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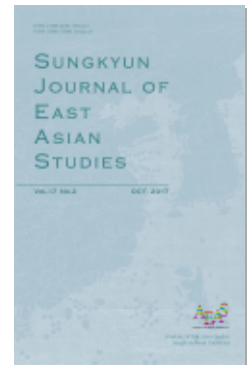
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# Failed Solidarity: Confronting Imperial Structures in Kim Sa-ryang's "Into the Light" and Kim Tal-su's "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji"

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## ABSTRACT

Published twelve year's apart, Kim Sa-ryang's "Into the Light" (1939) and Kim Tal-su's "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji" (1951) straddle the August 15, 1945 border that separates Imperial Japan (or colonial Korea) from postwar occupied Japan (or "liberated" Korea). Since these two works represent different sides of this chronological binary, it is telling that both represent Japanese society as being stratified based on a social hierarchy of ethnic difference. This article argues that Kim Sa-ryang and Kim Tal-su's efforts to subvert this distinction between the colonizer and the colonized fails because imperial structures, in both Imperial Japan and postwar Japan, prevent solidarity between Koreans and oppressed Japanese groups. The threads of continuity between these two works, therefore, pose a powerful critique of the postwar persistence of these structures and their continued impact on Japan, even while under the occupation of an external power.

**Keywords:** *Zainichi*, decolonization, imperialism, ethnicity, *Burakumin*, Kim Sa-ryang, Kim Tal-su

## Introduction

The closing scene of Kim Sa-ryang's 1939 short story "Into the Light" (*Hikari no naka ni*) depicts the acknowledgement of protagonist Minami's "true" (i.e., Korean) name by another character, Yamada Haruo. A young boy who struggles throughout the text to come to terms with his "mixed" Korean and Japanese ethnicity, Haruo proclaims: "Teacher, I know Teacher's name. . . . It's Nan, right?" (Kim Sa-ryang 1999, 56).<sup>1</sup> Haruo's evoking of the Korean reading of "Nan" for the character "南," rather than the Japanese reading of Minami, marks the positive outward recognition of the "Koreanness" both Minami and Haruo possess—something both characters had sought to hide in the past. Symbolically, then, this simple utterance functions as an act of salvation, the short story ending as Minami follows after Haruo "with light steps, as if he had been saved."

Kim Tal-su's short story "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji" (*Fuji no mieru mura de*), published in 1951—twelve years after "Into the Light," also portrays a public revealing of Korean names. In this case, the I-narrator and his Korean traveling companions unknowingly reveal their Korean names not by speaking but through the act of signing their names in commemoration of their visit to the family home of their *Buraku* (部落) friend Iwamura.<sup>2</sup> Through this act of writing the characters for their names, the Korean ethnicity of the visitors is revealed to

Iwamura's *Buraku* family. Immediately, the I-narrator realizes that Iwamura had purposely been hiding the Korean ethnicity of his guests: "He [Iwamura] had not even introduced us by name. Indeed! As we walked along the hedge-lined street behind his house, he had requested, 'Could you refrain from speaking Korean?'" (Kim Tal-su, 29). Differing from "Into the Light," the outcome of this acknowledgment of Koreanness is a starkly negative one in that the initially welcoming attitude of Iwamura's mother and sister reverses completely after realizing that their guests are Korean. This contrast is particularly striking when considering that Koreans were "liberated" from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Why would the revealing of a Korean name be used to construct a "happy ending" in 1939 and a tragic outcome in 1951?

At the end of World War II, there were nearly two million Koreans living in Japan (this is in addition to those scattered throughout the fallen Japanese Empire in places like Manchuria and China). Koreans in Japan, many of whom had been forcibly mobilized, suddenly found themselves in geographic and legal limbo, uncertain about their legal status and whether they would need to return to Korea. Koreans living in Japan before the end of the war were most commonly referred to as either "Koreans" (*Chōsenjin* 朝鮮人) or as imperial subjects (*kōmin* 皇民). With Japan's surrender in 1945 and the formation of the North and South Korean states in 1948, this once simple label became increasingly more complex and fragmented. In addition to the modifier of "residing in Japan" (*zainichi* 在日), different terms for "Koreans," each connoting a connection to a particular Korean nation-state, were now deemed necessary: (North) Koreans residing in Japan (*Zainichi Chōsenjin* 在日朝鮮人) or (South) Koreans residing in Japan (*Zainichi Kankokujin* 在日韓国人).

Clearly, Japanese society changed dramatically during the twelve years from 1939 to 1951. Yet, both of these two short stories, written in Japanese by Korean authors living in Japan, center on the theme of names and how they symbolize the marginalization of Koreans within Japanese society. What is the significance of this continuity? The decision of whether to emphasize discontinuity or continuity is a matter of perspective since periods of transformation will always contain elements of both. To state that there is continuity between two historical periods is to state the obvious. I do not, therefore, make an argument about the existence of historical continuity between Imperial Japan and US-occupied postwar Japan—a claim that has been substantiated in historical studies (Braw 1991; Dower 1999). Rather, I employ a framework of historical continuity in order to examine the threads of connection between these two texts.

In these two short stories, constructions of ethnic difference are clearly

<sup>1</sup> "Hikari no naka ni" was originally published in the journal *Bungei Shuto* (文芸首都) in 1939. All citations in this chapter, however, are from the following edition: Kim Sa-ryang, *Hikari no naka ni: Kimu Saryan sakuhinshū* 光の中に: 金史良作品集 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999), 10–56. "Nan" (南) is the Sino-Japanese pronunciation of the character, which in Korean would be read "Nam."

<sup>2</sup> Burakumin are descendants of former outcast groups but are often placed in the category of "minority" together with ethnic minorities in Japan such as Koreans (De Vos, Wetherall, and Stearman 1983; Weiner 1997). For studies dealing specifically with the Burakumin, see Amino (2001), Amos (2011), and Hankins (2014).

defined and seemingly insurmountable—the result of imperial structures that draws a distinct line between the colonizer and the colonized. These imperial structures, I argue, are presented as obstacles that promote the stratification of society based on ethnic difference and, lamentably, prevent solidarity between Koreans and oppressed Japanese groups. Characters at the bottom of this imperial hierarchy attempt to elevate their own status through language use, ethnic ambiguity, the consumption of modernity, and even violence, but these efforts are largely ineffective in the end. Throughout both texts, there is an undercurrent of implied, symbolic violence that maintains these hierarchies and limits the ability to deconstruct the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized. Though neither text is successful in dismantling the ethnicity-based social stratification upon which Japanese society is constructed, the threads of continuity between the two works pose a powerful critique of the postwar persistence of imperial structures and their continued impact on Japan, even while under the occupation of an external power.

### Continuity

History is written retroactively from a “future” point, which serves as the basis for carving out and dividing the past into clearly defined segments. Actual lived experience, however, is much less clear-cut and eventual outcomes are far from predetermined, even if historical accounts often make them appear to be. Historiographically, August 15, 1945, as the official endpoint of World War II, separates “Imperial Japan” from “postwar Japan” as well as “colonial Korea” from “liberated Korea.” Symbolically, then, “August 15” functions as a border that cleanly divides categories as a point of orientation for historical periodization. Japan’s actual transformation from an imperial structure to a nation-state model, though, was much more complicated than these neatly partitioned categories would suggest.

Many things transpired between 1939 and 1951—the dates of the short stories examined in this article. The Pacific War (1937–1945) began and ended; as part of the global entrenchment of the Cold War, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two nation-states that eventually engaged in a “hot war.” By 1951, the terms for the end of the US Military Occupation of Japan had been settled upon and the current borders of the nation-states in East Asia (China, Japan, Taiwan, and North and South Korea) had, for the most part, been established.<sup>3</sup> In this state of upheaval and major transformation, it is easy to overlook continuity, but focusing on the connecting threads that traverse across the “August 15, 1945” border highlights the ways in which imperial structures and social hierarchies persisted or were reconstituted in postwar Japan.

Kim Sa-ryang (金史良, 1914–1950) was born in 1914 in Pyongyang, now the capital of North Korea, while Kim Tal-su (金達壽, 1919–1997) was born five years later in 1919 in Masan, a city located at the southern end of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Though their ages and initial years in Japan overlap, the experiences of these two

<sup>3</sup> Some exceptions are the “reversion” of Okinawa to Japan in 1972 and some slight shifts along the border between North and South Korea.

writers differed vastly. Five years younger than Sa-ryang, Kim Tal-su was the first to immigrate to Japan in 1929 at the age of 10; Sa-ryang, in order to pursue studies in the metropole, made the journey to Japan three years later. The latter left Japan, after less than a decade, in 1941, whereas Tal-su stayed until his death in 1997. As a student at Tokyo Imperial University—the flagship university of the Japanese Empire, Sa-ryang was part of the intellectual elite. Tal-su’s family, on the other hand, made their way to Japan as part of the mass migration of displaced rural Korean farmers who sought economic opportunity in the urban centers of the empire (although Tal-su did eventually go on to study at Nihon University after spending his youth doing odd jobs, such as peddling scraps of metal).

With the vast differences in experience and class position of the two writers, it is striking how similar “Into the Light” and “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” are. Both texts are narrated from the perspective of an intellectual male adult “I” narrator and feature young male characters who simultaneously represent both the “discriminators” and the “discriminated.” Further, each text portrays scenes of “outing” where the narrator’s Korean ethnicity is revealed by the evocation of his (Korean) name. Lastly, both stories ultimately fail to resolve the dilemma of ethnicity-based social stratification in Japan. Indeed, although the narrators are “elite” in terms of education and class, the outing of their Korean ethnicity erases their status as intellectual elites and instantaneously relegates both to the “lesser” status of “Koreans.” It is a critique of imperial hierarchies—the stratification of identities based on race and class (and the connections between the two)—that defines these two short stories.

### **National Empires: Continuity from Empire to Nation**

Early postwar Japan is seen as a period of transition from empire to nation. Though this is certainly true in terms of political institutions, imperial structures (as will be discussed in detail below) continued to shape Japan long after the collapse of empire—even while under the occupation of an external power. In the case of Japan, the overlap of nation and empire has always been significant in that the formation of the modern Japanese nation coincided with the construction of the Japanese Empire (Okinawa and Hokkaido, in many ways, represent the areas of Japan’s initial imperial expansion). Etienne Balibar describes the formation of a nation as an “always already narrative” that appears as the “fulfillment of a ‘project’” (Balibar 1991, 86). Balibar further expands on this notion of a fulfilled project by labeling the community instituted by the nation-state as a “fictive ethnicity” (96); the “ethnicity” of this community, Balibar argues, is produced through language and race (97).

Frederick Cooper draws a clear distinction between nation-state and empire: “Thinking like an empire was not the same as thinking like a nation-state” and “the imperative of acting like an empire-state within a global system of empire-states was a compelling constraint on the range of action” (Cooper 2005, 200). Certainly,

<sup>4</sup> Though conventionally both author’s would be referred to as “Kim,” I will refer to their given names in order to distinguish between the two.

“thinking like an empire” is not the same as thinking like a nation-state, but empires, particularly late-comers to imperialism like Japan, were constructed upon, as Balibar describes the process of nation formation, an “always already narrative” that was part of the fulfillment of a project.

The discursive forces mobilized to form conceptions of the “nation” are intricately intertwined with those of empire. In the case of Japan, the nation-building project of the Meiji, Taishō, and even Shōwa periods was closely connected with the formation of empire. Mark Peattie highlights the direct connection between “Meiji modernization” and imperial expansion: “It is not too much to say that Japanese colonialism in its formative stage cannot be understood outside the perimeters of *fukoku kyōhei* (rich country, strong army)—that collective exhortation of early Meiji that bound all of Japan’s modernizing reforms to the twin goals of a strong and prosperous Japan” (1984, 23). For Japan, then, the “territorial and cultural conceptions” of nation and empire overlapped significantly, since a “strong and prosperous” Japan denoted a Japan with the military strength necessary to colonize external territories. As will be seen below, symbolic representations of this military and imperial power, and the implied violence behind these forms of power, undergird the worlds depicted by the two texts examined in this article.

Japan was successful in incorporating the separate “territories” of Ryūkyū (Okinawa) and Ezo (Hokkaido) into the Japanese nation, which illustrates the possibility for nation formation through imperial expansion—the ability for the constructed nation to consume new territory. The nation’s formulating concepts of language, race, culture, and territory can be mobilized in different, and sometimes seemingly divergent, directions in relation to empire. These “fictive ethnicities” can be used to justify imperial expansion and to construct imperial identities. Or, they can be utilized to form nations that can be subsequently subjugated to imperial power. The constructed category of the nation therefore provided a vehicle through which to mobilize ideology and imperial strategies to subjugate peoples.

### **Japanese Language as Imperial Structure**

During the colonial period, young Korean writers who had received their formal education in Japanese faced the dilemma of whether to write in Korean or Japanese. Japanese colonial policy promoted assimilation, with language emphasized as an integral part of the assimilation process. Slogans employed by Imperial Japan such as “same language, same race” (*dōbun dōshu* 同文同種) emphasized a shared cultural heritage with Japan’s East Asian neighbors and served as a justification for Japanese imperial advances into neighboring countries (Sato 1997).

Though most Korean authors chose to write in Korean during the colonial period, some writers such as Chang Hyōk-chu (1905–1998) decided to write in Japanese. Chang explains his reasoning, “There are few peoples in the world more unfortunate than the Koreans. I want to make the world aware of this situation, but the Korean-language sphere is too small. Therefore, I felt it necessary to enter the Japanese literary establishment where there are more opportunities for translation” (Kawamura 1999, 34). For Chang, Japanese-language publication represented a broader linguistic sphere through which to raise awareness about the “unfortunate

situation” faced by Koreans.

Kim Sa-ryang’s position on writing in Japanese was a little more ambiguous than that of Chang in that, though he published mostly in that language, he supported Korean authors who prioritized writing in Korean (Kawamura 1999, 36–37). He takes up this very issue in his short story “Tenma” (1940), which paints protagonist Hyölyong, a Korean author who writes only in Japanese, in a rather critical light. Regardless of the positions taken in his writings and views expressed in literary debates, Sa-ryang still chose to write in Japanese. Yun Tae-sök argues that Sa-ryang had two main reasons for doing so: first, similar to Chang Hyök-ju’s position, Japanese provided greater access through which to inform others about issues relating to Korea’s colonization; second, Sa-ryang was unaccustomed to using Korean as a “literary language” (*munhagö* 文學語; Yun 2006).

Tal-su’s decision to write “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” in Japanese was a much more straightforward one in that he was primarily educated in Japan and by the time of the story’s publication in 1951, he had lived there for over twice as long as in Korea. This does not mean, however, that Tal-su was unaware of the implications of publishing in Japanese. As the editor of the postwar magazine *Democratic Korea* (Minshu Chōsen, 1946–1950), Tal-su and the other magazine founders emphasized their choice to publish in Japanese as a means of dismantling imperial structures. The inaugural issue of the magazine designated correcting “Japanese consciousness regarding Korean history, culture, and tradition, which were misrepresented throughout the long period of thirty-six years” as one of the publication’s main objectives (“Introduction to the Inaugural Issue,” 1946).

For both Tal-su and Sa-ryang, their relationship to Japanese—the language of the “colonizer”—was complex and, in many ways, contradictory. Though both advocated for the potential impact of writing in Japanese to speak to a Japanese audience, both were also aware that markers of ethnic difference, of which language is one, could be used to construct colonial hierarchies. As will be discussed in detail below, both “Into the Light” and “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” represent this stratification through the symbol of Korean names. The evoking of a Korean name results in the inability to escape an imperial hierarchy based on ethnic distinction—a distinction largely defined by language. In sharp contrast with the aforementioned imperial slogan of “same language, same race,” it is language and the names represented through language that construct the difference between the colonizer (Japanese) and the colonized (Korean).

### **Ethnic Markings as Imperial Structure in “Into the Light”**

The narrative of Kim Sa-ryang’s “Into the Light” revolves around two main characters: Haruo, a young boy, and his teacher, the first-person narrator Minami. In the beginning, there is a great deal of conflict between the two; Haruo antagonizes Minami repeatedly by using indirect methods to draw attention to the latter’s Korean ethnicity. They become increasingly close, however, as the narrative progresses, with Minami learning more about Haruo’s Korean mother and his rather destitute living situation. The story reaches full conflict resolution in the final scene where Haruo positively acknowledges Minami’s “true” Korean name,

and in so doing, symbolically accepts his own partial Korean identity.

Neither Haruo nor Minami are entirely ethnically “Japanese” as defined by the text, which constructs ethnic identity as unchanging and determined by blood. Minami is Korean—“Of course, I [Minami] am Korean” (Kim Sa-ryang, 13), while Haruo is described as “a young boy who has received [*uketa* 受けた] both Japanese [*Naichijin* 内地人] and Korean [*Chōsenjin* 朝鮮人] blood” (29). Both Minami and Haruo inhabit an imperial space that essentializes ethnicity based on blood. As ethnically Korean (Minami) and partially Japanese (Haruo), both characters are connected to the status of “colonized.” To some extent, the characters are able to conceal or blur the ethnic markers in the text—physical features, language, names, and family relations. The ethnic ambivalence constructed by the characters, therefore, clashes with the unchanging, essentialized definition of ethnicity established by the text, creating tension between unnegotiable physical markers of ethnicity and “invisible” ones such as language.

Minami, although clearly defined as Korean in the text, possesses the ability to perform Korean and Japanese ethnicity due to the malleable nature of his name. “南,” the Chinese character for his family name, represents a crucial element in the construction of his ethnic identity since the reading of the character can mark him as either ethnically Japanese (Minami) or ethnically Korean (Nan).<sup>5</sup> The text transitions back and forth between these two readings. For example, on page thirteen, the reading of “Minami” is first used twice and then followed by two uses of “Nan.” These readings create flexibility in Minami’s surname, which, in turn, produces ambiguity in his ethnic identity, especially from the perspective of the unnamed Japanese characters who occupy the backdrop of the text. Interestingly, other Korean characters in the text have surnames, such as 李 (Ri) and 尹 (Yun), that are unmistakably Korean.

Contrasting with Minami, Yamada Haruo has a typical Japanese name that does not allow for an ethnically “Korean” reading. His ethnic ambiguity is revealed through discussion of his Korean mother and “Japanese” father, who personify the ethnic ambiguity of the “mixed blood” that flows through his body. In reference to Haruo’s ethnically mixed parentage, the narrator states: “I thought about the tragedy of the split between the irreconcilable sides found in a boy with both Korean and Japanese blood” (29). Once again, however, the text later resists its own essentialized definition of ethnicity when Haruo’s mother reveals that his father was not only born in Korea but “has a Korean mother like me” (44).

As a means of overcoming the ethnic ambiguity of their “blood,” Haruo and his father attempt to construct their status as “colonizers” through violence. As will be detailed below, Haruo endeavors to take on the position of colonizer by attacking Minami’s “Koreanness.” Haruo’s father, in a more brutal manner, inflicts violence upon his Korean wife. Metaphorically, Haruo’s parents are the embodiment of an Orientalist relationship between the colonizer and the colonized other or that “between a strong and a weak partner” (Said 1979, 40). These violent

<sup>5</sup> Nan is the Japanese pronunciation of the Korean reading for this character, which is actually *Nam* (남).



attacks are further amplified by the narrator's descriptions of Haruo's mother as a "weak-looking, small-bodied woman" (Kim Sa-ryang, 27). This personification of the colonial relationship can also be found in the way Haruo's father recounts "stealing" his wife: "I told them to hand her over and that I wouldn't take no for an answer. After I threatened to set their walls on fire, her father, turning pale, gave her to me" (38). In the text, then, violence functions as a force through which to overcome ethnic ambiguity and elevate one's ethnic status. As we will see below, however, this elevated status is by no means stable.

### **Imperial Continuity in "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji"**

Narrating a story of interaction between two groups historically oppressed in Japan—Koreans and *Burakumin*, "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji" represents a conscious engagement with oppression and discrimination in US-occupied Japan. The narrative follows four Korean men as they visit the two homes of their *Buraku* friend, Iwamura Ichitarō: his current residence with his elite, non-*Buraku* wife's family and the mountain village home where his *Buraku* family lives. Central to the text are depictions of the relational network of "family" and the location of "home"—spaces in which imperial structures are maintained and reproduced. Multiple layers of race and discrimination are uncovered as the narrative traverses these two vastly different spaces. Differing from the happy ending of "Into the Light," the tone of "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji" is decidedly pessimistic. Rather than reaching some form of resolution, the narrative closes with the aforementioned scene of the I-narrator futilely shooting at Mt. Fuji after having been spurned by Iwamura's family.

Though written from the first-person perspective of a Korean I-narrator, "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji" takes on the form of a dual narrative: Iwamura's self-narrative about his life and experiences is filtered through the thoughts of the first-person narrator. Direct quotes of lengthy Iwamura monologues are punctuated by the internal, non-verbalized reactions of the I-narrator, who constantly questions Iwamura's motives and authenticity. The reader, therefore, is encouraged by the narrative tone to doubt Iwamura's representation of himself and take a critical stance toward his actions. The text's "dual narrative" is further complicated by a dual chronological narrative perspective where "I" describes events as they unfold but also repeatedly inserts foreshadowing commentary, demonstrating knowledge of events yet to come and producing a "split narrative" that simultaneously conveys information from the present perspective and an undesignated point in the future. This form of split-narration makes it possible for the text to maintain a critical perspective vis-à-vis Iwamura without revealing beforehand the unintentional "confession," mentioned above, by the narrator and other Korean characters of their Korean ethnicity.

"I" first becomes acquainted with Iwamura while working as the editor for the magazine "M.C."<sup>6</sup> Iwamura submits a piece of his writing to the magazine, but

<sup>6</sup> The biographical background of narrator "I" clearly mirrors that of the author Kim Tal-su. "M.C." is also an obvious reference to the actual magazine *Minshu Chōsen* (i.e., Democratic Korea) where Tal-su worked as editor during the US Military Occupation of Japan.

due to occupation policy, the magazine is forced to shut down and Iwamura's work is never published. At Iwamura's request, the narrator and three of his Korean associates venture to "H-city" in Shizuoka to visit Iwamura. Upon arrival, the men discover that Iwamura's living situation is rather peculiar. He lives in a large building that houses his wife's family, who are not *Burakumin*, but his actual living quarters are restricted to a small room separated from the rest of the building. After listening to Iwamura complain vociferously about the oppression (*appaku*, 压迫) and discrimination (*sabetsu*, 差別) he is subjected to by his mother-in-law and wife's other relatives, the narrator starts to wonder why Iwamura does not move out of the tiny room and speculates that it is because his association with the ruling class (*shihai kaikyū*, 支配階級) is a source of pride.

Symbols of the power Iwamura's in-laws possess as members of the "ruling class" are flaunted conspicuously throughout his cramped apartment; the walls are decorated with portraits of Japanese soldiers, supposedly at the insistence of Iwamura's mother-in-law. These portraits, symbolic representations of violence and power, call attention to the family's military and "imperial" past: a time when all the male relatives were of the rank of "general or admiral" (*shōkankyū*, 将官級) and the mother held the position of vice-chair in the prefectural Patriotic Women's Association (*aikoku fujin kai*, 愛国婦人会). In the text, then, a clear link is drawn between involvement in the violence of Japanese militarism and high social status in the postwar period. The implication here, then, is that Japan remains "imperial" and that the ruling class of Imperial Japan has maintained its position of privilege in the postwar.

That the room Iwamura inhabits, with his wife, in the home of his ruling class in-laws is defined by imperial structures and symbolic continuity with Imperial Japan is of no surprise. More unexpected, however, is the influence of imperial structures within the home of Iwamura's *Buraku* family. As mentioned in the introduction, the Korean characters unknowingly "confess" their ethnicity to the *Buraku* family by signing their names on a piece of paper at the request of Iwamura's sister. Upon seeing the signatures, Iwamura's family realizes that these men are not Japanese but Korean. The evoking of a Korean name is a powerful act that destroys the budding solidarity between the Korean men and the *Buraku* family. Discovering that Iwamura has brought Koreans into their home, Iwamura's mother and sister's treatment of the men changes completely; they quickly leave the room, never to appear again. Clearly, their refusal to interact with the Korean characters once their ethnicity is "revealed" represents a form of discrimination based on the imperial social hierarchy of colonizer and colonizers—one that disregards the shared experience of oppression. The most blatant example of enduring imperial structures, however, can be found in the character of Iwamura. Though he seemingly seeks solidarity with the Korean characters, his actions and words repeatedly evoke a subservience to imperial structures. "I" is sympathetic to the motivations for this subservience (i.e., pressure on oppressed people to conform to the standards of the ruling class), but he constantly questions Iwamura's true intent. In addition to the abovementioned "forced" display of portraits of Japanese military officers, Iwamura refers to China using the derogatory *Shina* (支那)—a

holdover epithet from Japan's imperial expansion into China—and seems to bear no shame for having served in the Imperial Japanese Army or being a former “right-winger” (*uyoku* 右翼, 21). Moreover, the fact that Iwamura asks his guests to hide their “Koreanness” demonstrates an active participation in the maintenance of ethnicity-based imperial social structures in postwar Japan.

### **Hiding Places: Subverting Imperial Structures in “Into the Light”**

As outlined above, the social landscapes of both stories are dominated and defined by imperial structures that construct a clear dividing line between the colonizer (Japanese) and the colonized (Korean). As I will demonstrate, however, Korean characters in both texts are able to manipulate or subvert this social stratification through language and the status of class position. Assimilation to imperial structures relies on “almost but not quite” mimicry, since complete mimicry would elide the division between colonizer and colonized. According to Homi Bhabha, “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (1994, 86). The necessity of difference, however, requires limitation. To construct mimicry, difference needs to be limited to “almost but not quite,” for, if the difference is constructed as “almost total,” the colonial relationship will convert to “menace” and effectively separate the colonizer and the colonized with veritable ethnic polarity (91).

Characters in both “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” and “Into the Light” perform mimicry and, in so doing, successfully assimilate into the imperialized worlds they inhabit. Yet, as “almost but not quite,” this mimicry is unstable and can be destroyed in an instant by external acknowledgment of the Korean ethnicity of one of the characters. Both “I” in “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” and Minami in “Into the Light” enjoy an elite status in Japanese society based on class position and education. To emphasize this, Iwamura (in “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji”) praises the educational and career accomplishments of his Korean counterparts when introducing them to his family but never discusses their Korean ethnicity. In “Into the Light,” Minami often passes as Japanese due to his Japanese sounding name and status as a student of an elite university. For all Korean characters, though, this status is fragile and always subordinate to the imperial structure of ethnic hierarchy.

As an ethnic marker, Minami's name represents a large area of potential ambiguity in his ethnic identity, which is further magnified by his status as an educated elite as a student of an “Imperial University” (*Teikoku Daigaku* 帝国大学)—most certainly a reference to Tokyo Imperial University, which was the most prestigious university in the Japanese Empire. His connection to the university allows him to take on a position of authority as a teacher at a night school. A related source of power for Minami, accessed through his elite education, is his connection to the “West.” Although Japanese characters are given little to no voice, they are still present in the text. The West, on the other hand, is almost entirely absent, except for its presence in Minami. His knowledge of English gives him the power to teach his Japanese colonizers. Indeed, his position as an English teacher makes

it difficult for his students to see him as anything other than “Japanese,” since the Japanese, as colonizers, “brought” the West to Korea and “modernized” Korea. Minami’s proximity to the modern West, therefore, makes his ethnicity even more ambivalent.

Minami’s name, as an ethnic marker, contains significant flexibility. When the reading “Minami” is used, he is ethnically marked as Japanese; “Nan,” on the other hand, undeniably marks him as Korean: “Before I realized it, everyone at the night school was referring to me as Mr. ‘Minami.’ As you know, the character for my last name should be read [*yomu beki da* 読むべきだ] as ‘Nan,’ but for various reasons the Japanese version of my name was used” (Kim Sa-ryang, 13). Here, the text privileges the Korean reading as the correct one by using the phrasing “should be pronounced/read” (*yomu beki da*). On the other hand, Minami also endorses his colleagues’ use of the Japanese reading: “To begin with, my colleagues did me the favor [*yonde kureru* 呼んでくれた] of referring to me in that way” (13). The narrator’s usage of the word *kureru* in this passage clearly reflects Minami’s position that being referred to as “Japanese” is a benefit bestowed by the Japanese or the colonizing power that they represent. By using the reading that marks Minami as ethnically Japanese, the colonizing Japanese endorse the colonial strategy of mimicry, which allows Minami to construct a “hiding place” where his Korean ethnicity is concealed. Yet this hiding place is not one that Minami can maintain on his own. If his colleagues suddenly decide to use the character reading of “Nan,” constructing him as ethnically different, the slippage would then become too great.

The maintenance of Minami’s hiding place, therefore, requires the complicity of both Minami and the Japanese characters he is surrounded by. Minami does not have the power to assimilate completely on his own but simply needs to rationalize his ethnic ambiguity and his complicity in the self-serving colonial strategy of mimicry. He remedies this ambivalence through self-deceit: “Therefore, I continued to persuade myself, again and again, that I was not being hypocritical [*gizen wo haru* 偽善を張る], nor was I being servile [*hikutsu* 卑屈]” (13). The text, by employing a retrospective narrative, elucidates the process of self-deceit. The narrator is aware of this process and acknowledges it through the use of words like “persuaded,” demonstrating that consent to mimicry required Minami’s exertion. Only by remaining in this state of deliberate ignorance, or self-deceit, can Minami justify his ability to pass as Japanese and his reasons for doing so: “I started to think that, in order to play with these innocent children (Japanese children who attend the school where he teaches), this might actually be the best way to go about it” (13). Indeed, the innocence of these “harmless” children allows him to justify the contradiction he feels between his “proper” Korean name and the “beneficial” Japanese name that allows him to assimilate.

### Outing: The Destruction of Hiding Places in “Into the Light”

Similar to Minami, Haruo also maintains a hiding place that conceals his partial Korean ethnicity. Haruo’s self-deceit, in contrast to Minami’s internalized justifications, is active and external, maintained through the practice of inclusive

exclusion (i.e., creating a space for his own inclusion by excluding others). For example, even after it is clear to Minami that Haruo's mother is Korean, Haruo desperately asserts, "I'm not Korean . . . right, Mr. Minami?" (Kim Tal-su, 24). Haruo and Minami, then, achieve the similar end of assimilation into Japanese society, though through vastly different methods. Although both participate in acts of self-deceit, Haruo's actions are much more assertive, while Minami's complicity to pressures to assimilate is comparatively passive.

As suggested above, these hiding places require the tacit approval of those whom Minami and Haruo interact with, whether Japanese or Korean. Both characters maintain their hiding places, successfully assimilating and concealing their indistinct ethnic status until the ambivalence is confronted and the contradiction of mimicry is exposed. The first such confrontation for Minami occurs during an interaction with Korean night school student Ri, who annihilates Minami's delicately constructed hiding place with a single word: "[Ri] shut the door and stood in front of me in a defiant manner. 'Teacher.' He said this in Korean" (14). One Korean word rips apart the delicate "Japanese" face that Minami has heretofore presented through mimicry, making full assimilation now impossible. Upon hearing a Korean word, Minami can no longer justify his ambivalent status and his complicity to the colonial policy of assimilation: "This was certainly proof that I had placed a sense of servility inside of me that kept me from remaining calm" (15). Minami's reaction reveals an immediate awareness of his failed self-deception and complicity. Even so, he attempts to recover his hiding place, as he defends himself to Ri: "For example, say that I am Korean. Those kids' feelings toward me would contain something other than love. . . . Maybe a negative type of curiosity? . . . Anyway, I think that difference would become their main concern" (16). He also claims, "I am not concealing the fact that I am Korean" (16). Even if the latter assertion is true, Ri snatches Minami out of his hiding place of assimilation and firmly places him in the realm of colonized "Koreans."

With the destruction of his hiding place irreversible, Minami plunges into an internal struggle that is repeatedly triggered by Haruo. Shortly after the confrontation with Ri, Haruo, who recognizes that Korean is being spoken, sneaks into the room and yells, "Hey Korean!" (17). Later, fully aware of Minami's presence nearby, Haruo chases a Japanese girl, yelling, "Capture the Korean" (*Chōsenjin zabare* 朝鮮人ザバレ). The narrator explains the full meaning of Haruo's choice of words: "'Zabare' means 'capture' in Korean. It was a word that the Japanese [*naichijin*] in Korea used often" (18). There is an underlying tone of violence in Haruo's word choice that conjures up images of Koreans being captured or arrested. Here, then, Haruo is patterning his behavior after his father who employs violence in order to establish his position as that of colonizer.

Haruo's hiding place is also destroyed when his ethnic identity is exposed. The final blow to Haruo's tenuously constructed hiding place occurs at the hospital where Haruo's mother has been taken for emergency treatment. Replying to Minami's inquiry, the aforementioned Korean night school student Ri states, "She was stabbed in the head by her husband. . . . She is Korean. Her husband is Japanese, a cruel villain." Ri's remark reveals Haruo's ethnicity to Minami, which

Haruo tries to deny: “My mother is not Korean. That’s wrong. That’s wrong” (24). From this point forward, Haruo can no longer maintain the hiding place that was built on a foundation of mimicry; he must find a way to resolve the ambivalence of the colonizer-colonized binary that his mixed ethnic identity represents.

### **Solidarity Denied: Outing Korean Ethnicity in “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji”**

In “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji,” the Korean characters give Iwamura “permission” to construct a hiding place that conceals their ethnicity. In this case, however, the permission is granted unknowingly as “I” and his Korean associates consent to Iwamura’s request to enter the hiding place by agreeing not to use Korean in the home of Iwamura’s *Buraku* family. Similar to “Into the Light,” this hiding place is precariously fragile. As mentioned above, the Korean characters “confess” their ethnicity to the *Buraku* family through the act of signing their names. Appearance and language, often markers of ethnic difference, have in effect worked to conceal the men’s Korean ethnicity and to construct a hiding place. The evoking of Korean names destroys this hiding place. In response to the now revealed ethnicity of their guests, Iwamura’s mother and sister quickly distance themselves. “Koreanness,” or at least the recognition of it, immediately forms a boundary between the *Burakumin* and the Korean characters, denying the possibility for solidarity among these two “oppressed” groups. Here, the text is critiquing an imperial structure formulated through decades of deliberate policy intended to create a divide between Koreans and *Burakumin*, with both groups being categorized as “less than” but Koreans being decidedly more foreign (Bayliss 2013).

The narrative closes with “I” taking Iwamura’s young nephew, Keiji—the only one oblivious to the “need” to ignore these Korean men—hunting near Mount Fuji. As quoted above, the final scene reads: “I picked up the gun and, aiming toward Mount Fuji, pulled the trigger with all my strength. The gunshot ripped the surrounding quiet as it roared with an exploding sound. I shot again, and again. I continued to shoot Mount Fuji as if I had gone mad” (Kim Tal-su, 31). This shooting reflects the overall pervasiveness of violence throughout the text, which is present in wartime flashbacks, references to oppression faced by both Koreans and the *Burakumin*, and the symbolic violence of the swords of deceased Japanese soldiers memorialized by Iwamura’s mother-in-law.

The undercurrent of violence establishes a strong link between the symbolic power of violence present in the pictures of Japanese soldiers of a ruling class family with the ineffectual violence of the narrator’s shooting at Mount Fuji. Metaphorically, the shared experience of oppression between Koreans and *Burakumin* is ruptured like the sound of a gunshot through the quiet air because one member of the oppressed classes (the *Burakumin*) discriminates against another (Koreans). Although there is a slight amount of hope in the form of the youthful character Keiji, the narrator can only enact his “revenge” on Japan by harmlessly shooting at one of its most famous icons, Mount Fuji—an oft-used symbol of Imperial Japan (Earhart 2011). Other than making a loud noise, the narrator’s shooting has no effect on the mountain and its surroundings, relegating his action

to a futile attempt to fight back against ongoing forces of oppression in Japanese society.

Although the narrator is certainly critical of Iwamura's hypocrisy in disparaging the "ruling class" in word but striving to join their ranks in action, he is sympathetic to Iwamura's predicament. After listening to Iwamura recite a long narrative poem, in which Iwamura asserts that he willingly joined the Imperial Japanese Army in order to gain the approval of the non-*Burakumin* inhabitants of his village, the narrator states: "I completely understood his choice to take a pledge of loyalty and become a soldier, as well as his having been a rightist for a while. This was the oppressed currying favor in order to escape oppression and discrimination—the slave mentality of the oppressed" (21). Here, then, the "dual narrative" of Iwamura's poem and the narrator's understanding yet disapproving reaction to it encourages the reader to sympathize with Iwamura's predicament while also critiquing ongoing imperial social hierarchies in Japan and the inability to dismantle them.

### Colonial Utopia and Unsustainable Solution in "Into the Light"

In contrast to the severe divide between (*Buraku*) Japanese and Korean characters in "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," "Into the Light" seemingly resolves the predicament of unstable hiding places and the strictly defined imperial structure of ethnic hierarchy. A close reading of the short story, however, reveals this solution is illusory and that, just as in the case of "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," any solidarity or even meaningful interaction with Japanese characters is not possible when Korean ethnicity is acknowledged. Differing from "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," the inability to deny Korean ethnicity is treated as a positive in "Into the Light," which constructs an alternate space that is divorced from Imperial Japan—a "colonial utopia," where being Korean does not bring with it the stigma of being a colonized person. This utopian space constructed during the final stage of the narrative, however, contains no meaningful interaction with Japanese characters.

Both Minami and Haruo have immediate and significant obstacles (i.e., marks of Korean ethnicity) blocking their path to this colonial utopia: for Minami, it is the Korean reading of the character for his name; for Haruo, it is his mother. Haruo can overcome this obstacle through accepting his mother as ethnic Korean, but he has, up until this point, maintained his hiding place by denying his mother's existence and ethnicity. Throughout the text, Haruo separates himself from his mother to keep himself from having to confront his Koreanness. But after his "mixed" ethnicity is exposed, he starts to draw closer to his mother, and, through his relationship with Minami, to his partial Korean ethnicity. Aware of this change, Minami comforts Haruo's mother: "Surely, Haruo will recall his love for you soon. I think that Haruo's becoming attached to me is not necessarily only from love for me but also a different way of showing love for you" (Kim Sa-ryang, 44).

Haruo's gradual acceptance of his mother culminates while he is visiting her at the hospital: "I [Minami] hurriedly went around the corner, and suspiciously looked the area over. Sure enough, it was just as I had thought. In a dim corner behind the stairs to the second floor, Yamada Haruo, cowering, watched closely

as he hid himself" (47). Having accepted his mother and, in turn, his Korean ethnicity, the problem for Haruo, as well as for Minami, remains how to accept Korean ethnicity without being relegated to the inferior status of the colonized. The resolution reached in the text is the construction of a utopian space wherein ethnicity can be acknowledged without bringing negative consequences. This space is constructed in the text when Minami and Haruo go on an excursion to Ueno, a location that symbolizes Japan's status as a modern imperial power.<sup>7</sup> While in Ueno, Minami and Haruo visit a department store, and Minami purchases clothes for Haruo. They ride escalators and eat ice cream. It is through this consumption of modern Japan that Minami and Haruo are able to enter this colonial utopia. In other words, although the two have successfully discovered a way to accept their Korean ethnicity, this "public" acceptance is only accomplished through another type of assimilation: consumption of Japanese modernity. Their active participation in and consumption of modern Japan is performed without questioning Japan's symbolic power as colonizer and "modernizer" of Korea. Rather than being overcome, the hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized goes unaddressed.

This space of colonial utopia goes unchallenged even when they meet Ri, previously the main confrontational force for both of them. In fact, Ri, through his own consumption of modern Japan, joins them in this colonial space where there is no need to question ethnicity. They meet Ri when he pulls up in his new taxi. Having assimilated by acquiring a taxi and, therefore, an economic means of survival, Ri no longer questions Minami and Haruo's participation in the colonial strategy of assimilation. In the text, consumption of modern Japan erases the need to question ethnicity and the colonial situation. No longer is there any confrontation or doubt, no self-deceit or mimicry, just utopian bliss. After Ri drives off, Minami remarks, "I thought, what a blessed, happy day" (53–54).

The resolution of Minami's internal struggle is confirmed on the last page of the text: "'Teacher, I know Teacher's name.' 'Really.' Hiding my embarrassment, I [Minami] laughed, 'try saying it.' 'It's 'Nan,' right?'" (56). Through this recognition of Minami's name as "Nan," the text completes the construction of this alternate space of a colonial utopia. Haruo demonstrates his full acceptance of both his own and Minami's Korean ethnicity through voicing the Korean pronunciation of Minami's name. Minami no longer questions what reading of his name he should use, and Haruo no longer denies his mother. Their acceptance of their ethnic identity as constructed by the text is complete. Further, since the colonial utopia exists outside, among others, hiding places are no longer necessary: "I thought this young boy, Haruo, is now among all these people. For some reason, this made me happy to the point of being strange" (50). Their presence among "all these people" is reason for happiness because they have accepted their Korean ethnicity and are

<sup>7</sup> As home to the National Museum (1882), the Zoological Garden (1882), the Imperial Museum (1909), and the Tokyo Library, Ueno Park was designed as a site for modern cultural enlightenment. The park was also the site of several industrial expositions during the late Meiji and early Taishō eras. In 1911, parts of the Korean National Palace (Kyōngbokkung 景福宮) were dismantled in Seoul, shipped to Japan, and reassembled in Ueno Park as a "trophy" of Japan's colonial empire.



no longer confronted by others about it.

This state of “colonial utopia,” however, is completely divorced from the reality of the colonial situation. Here, the previous textual markers of the colonial relationship, like Minami’s colleagues “doing the favor of” referring to him as “Minami,” completely disappear. Earlier in the text, the narrator remarks that even Turkish children with “hair of a different color” (*keiro no chigau* 毛色の違う) can play innocently with these (*kochira no* こちらの, meaning “Japanese”) children; but “why is it only Haruo, who has received Korean blood, who cannot?” (34). This question clearly delineates the boundary between the colonizer and colonized. Yet this relationship is forgotten in the text’s construction of the colonial utopia: blood is no longer relevant, as there is no interaction with any of the people surrounding Minami and Haruo. By not giving Japanese people a voice, the text succeeds in creating a space where Haruo and Minami’s ethnicities are not challenged.

The colonial utopia, however, is ultimately just another hiding place, though a “social,” external one, rather than an individual, internal one. Undoubtedly, the social hiding place of colonial utopia is just as susceptible to confrontation as the individual hiding places of mimicry. Both are constructed through deceit and concealment. If Haruo and Minami were to engage the Japanese people surrounding them, their shared hiding place would be shattered just as quickly as the confrontations with Ri tore down their individual hiding places. The solidarity that the text strives to construct between different marginalized groups—colonized intellectual elites (Minami), working class Japanese (Haruo), and working class Koreans (Ri)—is, to some extent, accomplished, but only among Koreans. That the resolution reached takes place solely among characters marked by Korean ethnicity suggests that true solidarity with marginalized Japanese people, such as the students at the night school where Minami works, is not a possibility. The text never returns to the predicament of Minami’s colleagues “doing the favor” of referring to him as Minami, nor does it address his interaction with Japanese students and how they would treat him if his Koreanness was outed at the school.

### Conclusion

The fictional worlds of both “Into the Light” and “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji” are structured on imperial hierarchies that stratify society based on ethnicity. There is certainly a gray area in terms of ethnic categories, and as discussed above, characters employ various tools and methods—language, names, class, violence, and consumption of modernity—to construct ethnic ambiguity. In particular, violence and the power it represents functions as a means through which characters can elevate their status within the established imperial hierarchies: Iwamura by volunteering for the Imperial Army, Haruo by aggressively calling attention to Minami’s Korean ethnicity, and Haruo’s father by attacking his wife. In both works, however, this form of violence is painted in a harshly negative light and rendered largely ineffective and temporary. Even in the more positively represented spaces of language and education, the ability to traverse ethnic designation is precarious at best. Individual agency is an illusion, seemingly within a character’s grasp but

ultimately out of reach. The evocation of a Korean name, as an example, instantly undermines efforts to assimilate and construct hiding places. Korean ethnicity as a status of “lesser than” always trumps other forms of social status.

Both stories were written during a time of external occupation: the colonial rule of Korea by Japan for “Into the Light” and the US Military Occupation for “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji.” Though Kim Sa-ryang was living in Japan and not on the Korean Peninsula when “Into the Light” was published, he was still a colonized subject and had to work under the constraints, such as censorship, imposed by the imperial regime. Upon being nominated for the Akutagawa Prize for literature, he stated that he was not pleased with the nomination, claiming that the story was a lie and that he did not write what he had truly wanted (Nan 2001, 55). This assertion suggests an awareness of limitations placed on expression by the imperial structures in place at the time. He may very well have been aware that the “solution” provided in “Into the Light” was incomplete and unstable, ignoring the broader social context.

Sa-ryang expounded on his misgivings about the short story in response to Taiwanese author Long Yingzong: “Your critique of ‘Into the Light’ is right of course. With all my heart I too am eagerly awaiting for the day when I may be able to revise it. It is not a piece that I myself like. It was written for the Japanese reader. I know this well” (Kwon 2015, 61). What was the message to the Japanese reader? That although acceptance of Korean ethnicity was positive when among those with shared Korean ethnicity, it should be hidden when in the presence of Japanese people? That there was a clear divide between the colonizer and the colonized that could not be bridged? Clearly, the text represents a critique of imperial racial hierarchies and the predicament of colonized Koreans under Japan’s colonial rule—something that, most likely, would have spoken quite powerfully to Japanese readers. Yet, the only solution presented in the text is a partial one based on assimilating into the Japanese Empire.

In her summation of “Into the Light,” Aimee Kwon states, “The text’s multiple fragmentations and its inability to close itself into a unified self-contained entity are suggestive of a deeply melancholic conundrum marked by the wounds of an unspoken loss . . . ‘Into the Light’ leaves itself open toward another future” (79). It is from this future that Kim Tal-su wrote “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji.” As we have seen, this short story also represents “a deeply melancholic conundrum” that continues to lament the divide constructed between marginalized peoples in Japan and the inability of Koreans to form solidarity with Japanese people. In “Village with a View of Mt. Fuji,” there is no possibility for a decolonized Korean subjectivity since imperial structures remain intact and the hierarchies they produce silence Korean voices, just as Sa-ryang had claimed twelve years earlier. The character Iwamura, as a *Burakumin*, shares with the Korean characters an inability to combat the symbolic power of his in-laws’ connections to the imperial past, but the possibility for a shared resistance by the oppressed classes is shattered when the narrator and his three Korean friends are asked not to speak Korean by Iwamura and denied the opportunity to engage with *Burakumin* characters, who refuse to speak with them. Though Iwamura’s actions here are portrayed negatively,

the effect is essentially the same as when Minami's co-workers did him the favor of calling him by the Japanese reading for his name: the construction of a hiding place that conceals ethnic identity.

On the other hand, contrasting with the protagonist in "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," Tal-su's voice was not silenced as demonstrated by the fact that this short story was published in the widely read liberal-left magazine *World* (Sekai 世界). Certainly, the text can be read as an attempt to break down the boundaries, firmly delineated during Japan's colonial rule, that separate Japanese and Koreans (specifically, Koreans and *Buraku* Japanese). The tragic ending in "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji"—the complete disregard experienced by the Korean characters at the hands of Iwamura's family as well as the subsequent futile "shooting" of Mt. Fuji—serves as a rallying cry for the unification of the "oppressed classes," emphasizing the ongoing need to deconstruct imperial structures in order to construct a decolonized Korean subjectivity within Japanese society. Taken in a larger context, "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," through drawing attention to the problems caused by ongoing "imperialization" in Japan, represents a continuation of the critique originally made in Sa-ryang's "Into the Light." We will never know how Sa-ryang would have written the story if not under the strictures of Imperial Japan, but even after "liberation" from Japanese colonial rule, Korean writers, as evidenced by Tal-su's "Village with a View of Mt. Fuji," continued in the struggle to resolve this crisis of colonial identity.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Burakumin</i>	部落民	<i>kōmin</i>	皇民
<i>Chōsenjin</i>	朝鮮人	<i>munhagō</i>	K. 文學語
<i>Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken</i>	大東亜共栄圏	<i>bungakugo</i>	J. 文学語
<i>dōbun dōshu</i>	同文同種	<i>naichijin</i>	内地人
<i>fukoku kyōhei</i>	富国強兵	<i>shihai kaikyū</i>	支配階級
Kim Sa-ryang	金史良	<i>Zainichi</i>	在日
Kim Tal-su	金達寿		

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