

A Place of “Re-collect”: Zainichi Experiences with/in Utoro, Japan*

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As a memory place that exemplifies contemporary Zainichi experiences, the Utoro district in Kyoto, Japan, entails stories of Japan’s colonial exploitation and postcolonial oppression, yet simultaneously reveals human hope, cooperation, and solidarity. First formed for the Korean workers and their families mobilized for the construction of a military airport during World War II, Utoro was left abandoned for decades in postwar Japan. Its Korean residents have suffered from continuous eviction suits, harassment, and violence including the most recent arson attack in 2022. At the same time, these intricacies of colonial origin and postcolonial controversy also invited networked grassroots efforts among the Japanese and Koreans to remember and reconstruct the place’s sociohistorical meanings, resulting in the construction of the Utoro Peace Memorial Museum in 2022. This paper highlights the significance of Zainichi experiences with/in Utoro through an analysis of identity, discourse, and representation of the place. Drawing upon collective memory scholarship and adopting a theoretical framework of re-collection, the paper unravels complex meanings of a site in relation to human acts of remembering, making sense of, and finding significance to our past experiences with/in it. By situating visual and discursive voices of the Utoro community (*Zainichi in Utoro*), such as its former residents’ oral testimonies and museum displays, this study elucidates the significance of *Utoro in Zainichi* history. This paper argues that Utoro projects contradictory positionalities of Korean subjects as both integral and excess in the history of colonial and postcolonial socio-politics of ethno-racial Other in Japan.

Keywords: Utoro, Zainichi experience, memory place, discourse analysis, re-collection

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