

# Colonial Responsibility for Education of Koreans in Japanese Schools\*

Eika TAI

As soon as their homeland was liberated in August 1945, Koreans living in Japan opened schools for children, who hardly spoke Korean. They fought back against the Japanese government's intervention, but the majority of Korean children had to attend public schools, where they were treated as if they were Japanese. Some Japanese teachers opposed postwar assimilationist education and tried to take colonial responsibility through providing postcolonial education for Koreans in Japanese schools. I look into how those teachers engaged in Zainichi Korean education from the 1950s to the early 1970s, examining narratives from two teachers' associations in Osaka against the backdrop of sociopolitical circumstances and discursive formations. Whereas researchers of postcolonial education in North America delve into race relations and white privilege, I inquire into *minzoku* (ethnicity, ethnic-nation) relations and colonial responsibility. The concept of *minzoku* was central to teachers' narratives. The issue of colonial responsibility was raised in a social movement against the Japan-ROK negotiations for normalization and was applied to Zainichi Korean education. This development transformed the ways in which teachers dealt with Korean children. I demonstrate the historical significance of teachers' struggles and suggest the importance of interethnic dialogue in the pursuit of taking colonial responsibility.

**Keywords:** Zainichi Koreans, postcolonial education, colonial responsibility, ethnicity, dialogue

---

\*I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and thoughtful comments.

*Eika Tai (etai@ncsu.edu) is a professor emerita in North Carolina State University*