prefecture.²⁸⁸ As a result, “building and the land it stands on are mortgaged to a Chongryon-affiliated company on whose board sit a former member of the Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea and a former

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ “Chongryon Building Remains Under North Korean Control,” *The Japan Times*, February 11, 2015, accessed April 7th, 2014. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/11/national/chongryon-building-remains-under-north-korean-control/#.VSWYAf_nF_gc.

president of Korea News Service, a North Korean news agency, people familiar with the situation said.”²⁸⁹ As such, Chongryon appears to retain control of its property and will continue to use the old headquarters. The persistence of Chongryon in finding a way to retain its headquarters demonstrates a tremendous resilience and ability to adapt to new situations in order to maintain their daily functioning.

The crackdowns by the Japanese government have had repercussions between Chongryon and North Korea as well. The exact amount of money which Chongryon has allegedly provided for the DPRK is not known, but it is believed to have been a substantial portion of North Korea’s national budget.²⁹⁰ As such, it is not shocking to learn that in light of their financial difficulties Chongryon and its leadership has fallen out of favor in P’yŏngyang. In its heyday, Chongryon was a major player in North Korean politics, and wielded a great deal of influence in P’yŏngyang.²⁹¹ This is not insignificant for the organization or for their future involvement with the North Korean government and its schemes. Yoshihiro Makino writes for *Asahi Shimbun*, “In the past, North Korean agencies competed to curry favor with Tokyo-based Chongryon because of its financial assets.”²⁹² With Chongryon no longer pulling in the same kind numbers of funding, its influence with the regime is waning. Signs of its declining influence include a change in management of Chongryon’s P’yŏngyang handlers. They were once under the auspices of “Room 225 – the part of the North Korean government charged with clandestine money-gathering activities abroad” but now the organization is administered by the United Front

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Fisher, “North Korea is Losing a Crucial Source of Income.”

²⁹¹ Yoshihiro Makino, “Chongryon losing clout in North Korea as its financial health weakens,” *Asahi Shimbun*, October 17, 2013, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/AJ201310170076>.

²⁹² Ibid.

of the Workers' Party, a shift which demonstrates that Chongryon is no longer a powerful force of influence in P'yŏngyang.²⁹³ The machinations of the North Korean government are often difficult to understand from the outside, but it can be deduce that Chongryon's primary value to the regime was based on its financial aid. The top leadership of Chongryon likely enjoyed the prestige they were given in P'yŏngyang and the wealth which they received as a result of their prestige.

The loss of clout in P'yŏngyang is a blow to Chongryon, but the greater blow may come to North Korea in the end.²⁹⁴ If Chongryon cannot provide a cash flow to bolster the regime, North Korea will either have to make due with less, or expand their money-making activities without the crutch of relying on their cousins in Japan. Thus, although Chongryon has lost much of its prestige, the regime in North Korea will probably not cut them off entirely in the immediate future.

The extent to which Chongryon is still involved in North Korean affairs and attacks is unknown. In the absence of financial clout, the group could seek other avenues to curry favor with the elites in P'yŏngyang, to prove their continued relevance to the regime. Even as the group's financial troubles have continued into 2014, suspicion lingers around them in regard to a particular scandal which broke at the end of that year. There is some evidence that the group may have been involved in the Sony hackings in December 2014.²⁹⁵ No U.S. government body has made any official statement to that effect, and indeed has blamed sources from China, but there are voices, like security researcher Brian Krebs who question

²⁹³ Fisher, "North Korea is Losing a Crucial Source of Income."

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Dave Lee, "What is FBI evidence for North Korea hack attack?" *BBC News*, December 19, 2014, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://m.bbc.com/news/technology-30554444>.

the involvement of Chongryon, based on their suspected involvement in other North Korean activities,²⁹⁶ including the kidnapping of Japanese nationals.

In addition to the above, Chongryon appears to have found a way out of the doghouse in P'yŏngyang as the alleged connections to North Korea and financial support thereof continues. The home of Ho Jong Man, the chairman of Chongryon, was searched on March 26, 2015, in connection with suspicions related to smuggling of matsutake mushrooms from North Korea.²⁹⁷ Raids were also carried out at five other locations.²⁹⁸ If the allegations prove true, it would mean that Chongryon is working to boost funding for North Korea again. It is beginning to seem that not even bankruptcy will hinder Chongryon in their efforts to provide for the regime. Though imports from the DPRK are banned, it appears that these mushrooms were sold by a Tokyo-based trading company under false labelling which said they were products of China.²⁹⁹ Two men, both residents of Japan, the president of company, Lee Tong-chol and an employee named Yoshihiko Kin were arrested over the matter of the mushrooms.³⁰⁰ Though they denied the allegations, the restrictions on Chongryon are tightening, and likely will continue as public sentiment turns away from the organization.

The future of the organization is in flux, but to outward appearances, Chongryon is not making strides to adapt to new situations, or to face the future with adaptive new perspectives. They maintain the same Cold War rhetoric on their website, which

²⁹⁶ Lee, "What is FBI Evidence?"

²⁹⁷ "Police search home of Chongryon leader over suspected North Korea mushroom shipment," *Japan Times*, March 26, 2015. Accessed April 7, 2015.
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/26/national/crime-legal/police-search-home-chongryon-leader-suspected-north-korea-mushroom-shipment/>.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

demonstrates that they are out of touch with current political situations regionally and globally. If they remain trapped in the past, they may find themselves growing more irrelevant to both the Japanese Korean community who want to be part of the twenty-first century, and loss of membership and funds would make them increasingly irrelevant to North Korea.

However, this point in time could prove a drastic moment for Chongryon. Fewer people, even those educated by Chongryon's schools, are whole-heartedly devoted to their pro-DPRK ideology, or in staying wholly immersed in the group for all of their social lives. Scandals which link the organization to North Korean attacks against Japanese, whether through allegations that they helped with the kidnappings of Japanese nationals or that the Mangyongbong-92 helped take materials for nuclear weapons to North Korea, have given Chongryon a great deal of negative press in the past 15 years despite their official pledge not to interfere in Japanese internal affairs. With so many scandals, the continued claims of innocence and persecution begin to ring false, and the organization's relevance weakens, even among the residents' community. Students are being attacked or harassed by Japanese nationalists, making the association no longer a shelter from the discrimination Koreans face in Japan but rather a lightning-rod for controversy. Furthermore, the bankruptcy could be a challenge from which the group may not easily recover.

There are many reasons why resident Koreans would not feel comfortable associating with Chongryon, but there are also reasons to stay in the group. Koreans still face a great deal of discrimination in Japan. As one interviewee told the Japan Times:

Talented Koreans haven't been allowed to rise. Older generations were excluded from integrating into Japanese society, and Korean organizations welcomed those people. But things are changing now even though prejudice

is still there. As long as there's discrimination in Japan there will be a need for the Chosen Soren schools.³⁰¹

Chongryon will continue to influence the Zainichi community so long as Japanese society gives Koreans a reason to believe they are not equal members of society. Mindan members, as already discussed, have begun to fight for greater rights in Japan as resident Koreans, but given the slow process and the lack of acceptance of non-Japanese in wider society, people are likely to remain with what is familiar, and with groups which have in the past fought for their rights.

When it comes to addressing the relevance or threat from Chongryon in the future, several factors must be considered. First, Chongryon is not a single organization, but a large umbrella group which engages in many different activities. It is entirely possible that not all of the organizations are involved in illicit activities. Estimates place about a quarter of the 600,000 resident Koreans in Japan as members of Chongryon, which puts its current membership numbers at about 150,000 people. It is unlikely that all of those people are directly involved in schemes for P'yongyang. Narrowing the focus of criticism only to those organizations and individuals who are suspected of illegal activities could help to prevent a backlash from the whole of Chongryon's community, and prevent isolating its other members. The approach of divide and conquer may convince certain members to help investigations if they are not under suspicion. There is not a guarantee that all Chongryon members will not band together against external probing, but a show of good faith toward those members who are innocent or ignorant of illicit actions might convince them to support investigations into those who are guilty.

³⁰¹ McBride, "Young 'Zainichi' Koreans Look beyond Chongryon Ideology."

The second consideration is the possible consequences to resolving the abduction cases. The Japanese government has been working for nearly a decade to get a full list of the Japanese nationals kidnapped by North Korea and seek the return of all those who are still alive. Scrutiny of Chongryon could jeopardize the talks if North Korea chooses to take offense at investigations of its representatives. Since these arrests happened during heightened efforts to work with North Korea to return Japanese abductees, antagonizing Chongryon could have adverse effects on the talks.³⁰² Functioning as North Korea's unofficial embassy, Chongryon is an important conduit to leadership in P'yŏngyang, and putting them under surveillance and subjecting their members to searches might result in delaying talks or alienating North Korea. Mr. Ho has stated that the Japanese authorities are worsening relations with North Korea, and that there is a politically motivated suppression of the organization.³⁰³ In response, a senior police investigator said that they have reason to suspect a link between Chongryon and illegal imports, and as such the investigation of Chongryon will continue.³⁰⁴

On the one hand, increasing raids on Chongryon-affiliated organizations puts the group on the defensive. If so inclined, Kim Jong Un and his regime could use the raids on Chongryon and their associated companies as an excuse to shut down talks about the abductees, and if this happens the risk is that not all the hostages will be returned. They have used the abduction issue to leverage on behalf of Chongryon before. In May 2014 North Korea agreed to start a new investigation into regarding the whereabouts and situation of the Japanese abductees, and in exchange Japan allowed the head of Chongryon

³⁰² "Police Search Home of Chongryon Leader." *Japan Times*.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

to return to Japan after a visit to North Korea.³⁰⁵ As a result of the raid on Ho Jong Man's home, North Korea has begun to offer greater resistance in regard to the abduction issue.³⁰⁶ Chongryon is still important enough to the regime, or at least provides a useful excuse, that continued investigations and searches in relation to smuggling could jeopardize a speedy resolution to the abduction issue. On the other hand, the Japanese authorities demonstrate weakness if they tolerate violations of their laws and trade embargo. If Chongryon is involved in trade from North Korea, they are undercutting international efforts to pressure North Korea into better behavior. As a result of the slow progress on the abduction issue, Japan has extended its import ban and trade embargo against North Korea,³⁰⁷ meaning a violation of this ban threatens Japanese efforts to pressure P'yŏngyang on the issue. Breaking the Japanese law would be a violation of Chongryon's self-stated *modi operandus* regarding non-interference, and also present a challenge to the state authority which shows bad faith on the part of Chongryon and the regime whom they are helping by going around the ban on imports. Using the return of the hostages as a *carte blanche* to engage in illegal activities, or to expect not to be investigated in relation to illegal actions is not normative behavior, and it does not demonstrate to the Japanese that there is any sincerity on the part of either Chongryon or North Korea. If Chongryon continues to give the Japanese reason to suspect they are involved in illegal actions, the two countries will likely not be able to reach a satisfactory conclusion to the issue of the abductions.

³⁰⁵ "Japan Draws a Blank in Latest Secret Talks with North Korea on Abduction Issue," *Asahi Shimbun*, April 01, 2015, accessed April 18, 2015. https://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201504010055.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ "Japan Ups Abduction Probe Pressure on North," *The Japan Times*, March 29, 2015, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/29/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-ups-abduction-probe-pressure-on-north/>.

Chongryon will likely remain a part of the Zainichi community and an important player in Japanese-North Korean relations for years to come. Japanese government policy must take into account the pros and cons of increased monitoring of Chongryon in relation to international issues like reducing North Korea's nuclear weapons program and resolving the abductee issue. Chongryon has survived many setbacks since the beginning of the twentieth century and likely will not disappear anytime soon.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Chongryon's significance has waned among the Zainichi community since its founding, but it continues to endure. The organization has continued to exist despite a global shift away from communism, investigations from the Japanese government, targeting from Japanese nationalists, and bankruptcy. Even the bankruptcy and selling of its headquarters was not a hindrance to the organization's ability to keep running. In the future, Chongryon will probably remain, albeit as a minor part of the Zainichi community.

While Chongryon remains tied to North Korea, it remains a potential threat to the security in Japan. The various scandals which have emerged from the late 20th century to the present day suggest that the organization is not merely an innocent representative of P'yongyang, but actively involved in efforts which could have consequences for Japanese society and the geopolitical balance of the region.

One possibility for Chongryon's future is that they will continue to wane in relevance as Mindan's numbers grow or as Korean residents accept Japanese citizenship. At its founding Chongryon had the support of the majority of Zainichi, but in the present day that support has withered to one quarter of the total population. If the trend continues, they could lose numbers to the point where they would not be able to afford to keep up their business enterprises which funnel money to the North Korean state, and many of their schools may close as parents choose other options for their children's education.

On the other hand, Chongryon's persistence in continuing their activities in the face of bankruptcy, and their apparent retention of control of their headquarters through a lease held by one of the companies under their umbrella show that the decline of membership and even greater scrutiny and crackdowns from the Japanese government have proven

insufficient to dismantle the organization entirely. Predictions of Chongryon's demise at this point would be premature. As such, the Japanese authorities should maintain vigilance regarding any illicit activity carried out by Chongryon. The danger is profiling all Zainichi as being connected to Chongryon and through it, North Korea.

The Japanese authorities will have to maintain vigilance as they continue to try to work out a deal with P'yŏngyang over the abduction issue. Increasing pressure on Chongryon could allow them to leverage pressure against the North Korean regime, but that pressure could backfire if P'yŏngyang withdraws entirely from talks as a result of what it perceives to be unfair monitoring of its representatives in Japan. Balancing Chongryon between the two governments might be the only way to come to a resolution and bring this chapter of Japanese-North Korean relations to a close.

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