

Grenzgänge : (De-)Konstruktion kollektiver Identitäten in Japan

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“WE ARE ALL ‘RESIDENTS OF JAPAN’”: THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMON IDENTITY AND THE SUCCESS OF THE ANTI-FINGERPRINTING MOVEMENT¹

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Abstract: The anti-fingerprinting movement in the 1980s was the first movement of *zainichi* Koreans in Japan that achieved both its goal and support from Japanese. Considering the movement as a result of the acceptance by Japanese of Koreans' claim of their being the same “residents of Japan” as Japanese are, this paper analyzes how this acceptance was achieved, based on interview data. Particular focus is given to interpretations of structural factors by four movement actors: the Japanese state, Koreans, Korean ethnic organizations, and Japanese. This paper discusses how the Koreans' separation from ethnic organizations and the Japanese' questioning of undemocratic behavior of their own state removed the “cage of nationalism” that had divided the two. It concludes that it was this separation from the state that made the anti-fingerprinting movement one of “residents of Japan,” which was characterized by a collaboration between two groups whose national and ethnic boundaries were blurred. By describing the anti-fingerprinting movement as a “failure” from the “new” social movement point of view while being a “success” as an “old” social movement, this paper also suggests the limitation of distinction between the “old” and the “new” based on different roles of identity.

INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Han Jong-Suk², a first-generation Korean resident in Japan, refused to re-register his fingerprint at Shinjuku Ward Office. This was a violation of Article 14 of the Alien Registration Law enacted in 1952 that obliged all foreign residents in Japan, 14 years and older, to have their fingerprints taken every three years for alien registration, commonly known

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² For the names of the individuals that appear in this paper, except the author's name, the family name comes first followed by the first name as they do in Japanese and Korean.

as the fingerprinting requirement.³ A violation of the requirement could result in a one-year imprisonment or labor, or a fine of more than 10,000 yen but no more than 30,000 yen. Only a few rejections followed immediately after this due to fear of the legal sanctions. However, this small and individual resistance gradually spread among foreigners, Koreans in particular, developing into a nation-wide movement that is now referred to as the anti-fingerprinting movement. The movement challenged the fingerprinting requirement and demanded that the Japanese state abolish the requirement and improve the legal status of foreign residents in Japan. After 11 years of struggle, it finally led to a government decision in 1991 to abolish the fingerprinting requirement for permanent residents by 1993.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Many scholars have examined social movements from various points of view such as resource mobilization (Gould 1991; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Morris 1981; Snow, Zurcher and Ekland 1980) and political opportunities (Barkan 1984; Cloward and Piven 1977; Goldstone 1991; Jenkins and Perrow 1997; Koopmans 1993; Kriesi et al. 1992; Marx 1995) or political processes (McAdam 1999). However, these structural explanations describe only the environment for a movement. Actual participation of an individual in a movement is influenced by a cognitive process of her/his interpretation of these factors in relation to her/his own situation (Hunt, Benford and Snow 1994; Snow and Benford 1992). Since the framing process is a process of transferring an individual into part of a collective, the study of collective identity also seems to be relevant to the study of social movements.

Yet, collective identity is almost exclusively associated with "new social movements." The "new" is claimed to be different from its "old" counterpart as the former engages in identity politics (Cohen 1985), while the latter is aimed at achieving a concrete goal (Duyvendak and Giugni 1995). However, this distinction is problematic since "identity politics has been part and parcel of modern politics and social life for hundreds of years" (Calhoun 1994: 23). The "old" is in fact also involved in identity politics in a sense, since its demand for structural change is actually based on the identity claim of participants that they deserve such a change. The assumption of the different roles of identity for the different types of movements does not seem appropriate to distinguish the types of the social movements. Rather, how the collective identity is formed seems to play an

³ The requirement was amended when the 1947 Alien Registration Ordinance was made into the Law in 1952.

important role in the mobilization of individuals, regardless of whether a movement is “old” or “new.” Moreover, this assumption also contradicts the assumption of the fluidity of social movement trajectories. It ignores the transformability of a social movement that goes beyond the border between the “old” and the “new” over time. A social movement is not fixed but flexible, and changes its form according to any change in a combination of “purposes, resources, and limits” (Melucci 1995: 43), which varies not only among different movements but also within the same movement over time (McAdam, McCathy and Zald 1996). Thus, to understand the trajectory of a social movement, dynamics among both structural and cognitive factors, as well as changes in movement identity influenced by these dynamics, need to be examined.

Although the potential beneficiaries play an important part in a social movement, they are not the only players in it. A movement certainly needs supporters who provide the participants with material and emotional support. Particularly, the powerless need to receive a positive response from society in order to have their movement succeed (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). In order for a movement to appeal to non-beneficiaries, a collective identity based on factors that only potential beneficiaries share seems disadvantageous as it excludes those who are not really “us” from the pool of potential supporters. Yet, literature on collective identity, whether it is based on a narrow and fixed or an essentialist notion of collective identity (Johnston, Laraña and Gusfield 1994; Melucci 1985; Phelan 1993; Taylor and Whittier 1992), a “target-specific policy” (Marx 1995), or a collaboration beyond gender (Bernstein 2002), only discusses the collective identity of potential beneficiaries. It fails to explain why non-potential beneficiaries are also mobilized into the movement in question. To appeal to supporters who are not potential beneficiaries as well as to potential beneficiaries, a movement needs to construct an identity that unifies both groups as a collective, yet tolerates differences between them and among individuals.

WHY THE ANTI-FINGERPRINTING MOVEMENT?

The anti-fingerprinting movement provides an interesting case for the study of movement dynamics and the construction of such an umbrella identity. At first glance, the anti-fingerprinting movement seems to be an unintended consequence of a “target-specific policy” (Marx 1995), which unintentionally creates a potential group to resist against itself, in this case, the foreign residents in Japan. However, the 80% majority of the foreign population in Japan at the time of the enactment of the Alien Registration Law were actually the *zainichi* Koreans [Koreans living in Japan], that is,

war-time immigrants to Japan under the colonial rule of their motherland by the Japanese (1910–1945) and their Japan-born descendants, who decided to remain in Japan even after the liberation in 1945 (HSÖKSK 1990: 30).⁴ Their Japanese citizenship was stripped from them by Japan's signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, which made them subject to the Law implemented on the very next day. Due to this ethnic composition of the foreign population in Japan, the issue was easily perceived by the *zainichi* Koreans as their immediate problem.⁵ Their resistance successfully postponed the fingerprinting requirement three times after 1952; however, it finally came into effect in 1955 (HSÖKSK 1990: 30).

The anti-fingerprinting movement could actually have easily developed as a movement led by ethnic organizations. The Koreans in Japan usually belong to one of two ethnic organizations: the pro-South Korean organization Zai Nippon Daikanminkokumindan [(South) Korean Residents Union in Japan]⁶, or Mindan for short, or the pro-North Korean organization Zai Nippon Chōsenjin Sōrengō Kai [General Association of Korean Residents in Japan], or Chōsōren. As the official representatives for the Koreans in Japan, they made demands on the Japanese state and led the previous movements of the Koreans. Indeed, both Mindan and Chōsōren had expressed their respective requests to the Japanese government to remove the fingerprinting requirement long before the anti-fingerprinting movement emerged in the 1980s.

In fact, however, the anti-fingerprinting movement developed differently from these predecessors that had constructed a narrowly defined movement identity based on Korean ethnicity. Rather than emphasizing differences in ethnicity and nationality, the fingerprinting rejecters claimed that they were the same *Nihon no jūmin* [residents of Japan] as the Japanese were. Unlike the previous movements, the ethnic organizations played only a minimal role in the anti-fingerprinting movement. Instead, it was the Japanese who took an active role in support activities. The participation of Japanese in the movement prevented it from becoming just

⁴ The Korean population in Japan, which once reached 2 million by the end of World War II, declined rapidly in the 1950s as many repatriated after the defeat of Japan in 1945. The number ranges from 500,000 to 700,000, depending upon sources. Those who remained in Japan are called *zainichi*, which literally means “to live in Japan” but is used to imply that the individual's residency in Japan is temporal.

⁵ Among the 263 foreigners who rejected fingerprinting since the implementation of the fingerprinting requirement in 1955, the majority were Koreans, with two Chinese and one with no nationality (HSÖKSK 1990: 30).

⁶ The organization was known as Zai Nippon Daikanminkoku Kyoryū Mindan [(South) Korean Foreign Residents' Union in Japan] until 1994.

ethnically homogenous, and thereby made it a movement of both Koreans and Japanese. Indeed, their support can be interpreted as an acceptance of the claim made by Koreans of their being “residents of Japan.” While the fingerprinting requirement was an issue that applied exclusively to foreigners, how could this acceptance be achieved? How did the Koreans’ claim as “residents of Japan” appeal to the Japanese?

Moreover, the fingerprinting requirement was not a new problem. The issue had been a source of discontent for foreigners since its enactment in 1952, but had never succeeded to mobilize people into a movement due to fear of legal sanctions. Han’s rejection was not the first challenge to the requirement, but definitely was the first case that succeeded in mobilizing a movement among Korean individuals who had been concerned with the issue but had not taken any action before. While the legal restrictions seem to have remained the same, why, then, could Han’s rejection mobilize many foreigners into the movement this time? What made Han’s rejection different from the previous attempts?

This paper examines the construction of this umbrella identity of a movement community as “residents of Japan” beyond the differences in ethnicity and nationality between Koreans and Japanese. It discusses how movement actors interpreted structural factors of the anti-fingerprinting movement and how these interpretations were reflected in their behavior. Since the identity of the individual and the movement community is constructed through interactions with other movement adherents and their oppressor (Meyer 2002: 15), it also explores how interactions among actors enhanced the Koreans’ claim as “residents of Japan.”

DATA

This analysis is based on two sets of in-depth interviews with the Korean fingerprint rejecters and their Japanese supporters in Tokyo and Osaka.⁷ The first interviews were conducted in March and April 2002, and some follow-up interviews in August and September 2003.⁸ I found these informants

⁷ This research has been exempted from full review by the University of Hawai’i Committee on Human Subjects (CHS No 11680). For the purpose of privacy protection of the interviewees, all interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

⁸ The first research was supported by a small research grant for graduate students from the Department of Sociology at the University of Hawai’i and the second research by a field research grant from College of Arts and Science Advisory Committee at the University of Hawai’i. I am grateful for their generous support for my study.

by a snow-ball process, and they were all prominent activists at that time. The interviews were semi-structured and usually lasted at least one hour, often running much longer. Each interview was conducted in Japanese and either recorded by hand or on audio equipment, or both, depending upon whichever the situation allowed, and translated into English by the author.

Another source of information is *Asahi Shinbun*, which is considered the Japanese newspaper of record. All articles regarding the anti-fingerprinting movement from 1981 to 1992 were collected under such indexes of the *Asahi Shinbun kiji sōran* [*Asahi Shinbun Indexes*] as “the fingerprinting problem,” “human rights,” “court decisions,” and “diplomatic relations with [both North and South] Korea.” Although types of events and actors were input in the database for more detailed statistical analysis, for the purpose of this paper, contents of the newspaper articles are mainly used to supplement data concerning the state actors’ behavior. The statistical data show that there are six important actors who influenced the course of the anti-fingerprinting movement: the national state (both Japanese and Korean), the *zainichi* Koreans, the Japanese citizens, the Korean ethnic organizations, local governments, and the other foreigners. This paper focuses mainly on the framing process and behavior of the Japanese national state, the *zainichi* Koreans, the Japanese citizens, and ethnic organizations.

THE STATE OPPRESSION: “DEVIANT FOREIGNERS”

The fingerprinting rejecters claimed that the fingerprinting requirement was “a humiliating treatment that assumes that foreign residents are potential criminals and violates the human rights that protect the human dignity of everyone” (*Asahi Shinbun* 26/02/1982: 4). They argued that it was against the Japanese Constitution, which guarantees the equality of everyone before the law; thus it violated the International Convention on Human Rights that Japan ratified in 1979. However, the term “everyone” as stated in the Japanese Constitution was commonly understood by legal professionals to mean every *Nihon kokumin* [Japanese national], not “anyone” in her territory in the 1980s. In addition, the term “minority” was interpreted as a group of “Japanese nationals” who were marginalized by the mainstream for various reasons (Iwasawa 1998: 135). Foreigners were not included in this interpretation of “minority.”

According to the 1950 Japanese Nationality Law, in order for a child to be entitled to Japanese nationality, his/her father must be a Japanese national.⁹

⁹ Following the revision in 1985, a child of whom at least one of the parents is a Japanese national, is entitled to Japanese nationality.

Anyone who does not fulfill this requirement is legally considered a foreigner. Kobayashi Shunji, the then-Chief of the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Justice, argued that foreigners with permanent residency in Japan could choose one of three options, “either to stay in Japan as foreigners, to become naturalized, or to go home or another country to live” (*Asahi Shinbun* 22/05/1985: 3). The foreigners were those who had chosen to live in Japan as “foreigners” where naturalization was available for them as an option, knowing that the Alien Registration Law would apply to them as foreigners. This view of the Koreans as foreigners was reflected in the reluctance of the Ministry to abolish the requirement. While implementing some *kaisei* [positive revisions] in 1982, such as raising the initial age of registration from fourteen to sixteen years and extending the registration validity period from three to five years, the Ministry basically maintained the existing system. At the same time as relaxing the requirement, it criminalized fingerprinting rejection even more by increasing the fine for rejection from no more than 30,000 yen to a maximum of 200,000 yen. The Koreans claimed that the revisions were rather *kaiaku* [negative revisions].

The government’s position that viewed fingerprint rejection and the revision of the law as two different issues was clear from how it defined the rejecters and how it dealt with them. From the Ministry’s point of view, the fingerprinting registration was also a choice by the foreigners, since they chose to live in Japan knowing the legal requirements that applied to them. Thus, they had to obey the Japanese laws that apply accordingly to foreigners, as they had chosen to live in Japan permanently as foreigners (*Asahi Shinbun* 22/05/1985: 3). Those who did not obey the law were “deviant” foreigners, “as opposed to 996 out of 1000 foreigners who are willing to undergo fingerprinting according to the law” (*Asahi Shinbun* 11/05/1985: 23). Since Japan is “a country ruled by law” (*ibid.*), Tomita Gorō from the Osaka Police Department insisted that it was the duty of the Police Agency to “firmly deal with those actions [the fingerprinting rejection] that slight the law accordingly to what the law directs us” (*ibid.*).

So they did. Among those whose applications for re-entry permits had been rejected by the Ministry of Justice, the number of fingerprinting rejecters particularly increased.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Ministry did not reject the applications from those who had expressed their intention for the rejection but had not yet done it. It implies that the Ministry may have used the refusal of the applications as a means of punishing the finger-

¹⁰ Foreigners who leave Japan and wish to return have to obtain the re-entry permit before their departure. Although the Ministry claimed that it would take some special situations into consideration for their decision on the permit, some cases imply that no such consideration was taken.

printing rejecters, expecting it would deter future rejections. Moreover, other state actors also joined the Ministry of Justice to oppress the rejecters. The National Police Agency made unexpected arrests of Kim Meong-Kwan on July 5, 1983, and of Lee Sang-Ho on May 8, 1985, the latter being an arrest even without a formal complaint by the local government.¹¹ Two of the early rejecters, Han Jong-Suk and Catherine Morikawa, went to court to have their argument heard before a judge; however, the court ruled against them in 1984.¹² Both the Police and the court seem to have shared and supported the Ministry's view that the fingerprinting registration was necessary and the rejecters were criminals.

In 1985, the Ministry of Justice abolished the black ink and a rolling method for fingerprinting, both of which were also used to take fingerprints from criminals. It now used a transparent ink that turns black after the imprint was made and a tapping method in which the foreigners just need to tap on paper with their fingertip. The rejecters were astonished that the focus of the Ministry was still on the revisions while the issue was not about either "the method" or "the color of ink" (*Asahi Shinbun* 14/05/1985: 11). In 1988, although the Ministry of Justice had long insisted that it was inevitable to re-register the fingerprint, it decided to adapt the one-time-only plan. These revisions were not at all an improvement from the Koreans' point of view, as their demand was a complete abolition of the requirement. It just showed that the government continued to view the Koreans as foreigners.

THE LIMIT OF ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS:¹³ "OVERSEAS NATIONALS"

Although the *zainichi* Koreans expected that the end of World War II would guarantee them an opportunity to unite as one ethnic group, the Cold War context brought into the Peninsula did not allow them to do so. Both Mindan and Chōsōren, which were established in 1946 and 1955 respectively, took the position that their members would live in Japan as foreign nationals. Since Mindan was appointed by the South in 1947 and Chōsōren by the North in 1955 as their official representatives in Japan, that meant living as

¹¹ The fingerprinting registration is a national-level administrative task that the national government requests the local governments to administer according to its guidance. The local governments were expected to file a formal complaint to the Police Agency if any rejection occurred, but many refused to do so.

¹² The Yokohama District Court ruled against Morikawa on March 2 and the Tokyo District Court ruled against Han on August 29.

¹³ Due to the availability of data, the analysis on this section is largely about Mindan.

either a South Korean or North Korean national, dividing one ethnic group into two nations. Although their original purposes were to promote ethnic education for their youth (Lee 1999: 139; Seo 1999: 93) and to protect and improve the lives of their members, the organizations became political rather than ethnic. Moreover, Japan's normalization of diplomatic relations with only South Korea in 1965 entitled only South Korean nationals to permanent residency in Japan. This made many Chōsōren members abandon Chōsōren and become affiliated with Mindan.¹⁴ The competition between the organizations over leadership of the Koreans in Japan became even worse, forcing the Koreans to define themselves as either North or South affiliates. Park (1999) criticizes that the directions of each movement led by the organizations in the 1960s tended to be influenced by the ideological lines of their countries and were thus nationalistic.

Since the organizations maintained strong ties with their motherlands, the focus of their activities was more on a benefit to their motherlands than that of their fellows in Japan. However, the reality was that the more *teijū gaikoku-jin* [long-term resident foreigners] the Koreans became, the more problems they encountered in their lives in Japan. The organizations' ignorance and contradiction of this reality failed to meet their fellows' needs, resulting in a loss of trust in the organizations. Han confesses his long-term skepticism toward Mindan as follows:

Ethnic organizations did not seem to be concerned with this problem yet at that time [I had decided to reject fingerprinting]. Also, I could not at all imagine that the Koreans could unite as one together. Thus, I acted individually without any consultation from the ethnic organization. (HSŌKSK 1990: 39)

Instead of considering the organizations a source for help and protection, Han recognized the limitations of ethnic organizations (HSŌKSK 1990: 29), to the extent that he distrusted them (Interview 1, 30/03/2002). His rejection was an individual choice with no organizational support, which was later called a "lonely resistance" (Park 1999: 57).

Indeed, the ethnic organizations' response to Han's rejection and the state oppression were rather slow. Mindan took its first official action to collect petitions in 1983 after the revisions were made in 1982 (ZNDMMCH 1997: 60). From the activists' point of view, these large organizations did not do anything until the movement became bigger and more visible (Interview 2, 27/03/2002). Moreover, although its members were actively involved in the fingerprinting rejection as well as in other direct actions such

¹⁴ Originally, more *zainichi* Koreans viewed North Korean policy to be more promising and thus affiliated with the North.

as throwing away the registration booklets, and hunger strikes, all while at risk of legal sanctions, Mindan only adopted a strategy to postpone fingerprinting during a three-month “grace period”¹⁵ and took indirect action such as collecting petitions and expressing its discontent through statements. Chōsōren, which maintained its stance that they as foreign nationals should not intervene in other countries’ domestic politics, was even less active.

In addition, these organizations’ policies were also influenced by the diplomatic relations of their respective motherlands with Japan. After Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro agreed with South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan in 1985 on financial support for South Korea, the South Korean government requested Mindan to guide its members to behave in accordance with the Japanese law. Upon this request, Mindan declared the termination of postponing the fingerprinting, claiming that it achieved its initial goal to express demands for a reform of the alien registration system. A Mindan officer explains the reason for its action that “we [Mindan] as a legal organization could not encourage our members to get involved in an illegal act” (Interview 3, 28/03/2002). An informant criticized Mindan for its taking a minimal action and considered that it was acting for its survival as an organization, becoming “an organization for its own sake” (Interview 2, 27/03/2002). Mindan valued itself as an entity with a strong solidarity that had played an important role in strengthening the organization and contributing to the construction of an ethnic identity among the Koreans in the anti-fingerprinting movement (ZNDMMCH 1997: 61). However, the anti-fingerprinting movement obviously was not a top-down movement as previous movements had been, but rather a grass-roots movement that involved many of those who had not previously participated in any political activities.

KOREANS: “RESIDENTS OF JAPAN”

Although the *zainichi* Koreans were considered foreigners, to what extent they were foreign was questionable. In fact, 68.5% of the Koreans in general and as many as 80% of those whose age was 20–29 were Japan-born by the 1980s (Kinbara et al. 1986: 13). They were defined as foreigners because the Japanese Nationality Law enacted in 1950 generally entitled Japanese citizenship based on paternalistic bloodline. Thus, although they were indeed foreigners in legal terms, the younger generations were not quite for-

¹⁵ The Ministry of Justice gave rejecters a three-month grace period before making formal complaints.

eign in the same sense as the first-generation, who may have hesitated to oppose the Japanese government, as a first-generation Korean male confessed, because he is “after all a foreigner living in a host country” (*Asahi Shinbun* 30/04/1985: 22).

Moreover, the longer they lived in Japan, the less unknown they became. By the 1980s, about 40% of the Koreans had lived at their present addresses more than ten years, with the mean being 11 years, and most South Koreans went to Japanese schools rather than Korean ethnic schools (Kinbara et al. 1986: 12; 131). Some were simply well-known in their professions. The Koreans were not quite unknown either, as the government claimed, but had been identifiable by their residences, school records, and occupations. Rather than being foreign nationals who had wished to repatriate to their motherland, the Koreans gradually began to become a part of the community in which they lived.

This could have certainly changed their perception of themselves as *zainichi gaikokujin* [foreign residents in Japan]. Indeed, it was around 1985 that the Koreans began to use the concept of *teijū gaikokujin* [long-term resident foreigners] or *Nihon no jūmin* [residents of Japan] who did not deserve the fingerprinting requirement. Together with the concept of *naikokujin*¹⁶ that Han used to describe his position in Japan (Interview 1, 30/03/2002), these concepts all seem to imply the republican concept of citizenship, the bundle of rights one can get when one is born in that country. Han’s rejection was an expression of concerns for his daughters, who as “residents of Japan” would face the reality of discrimination in Japan, as well as of his own long-term anger and discomfort over the requirement (Interview 1, 30/03/2002).

Their strong hesitance to become naturalized can also be seen as a reflection of this perspective of “residents of Japan.” Fukuoka (2000) discusses that the Japanese consider lineage, the internalized understanding of Japanese culture, and nationality crucial for pure Japaneseness. Further, Yoshino (1998) argues that since the Japanese still place importance on the sharing of common “blood,” they tend to give more credit to foreign nationals of Japanese descent, such as Japanese-Americans, as more Japanese than naturalized Japanese, who are legally and culturally “Japanized outsiders.” To become Japanese does not mean for foreigners in Japan just to acquire Japanese citizenship; it means, or at least is perceived to mean, to become culturally, ethnically and racially Japanese. The Koreans’ rejection

¹⁶ It is difficult to translate this term into English. Although it literally means a person from within a country as opposed to a person from a foreign country (*gaikokujin*), the term seems to be referring to the concept of citizen or citizenship in this context.

of naturalization is their resistance to the notion of a “homogeneous Japan,” in which heterogeneous membership in the society is rejected. To live the way they are, the *zainichi* Koreans simply could not see a naturalization that forces them, who are already culturally Japanese, to be more Japanese, as a choice. In fact, my informants mentioned “something like American citizenship” as what they consider they should be guaranteed by the Japanese government, referring to the ethnic and cultural diversity among citizens in the United States.

This older generation’s concern for their descendants’ future was handed to the younger generation and presented as their own issue. Indeed, among 263 foreigners who rejected fingerprinting in 1985, Koreans constituting the 95% majority, 141 were in their twenties, followed by 54 in their teens, 41 in their thirties, and only 27 in their forties (*Asahi Shinbun* 03/06/1985: 1). In fact, many of the prominent activists in the anti-fingerprinting movement were members of Kankoku Gakusei Dōmei ([Zainichi] Korean Student League), or Kangakudō for short. Kangakudō was an organization for students under the leadership of Mindan until the 1970s. Its alumni usually became members of Kankoku Seinen Dōmei ([Zainichi] Korean Youth League) or Kanseidō for short, another organization for workers under Mindan, after they graduate from universities. Both Kangakudō and Kanseidō were later purged by their mother organization Mindan.¹⁷ Thus, the rejecters did not have a strong connection with, nor were they controlled by, the organization that still maintained close political ties with their motherland.

However, the fact that many of the activists were once Kangakudō members does not mean that the anti-fingerprinting movement was led by Kangakudō. Where their activities should be directed, whether to South Korea or Japan, was a big problem for the Koreans in general; as it was for this organization for the young generations. Those who were interested in the fingerprint issue were a minority, as the majority of Kangakudō viewed the issue as one that could not be solved completely without solving issues back in South Korea.¹⁸ A former Kangakudō and Kanseidō member informed me that he did not reject fingerprinting because to him, “Demanding the same rights as the Japanese have [claiming that the Koreans have the same rights

¹⁷ Both Kangakudō and Kanseidō considered it impossible to solve the *zainichi* issue only within the context of Japan since the source of the issue laid in the division of Korea and Park’s dictatorship in South Korea. Both organizations were against Mindan’s support for Park Chung Hee.

¹⁸ There were also regional differences; Kangakudō in Tokyo and Osaka focused more on *zainichi* issues while Kyoto and Hyogo focused more on issues in their motherland. This difference in the focus on how to solve their issues may have resulted in differences in behavior among its members.

as the Japanese do as “residents of Japan”] equals wanting to be Japanese” (Interview 4, 13/09/2003). From his point of view it was not Kangakudō itself, but those who graduated from Kangakudō but did not become members of Kanseidō, that led the fingerprinting rejection by deploying their own movement (Interview 4, 13/09/2003). It can be said that they were the ones whose focus was on solving their immediate problems in Japan.

Viewing themselves as *Nihon no jūmin*, the Koreans now perceived the state as an illegitimate oppressor that imposed an unjust treatment on them. The harsh oppression by the state seems to have empowered the Koreans who used to perceive themselves as powerless before the Japanese state (Interview 2 and 5, 27/03/2002):

It is just one fingerprint! How astonishing, I thought, this state, which holds enormous power over us, even arrests us little ones just to take one fingerprint from us! I thought, if they want to fight against us, then we should also fight back against them. (Interview 2, 27/03/2002)

Although they wanted to appeal to the Japanese government, the Koreans were those who “do not own any means to change the [illegitimate] law” (*Asahi Shinbun* 03.06.1985: 1). As a result, the fingerprinting rejection became the last resort for them, what Black (1998: 27) called “self-help,” a necessary evil. According to a survey conducted on 1,300 South Koreans by Mindan in 1985, 50% answered that the fingerprinting is “humiliating,” 50.7% said that “the rejection was illegal but necessary,” 26.3% “wanted to reject fingerprinting,” and only 5.1% did not support the movement since it was illegal (*Asahi Shinbun* 02/02/1985: 3). Meanwhile, 1985 – the year when a massive renewal that had been postponed by the 1982 revision was expected – was approaching. The state oppression contributed to the Koreans’ interpretation of this structural factor as an opportunity for mass mobilization, which they expected could bring a victory to the movement. This created a powerful force that motivated the Koreans to participate in the movement. Indeed, the number of rejecters, which was only eight by 1982, increased to more than 2,000, with about 8,000 more who were postponing the registration.

BECOMING A MOVEMENT OF THE “RESIDENTS OF JAPAN”:
A SUCCESS THAT WAS A FAILURE

The separation of the Koreans from the nationalistic organizations and their focus on where they actually stood made the presentation of themselves as “residents of Japan” more sound. Indeed, the group who filled the vacancy left by the ethnic organizations was Japanese supporters. Un-

like Mindan, a group of Japanese activists, who later organized Han-san no Shimon Ōnatsu Kyohi o Sasaeru Kai [Support Group for Han's Fingerprinting Rejection] to support his rejection, had actively looked for Han after having learned that the first rejecter was from Tokyo (HSÖKSK 1990: 45). They were individuals who originally had had regular meetings in Tokyo to discuss the negative reforms in the Alien Registration Law.

In fact, my Japanese as well as Koreans informants had some experiences in participating in social movements, especially in *nyūkan tōsō* [the struggle against the Immigration and the Refugee Law] in the 1970s. The Japanese activists were those who had challenged the Japanese government for more democracy and were concerned with discriminatory and unequal policies of their own government against the foreigners. The anti-fingerprinting movement occurred just at the right time for Japanese activists to fill the vacuum in the social movement scene in Japan in the 1980s where there was no political movement to participate in (Interview 2, 5 and 6, 27/03/2002). Thus, they presented the fingerprinting issue as an issue of Japanese society. In this respect, the fingerprinting movement was where demand and supply met; the Koreans did not have the resources but an issue, and the Japanese did not have an issue but the resources.

Likewise, the Korean activists were those who could emancipate themselves from the state-led ethnic organizations that had controlled them under policies which reflected their mother state's politics, rather than meet the demands of Koreans in Japan. The Koreans perceived themselves as "individuals" who wanted recognition as residents of Japan beyond their nationality and ethnicity. The acceptance by the Japanese activists of this issue as a Japanese one and their support for the Koreans can be considered acceptance of the Koreans' claim that they were members of Japanese society. One of Han's Japanese supporters confessed that he supported Han because he felt a humanitarian obligation: "I just thought that I, as a member of a society, have to support him as he was also a member of the same society. Otherwise, I wondered, what could happen to him?" (Interview 6, 30/03/2002). Indeed, the early rejecters were supported by sympathetic community members in their neighborhoods (Interview 7, 31/03/2002). The Japanese activists also admitted that there were many Japanese citizens who could not be committed to the movement but participated in support activities when their time allowed. Han's comment on the nature of the anti-fingerprinting movement illustrates this point:

[In this movement], not the pre-existing organizations struggled against the government but individuals, because they did not have any alternative. The movement then spread like wildfire with the participation of Japanese and the media that understood its purpose and

were sympathetic to it. It is important to recognize that this movement became a movement in which the Japanese nation included us. (*Asahi Shinbun* 14/07/1989: 18)

The anti-fingerprinting movement became a movement of both the Koreans and the Japanese who escaped from a “cage of nationalism” (Hall 1995: 12). They united under the concept of Koreans as the “residents of Japan,” which tolerated differences between the two.

Consciousness of the fingerprinting issue was diffused to foreign residents from other countries. By September 1 1985, 33 individuals of eight different nationalities, Chinese (21), American (5), English (2), French (1), German (1) Belgian (1), Italian (1), and Irish (1) rejected fingerprinting (*Asahi Shinbun* 01/09/1985: 3). Some of them were permanent residents but others were not, with different nationalities and diverse occupations such as teachers, spouses of Japanese nationals, and priests. Despite the diversity of their occupations and citizenship statuses, what they had in common was their sympathy toward the Koreans. A French Catholic priest explains why he decided to reject fingerprinting as follows:

The French have not really been discriminated against by Japanese as Koreans have been. So I did not think that the fingerprinting is a form of discrimination. But now I realize that an idea like this ignores and enhances suffering of 680,000 Koreans and permits more discrimination. (JCCJP 1985, Internet)

The participation of these individuals with various visa statuses and nationalities made the movement issue diffuse as a problem of the foreigners in general and thus made the movement more inclusive.

In 1991, the Japanese government announced that it would abolish the fingerprinting requirement for permanent residents by 1993. However, it was a political solution between Japan and South Korea, both of which were willing to establish a better political and economic partnership with each other.¹⁹ Moreover, the Court decided to give amnesty to those who violated the Alien Registration Law after the death of the Emperor in 1989.²⁰ Since adjudication by amnesty constitutes the dismissal of guilt of criminals, the acceptance of amnesty meant that the rejecters would have to admit they were guilty. As this would then acknowledge the legality of the Alien Registration Law, the rejecters refused to receive this special “con-

¹⁹ It was a solution for the issue facing the third and later generations whose permanent residency was not covered by the 1965 arrangement. The issue had to be discussed before the agreement would expire in 1990.

²⁰ During this period, the rejecters' protests shifted to *saiban tōsō* [court struggles] by contesting the criminal charges made by the National Police Agency.

sideration." From the rejecters' point of view, amnesty was rather an institutional intimidation that "deprives Koreans of their rights to go to the court and make a rational claim" (*Asahi Shinbun* 07/02/1989: 30).

In a sense, the abolition was a successful achievement of the anti-fingerprinting movement's goal. However, the result was rather unsatisfactory for the activists because it did not yet recognize the claim that the fingerprinting requirement "ignore[ed] the social reality in which the Koreans have already been a component of Japanese society" (*Asahi Shinbun* 30/08/1984: 23). What they really wanted the Japanese government to do was to question what the fingerprinting meant for Koreans and for Japanese. A recognition of the Koreans as "residents of Japan" could naturally come if these questions were asked. Furthermore, the abolition of the fingerprinting requirement should come with this recognition. A structural change made by a political solution ignoring this reasoning was not at all considered a success. Rather, it left the Koreans with a feeling of being used as a political tool by both the Korean and the Japanese governments.

CONCLUSION

The anti-fingerprinting movement was a collaborative product by the Koreans and the Japanese. The fingerprinting requirement had been an issue of discontent since 1952, but no attempt to abolish the requirement had ever grown large enough to be called a movement. However, demographic changes in the Korean population in the 1980s changed the understanding of their situation and made them aware of their rights as residents, which they could have had if Japan were a *ius soli* country. Concerned with their daily lives, these Koreans acted to abolish the requirement. The harsh state oppression and the nationalistic nature of the ethnic organizations made them question the rationality of the Japanese state and relevance of the Korean state-led ethnic organizations. They claimed that they were "residents of Japan" who went beyond ethnic and national boundaries. This claim was accepted and supported by Japanese who also viewed their own government as undemocratic. When the Koreans and the Japanese viewed the state as problematic, they became free from the ethnic-national framework and were unified as a collective that challenged the national oppression under the concept of "the residents of Japan." When this social reality of Koreans as residents of Japan was accepted, the state-defined notion of membership lost its relevance. What is seen here is a community effort in which both the Koreans and the Japanese acted together to achieve a goal, which they considered a common good for both the Japanese and the foreigners who lived in the same society. Although they united under

a broad identity as “residents,” the identity was not universalistic but tolerant, celebrating differences among its members.

A movement can appear as an “old” social movement when it demands a structural change. However, the want for structural change is actually based on the participants’ claim that they deserve such a change because of their identity. A seemingly “old” social movement is actually involved in an identity claim since their demand for structural change itself is an expression of their identity. Any structural achievement without an understanding as to why they claim such a change is not considered a “complete success” but rather, a goal only half achieved. Indeed, the anti-fingerprinting movement is not a success from the Korean individuals point of view, since none of the state actors questioned the rationale for the fingerprinting requirement and the meaning of being “residents of Japan.”

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