

## THE CHANGING CONTOURS OF DISCRIMINATION IN JAPAN: THE TREATMENT OF APPLICANTS FROM NORTH KOREAN- AFFILIATED SCHOOLS IN JAPAN TO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

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The Japanese authorities are often accused of systematically discriminating against the North Korean-affiliated Ch'ongryŏn schools in Japan in several respects, which include denying applicants from such schools eligibility for entry to national universities unless they pass a special eligibility test. Another example of discriminatory treatment is the difference between the financial situations of regular Japanese and Ch'ongryŏn schools. The Ch'ongryŏn schools do not receive subsidies from the national government, and can only get subsidies of variable size from the prefectures. The size of the available subsidies is vital to schools' finances, and affects the willingness of ethnic Korean parents or guardians to choose a Ch'ongryŏn school for their children. Ch'ongryŏn, an organisation that supports the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and which runs the schools, is not just infamous for its chronic money problems; it also has a bad reputation among the Japanese general public as well as some ethnic Koreans living in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

In July 2002, the Japanese Ministry of Education announced that the current regulations for eligibility for entry to national universities were to be abolished, thus making it easier for applicants from *gaikokujingakkō*, i.e. foreigners' schools, to enter such universities. Despite considerable resistance among conservative politicians, an amendment to the regulations finally came about in September 2003. As a result of the amendment, currently all but one of the national universities now admit applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools.

Six years after the keen debate over this change, the question of the Ch'ongryŏn schools' official status is not attracting a great deal of attention. The question seems to have lost its topicality as the national universities began to admit applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools; and it seems that those who earlier criticised the Ministry of Education's treatment of such schools are satisfied with the amendment of 2003. Nonetheless, the absence of such a debate does not necessarily mean that the discrimination against

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1 *Asahi Shimbun*, January 4, 2007: 21.

Ch'ongryŏn schools has ceased. In fact, there is good reason to wonder whether the amendment was an adequate answer at all to a demand for less discriminatory treatment.

First things first, though. Why is there a Korean minority in Japan, and what are features of the so-called Ch'ongryŏn schools?

### Koreans in Japan

The image of Japan as a uniform country with a homogeneous population is a strong one, but it is not quite true. Non-Japanese peoples and tribes have lived in Japan and its surrounding areas such as the Ryukyu Islands and Hokkaido, for as long as the Japanese nation has existed. When Japan was industrialised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and nationalism in the modern sense developed, foreign influences as well as the dependence on foreigners increased. Alongside many Westerners, Chinese shopkeepers and guest workers, Korean students too represented the first wave of globalisation in modern time. After Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 the Korean population in Japan grew rapidly and soon became the largest ethnic minority in the country. During the inter-war period and especially during the Pacific War, the Korean immigration to Japan intensified (partly as a result of forced population transfer). The following figures for the Korean population in Japan clearly show the explosive growth. In 1933 the number of Koreans was approximately 460,000; in 1936 it was 690,000; and in 1945 it was 2.4 million.<sup>2</sup> Since then many Koreans has returned to their homelands, the birth rate has declined, and thousands of people with permanent resident status<sup>3</sup> have exchanged their Korean citizenship for Japanese. Currently, the number of Korean permanent residents is approximately 500,000.<sup>4</sup>

During the chaotic post-war period several organisations were established to help Koreans return to their homelands. The most important was named Choryŏn.<sup>5</sup> This organisation also made efforts to improve the situation of those Koreans who chose to remain in Japan. In the early stage Choryŏn supported the northern communist Korea and was the organisation running the majority of Korean schools until 1949.<sup>6</sup> In 1948 a pro-South organisation called Mindan<sup>7</sup> was founded, and it run the schools supporting southern Korea. Mindan and Choryŏn – which was abolished but revived as Ch'ongryŏn<sup>8</sup> in 1955 – were bitter enemies and antagonists in the struggle for the support of the Korean minority. These organisations have opposed each other in most matters and it might be suggested that they have promoted the division of the Korean minority by so doing.<sup>9</sup>

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2 Mitchell, 1980: 96, 97.

3 特別永住者 in Japanese. This status is possessed only by those Koreans settled in Japan prior to 1945 and their descendants.

4 Kim, 2004, vol. 3: 254, 255.

5 Abbreviation for 在日本朝鮮人聯盟

6 I and Ch'oe, 2006: 145, 146.

7 Abbreviation for 在日韓国居留民団

8 Abbreviation for 在日本朝鮮人総聯合会

9 I and Ch'oe, 2006: 146, 149.

### Korean Schools in Japan

Directly after the war ended in 1945, over a short period of time simple schools for education in Korean language, culture and history were founded all around Japan. In spring 1946 they schools developed into proper schools.<sup>10</sup> The new schools were called *chōsenjingakkō* (schools for Koreans).<sup>11</sup> Another term, still used today but in a broader sense, was *minzokugakkō* (ethnic schools). In 1947 as many as 541 schools existed with a total of 62,000 students, and over the following two years these numbers steadily increased.<sup>12</sup> The numbers mentioned only concern *minzokugakkō*, which mainly supported northern Korea.<sup>13</sup> Their South Korean counterparts, referred to as *kankokugakkō* (South Korean schools), numbered only 54 with a total of 6,600 students. About 50% of the Korean children in post-war Japan were attending *minzokugakkō*.<sup>14</sup>

Henceforth the pro-North Korean schools in Japan will be referred to as Ch'ongryŏn schools, as that is the present name of the organisation that runs them.

Today Ch'ongryŏn schools exist all over Japan but are mainly concentrated in metropolitan areas, as these were the destinations for a majority of the Korean immigrants during the colonial era (1910–45). In 2007, there was a total of 69 Ch'ongryŏn schools distributed over 114 departments, in addition to several pre-schools and one university.<sup>15</sup> However, these schools have been in deep financial crisis since the early 1990s, and their number is decreasing steadily.<sup>16</sup>

At no point since their foundation in the post-war period have the Korean schools ever been officially recognised as “satisfactory” schools: they have been classified in the Japanese school system as what are called *kakushugakkō*. Nowadays, this term refers to schools with a course period of at least one year, with annual lesson hours of at least 680 hours, and where the students are accepted on the basis of the regulations of each school. The number of students must not fall below twenty.<sup>17</sup> Examples of such schools are driving schools, knitting courses, cookery courses, Japanese-language courses, and various crammer schools (so-called *juku*). Since 1975, some foreigners' schools, *gaikokujingakkō*, in which Ch'ongryŏn schools as well as the Mindan schools are included, have also been categorised in this group.<sup>18</sup> Prior to 1960, most Korean

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10 I and Ch'oe, 2006: 150.

11 Mizuno, 2003: 55.

12 Su-yŏng Chŏng, 1996: 300.

13 Some of the early *minzoku-gakkō* appears to have been run independently from Choryŏn, and could thus be regarded as ideologically neutral. Mizuno, 2003: 56, 57.

14 I and Ch'oe, 2006: 150.

15 “Uri hakkyo ichiran”, <http://www.chongryon.com/j/cr/link3.html>, 2008.

16 “Chōsengakkō ichiran”, <http://www.jade.dti.ne.jp/~f-chouko/link.html>, 2005, 2007.

17 Han, 1996: 41, 51; *Kyōiku shōroppō*, 2007: 41, 51.

18 Ch'ŏl-sŏng Chŏng, 2005: 6.

schools were not even acknowledged as *kakushugakkō*.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that the Japanese government has never itself acknowledged *gaikokujuingakkō* as *kakushugakkō*, but instead has let each prefecture decide the status of these schools. Although all Ch'ongryŏn schools have been acknowledged as *kakushugakkō*, some *gaikokujuingakkō* of other nationalities have not.<sup>20</sup>

Until 2003, a person graduating from a *kakushugakkō*-classified high school who wished to enter a national university had to do a special eligibility test in addition to the ordinary tests required for entering university, just to show that he or she had obtained the same knowledge as those who had undergone the regular Japanese education. Private universities, however, were more independent than the national ones, and some of them treated applicants from *gaikokujuingakkō* and those from regular schools equally.<sup>21</sup>

Regular Japanese schools, from preschools and elementary schools to technical colleges and universities, are all referred to as *ichijōgakkō*. Such schools can be national or public as well as private, but all of them are assumed to follow the curriculum set by the Japanese Ministry of Education and use teaching materials authorised by the ministry. Therefore, all teaching in any language other than Japanese is excluded from this group.<sup>22</sup>

### The Finances of Ch'ongryŏn Schools

*Ichijōgakkō* have an essential financial advantage over Ch'ongryŏn schools, which have no right to government aid but have to rely on non-tax-deductible donations, fees, and regional subsidies of varying sizes.

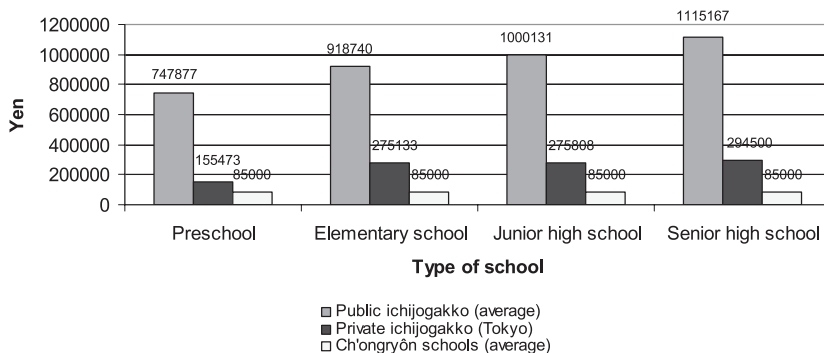
Figures about their finances are also kept secret by most Ch'ongryŏn schools, as well as by the central organisation. As the example from Nagoya Korean Elementary School shows (see Figure 2), the finances of Ch'ongryŏn schools are heavily based on fees and (especially) donations, while regional subsidies represent a rather minor part of their revenues. (Subsidies from the North Korean government are even smaller.) According to several people to whom the author has spoken within the Ch'ongryŏn organisation, the schools seldom manage to make ends meet.

19 In 1960 the number of foreigners' schools was 214. Ten years later the figure had more than doubled to 430, and stopped at 431 in 1975. Han, 1996: 43.

20 "Gaikokujuingakkō ni kansuru saishitsumon shuisho", <http://www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~mingakko/kuniosima5.html>, 2008; *Nihon no naka no gaikokujuingakkō*, 2007: 149, 150.

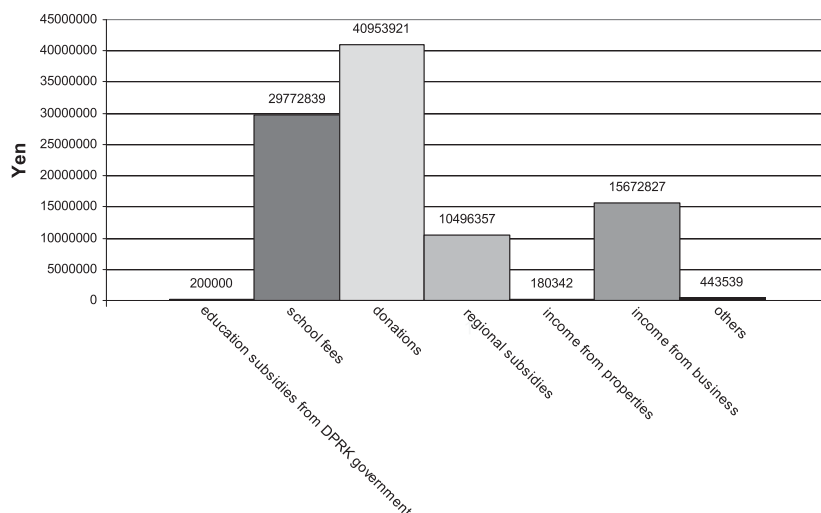
21 *Gendai gakkō kyōiku dai-jiten*, 2002, vol. 4: 496, 497.

22 *Ichijōgakkō* (一条学校). This is the designation for *shōgakkō* (小学校) – equivalent to elementary school, age 7–12; *chūgakkō* (中学校) – junior high school, age 13–15; *kōtōgakkō* (高等学校) – senior high school (3 years); *chūtōkyōikugakkō* (中等教育学校) – a fusion of *chūgakkō* and *kōtōgakkō* (equivalent to *secondary schools*); *daigaku* (大学) – university; *kōtōsenmongakkō* (高等専門学校) – college of technology; *tokubetsu shiengakkō* (特別支援学校) – special compulsory school for disabled children; *yōchien* (幼稚園) – preschool. *Kyōiku shōroppō*, 101; Ch'ŏl-sŏng Chōng, 2005: 3.



Source: <http://www.k-jinken.ne.jp/minzokukyoiku/syoguu.htm> (August 10, 2007)

Figure 1. Annual governmental and local subsidies per student (2007) – comparison between public and private ichijogakko and Ch'ongryŏn schools.



Source: *Nyŏn'gan saŏp pogosŏ 2006* [Annual report from Nagoya Korean Elementary School], 2007: 53–72<sup>23</sup>

Figure 2. Annual revenue at Nagoya Korean Elementary School (2006).

23 “Income from business” means such extra work performed by the staff besides their regular duties, for example packaging and selling products.

## Education in Ch'ongryŏn Schools

With a few exceptions, the teaching materials used in Ch'ongryŏn schools are still prepared by Ch'ongryŏn itself and partly approved by the DPRK authorities. In that sense not much has changed since the 1980s. Nevertheless, the contents have changed considerably; from having been ideological and based on strictly North Korean conditions, the teaching nowadays is more oriented to preserving the ethnic integrity of the North Korean in the Japanese context.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from the Ch'ongryŏn schools' ethnic profile, and the facts that the teaching is pursued predominantly in Korean and that the Korean language, rather than Japanese, is the main subject, the distribution of subjects in the Ch'ongryŏn schools is quite similar to that in the regular Japanese schools and, as can be seen in figure 3, and the total number of lessons does not differ much either.

Comparing studies on high-school level is far more difficult, as the subjects and distribution of lesson hours at Japanese high schools vary between different schools. The study hours at the Ch'ongryŏn high schools total 2,850 lesson hours, divided into 1,050 hours each on the first and second grade, and 750 hours on the third. The average number of school weeks is 35 a year, including time for examinations, counselling and so on. According to the Ministry of Education, the average study hours at *ichijōgakkō* are 3,150 hours, which is a little more than at the Ch'ongryŏn high schools.<sup>25</sup>

The subjects studied at the Ch'ongryŏn high schools are the Korean language, social studies, Korean history, the modern history of Korea (replacing studies dealing with the revolutionary activities of Kim Il Song and Kim Jong Il), world history, world geography, mathematics, science, the Japanese language, English, physical education, music (many of the ideological songs have been replaced by folk songs), IT, and 11 other eligible courses (such as art, English conversation, Korean literature, and business).<sup>26</sup> As a comparison, at Japanese schools with ordinary courses the following subjects are studied: the Japanese language, geography and history, social studies, mathematics, science, physical education, artistic subjects (such as music, art, handicraft, and calligraphy), a foreign language (i.e. English), home economics, and IT.<sup>27</sup>

Another similarity between Japanese and Ch'ongryŏn schools is the structure of and the length of time spent in elementary, junior and senior high school. Both of them have six grades corresponding to elementary schools and three grades each in junior and senior high school. In this respect Ch'ongryŏn schools differ from several international schools, which often follow the system of the native country. For instance, the Indian

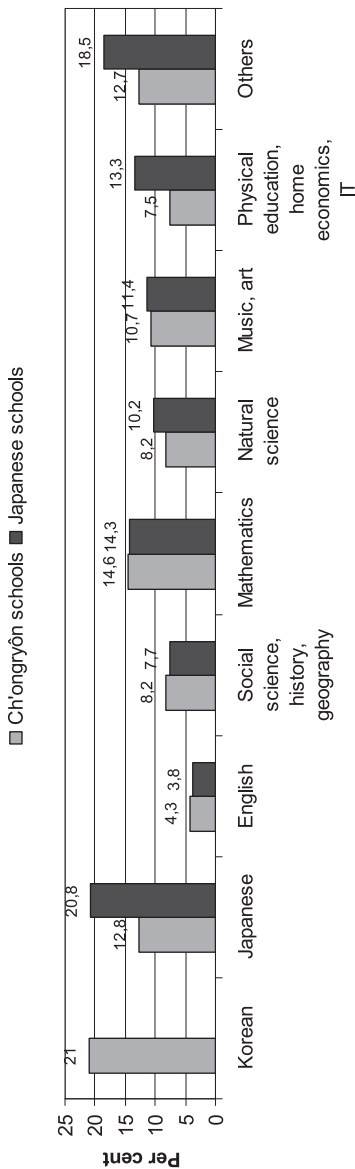
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24 Kim, 2004, vol. 4: 232.

25 "Kyōiku katei hensei no ippan hōshin", [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shuppan/sonota/990301a.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shuppan/sonota/990301a.htm), 2007.

26 "Chōsengakkō kōkyūbu no jugyō jikansū", <http://www.k-jinken.ne.jp/minzokukyoiku/caliculum.htm>, 2007; "Kōkyūbu", <http://www.k-jinken.ne.jp/minzokukyoiku/index.htm>, 2007; Kim, 2004, vol. 4: 237.

27 "Kyōiku katei hensei no ippan hōshin".



Source: *Ch'ongryŏn: chaeilbon chosŏnin ch'ongryŏnhaphoe* [Ch'ongryŏn: The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan]. Tokyo: Chaeilbon chosŏnin ch'ongryŏnhaphoe chunggangsangim wiwŏnhoe, 2005: 47

Figure 3. Distribution of subjects – comparison between Ch'ongryŏn schools and Japanese elementary and junior high schools (2005).

international school in Tokyo is divided into five and three grades, corresponding to elementary and junior high school, respectively.<sup>28</sup>

The reformed Ch'ongryŏn schools have adapted over time to Japanese conditions, but at the same time they are faced with a practical dilemma; on the one hand they want to create an education based on ethnicity rather than a strongly nationalistic ideology, while on the other hand they are unwilling to completely cut their ties to Pyongyang. Furthermore, the organisation still has the reputation of being introvert and suspicious of outsiders. The author observed this during his time as a Ch'ongryŏn school teacher in Nagoya in 2007–2008. Although there were many enthusiastic individuals within the Ch'ongryŏn organisation on the grass-roots level, the author was constantly directed to the headquarters for permission to send out questionnaires, carry out interviews, and receive various statistics. None of these requests were granted.

### The Road to the Amendment of 2003

Such was the situation in the summer 2002, when the Ministry of Education promised an expansion of the types of schools whose graduates would be automatically eligible for admission to national universities. However, the ministry changed its attitude to this matter after the DPRK in September of that year officially acknowledged the abductions of Japanese citizens,<sup>29</sup> and after criticism from politicians of the ruling parties increased. Many Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members of the Parliament had been asking for recognition of the *gaikokujingakkō*, but when the abolition of the current regulations became the subject of discussion several of their fellow party members expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed expansion, claiming that “schools which defame Japan in their teaching should not be authorised”.<sup>30</sup> Also some people within the ministry itself had protested against the proposal during the summer.<sup>31</sup> It is obvious that many ruling politicians in Japan harboured distrust of the DPRK government and those who openly supported its regime. This distrust affected the Ministry of Education's treatment of the Ch'ongryŏn schools. According to several newspaper editorials, a similar distrust of all things “North Korean” can be found among the Japanese public.<sup>32</sup>

In February 2003, the Ministry of Education announced that among the students from *gaikokujingakkō* only those from schools acknowledged by the international accreditation organs – the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the European Council of International Schools (ECIS), and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) – were thought worthy of eligibility for entry to national

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28 *Nihon no naka no gaikokujingakkō*, 2007: 66.

29 The North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens took place between 1977 and 1983. The DPRK government admitted to the abduction of thirteen citizens, although more missing people are assumed to have been abducted by the North Koreans.

30 “Nihon no waruguchi o oshieteiru yōna gakkō ni taishite mitomeru beki dewanai”.

31 *Kyōto shinbun*, October 12, 2002.

32 *Chūnichi-Tōkyō shinbun*, April 3, 2003: 4; *Asahi shinbun*, February 22, 2003: 2.



universities.<sup>33</sup> Traditionally, such schools were referred to as international schools, that is to say schools with a mainly international character rather than a specific ethnicity, in most cases with English as their main language and providing an education following British and American curricula. The pupils are often children of foreign businessmen, missionaries, embassy people and so on who are temporary residents, but sometimes Japanese who wish to give their children a better knowledge of English also choose international schools.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, exchange students who had graduated from schools not authorised by the WASC, the ECIS, or the ACSI were still admitted to Japanese national universities.<sup>35</sup>

As a result of this sudden turnaround by the ministry, the debate and the protests increased until on 19 September 2003 the ministry introduced three categories of *gaikokujingakkō* whose graduates would now have the right of eligibility for entry to national universities. The first category represented schools authorised by the Western accreditation organs, in reality English-speaking international schools. These schools were also awarded the status of legal person for the public good, thus allowing those making donations to them to deduct their donations from tax. The second category represented schools whose teaching could officially be confirmed to correspond to the regular curriculum of the native country. Among them were South Korean, Chinese, and some Brazilian schools. Finally, the third category consisted of schools whose teaching was not officially confirmed as corresponding to the regular curriculum of the native country. It was up to the individual universities to estimate whether such schools were providing a satisfactory education. Ch'ongryŏn schools belonged to this third category.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note the unspoken reservation made by the Ministry of Education in introducing this categorisation. It did not want to actively relieve the situation of the Ch'ongryŏn schools, but left it to the universities to individually appraise the eligibility of the applicants, and additionally – and most importantly – the decision to grant a beneficial taxation system only to international schools remained.

The Ministry of Education officially justified its decision by the fact that Japan has no diplomatic relations with the DPRK.<sup>37</sup> In other words, schools representing a nation with which Japan had diplomatic relations were automatically granted eligibility for entry to Japanese national universities, while those from other countries were not. Another country represented by schools in Japan, but lacking such diplomatic relations, is Taiwan. In this case the Ministry of Education made an exception, because it was a country which, through Japan's representation office in Taiwan (the Interchange Association, Japan), could officially confirm the quality of the education, and hence the ministry placed the Taiwanese schools in the second category.<sup>38</sup>

33 Pak, 2003: 227; *Asahi shinbun*, February 21, 2003.

34 *Subete no kodomo-tachi ni 'kyōiku no kenri' o: taminzoku kyōsei kyōiku fōramu 2007 Tōkyō*, 2007: 41, 42, 48, 60, 66.

35 *Nihon no naka no gaikokujingakkō*, 2007: 154.

36 *Nihon no naka no gaikokujingakkō*, 2007: 154.

37 *Asahi shinbun*, August 2, 2003: 12.

38 Pak, 2003: 228, 229.

### The Reason for the Amendment

So what affected the developments during 2002–2003? Several factors worked in favour of recognition of the Ch'ongryŏn schools. One of the most important is probably the globalisation pervading modern Japanese society. The growing number of foreign citizens living in Japan and the closer relations with foreign countries probably contributed to the Ministry of Education's changed attitude. The new thinking at the ministry could be said to have been "in touch with the times".<sup>39</sup> In fact, the ministry's proposal of July 2002 was originally an answer to demands from the Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren), which was concerned about the education of foreigners whose parents were working in Japan.<sup>40</sup>

Although influential, Keidanren was certainly not the main or the only authority (besides the *gaikokujingakkō*) demanding an expansion of the schools whose students could go on to national universities. At the beginning of the 1990s a student movement at the national university in Kyoto was already working for recognition of students from Ch'ongryŏn schools, enabling the first graduate student from the Ch'ongryŏn university in Tokyo to enter Kyoto University in 1998.<sup>41</sup> This occurrence could be seen as a turning point, especially as Kyoto University has the status of "elite school" in Japan. When one national university began to go its own way, it was easier for other national universities to sidestep the directives of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education was also subjected to sharp criticism from the Japanese Bar Association, whose viewpoint probably carried serious weight. This criticism started as early as the beginning of the 1990s, but was long ignored by the Ministry of Education. On at least one occasion the Bar Association referred to UN reports questioning the Japanese authorities' treatment of ethnic Koreans.<sup>42</sup>

Another factor contributing to the decision of 19 September 2003 was the public protests against the ministry's treatment of Ch'ongryŏn schools, accompanied by the critical editorials in the major daily newspapers *Asahi shinbun* and *Chūnichi-Tōkyō shinbun*.<sup>43</sup> In addition, many politicians in the Parliament, for instance Ikenobō Yasuko of the New Clean Government Party, also took an active interest in favour of the recognition of all *gaikokujingakkō*.

Nor should the Korean minority's part in these events be forgotten. In 1993 an extensive reform of the Ch'ongryŏn schools was implemented. This reform may have had its origin in the changed values which could be observed among the Korean minority at the time. Ch'ongryŏn's power was no longer a matter of course, as it used to

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39 Interview with Naoki Mizuno, 2008.

40 *Nihon no naka no gaikokujingakkō*, 2007: 153.

41 Interview with Mizuno.

42 "Daigaku nyūgakushikaku ni kansuru monbukagakushōan ni taisuru seimei", <http://www.k-jinken.ne.jp/minzokukyoku/bengoshikai.htm>, 2007.

43 "Paburikku komento", [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/public/2003/030312.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/public/2003/030312.htm), 2007.

be, and many people had ceased to see any future in working within the organisation.<sup>44</sup> One might say that Ch'ongryŏn's reputation had been tarnished in the eyes of many ethnic Koreans, especially since the deterioration of its financial situation in the 1990s.<sup>45</sup> Although it is hard to prove any direct connection between Ch'ongryŏn's education reform and the changed attitudes of the Ministry of Education, it is difficult to believe that the ministry was not aware of the reforms. There is a possibility that the decision of 2003 might have looked different if the Ch'ongryŏn schools had not been reformed. On the other hand, the schools' persistence in protecting their foremost characteristic, the teaching in Korean, may have been far too conspicuous to the Japanese authorities. Ever since they were founded, one of the trademarks of the Ch'ongryŏn schools has been their teaching entirely in Korean. This policy has been protected despite the extensive reform of the education they offered in other respects.<sup>46</sup> If the schools were to accede to the Ministry of Education's demands and gain the status of *ichijōgakkō*, the so-called *100% urimal undong* (Korean language movement) policy would have had to be abandoned, and the question was whether the schools would then remain attractive for ethnic Koreans or not.

Finally, besides the above factors, it is worth mentioning the transition to more independent national universities, which was created by the reorganisation started in 2000. The universities were given legal personality for financial reasons, but simultaneously they also gained greater independence, which may have facilitated the recognition of applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools.<sup>47</sup>

### The Current Situation

As a result of the amendment of 2003, the national universities could now freely make individual appraisals of applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools. In 2007, there were about 85 national universities in Japan,<sup>48</sup> of which only one, the Tokyo Institute of Technology, refused applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools.<sup>49</sup> In that sense, the situation for these applicants at the national universities – schools representing the Japanese authorities' official attitude – has indeed changed radically.

At the same time, several ethnic Koreans expressed only muted pleasure at the decision to let the universities individually appraise applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools.<sup>50</sup> The lawyers Niimi Takashi and Niwa Masao called attention to the fact that

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44 Interview with Mizuno.

45 *Asahi Shimbun*, January 4, 2007: 21.

46 Sonia Ryang, 1997: 31, 32.

47 "Naze kokuritsu daigaku o hōjinka suru koto to shita no desuka?", [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/koutou/houjin/03052702/001.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/houjin/03052702/001.htm), 2007; *Ronza*, 2006:6, 53.

48 *Japanese Colleges and Universities*, 2006, 2006.

49 "Kokuritsu daigaku: nintendaigaku ichiran", [http://www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~mingakko/cf\\_03718.html](http://www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~mingakko/cf_03718.html), 2008.

50 *Asahi shinbun*, August 2, 2003; *ibid*, August 7, 2003.

They (applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools) are exposed to uncertainty as to whether they will be approved or not according to the individual appraisal of the schools. /.../ The Ministry of Education has announced that it intends to favour, as is the case with Japanese private schools, only such schools as are certified by Western accreditation organs as legal persons for the public good in the taxation system, thus discriminating against Asian and South American and, above all, Korean [Ch'ongryŏn] schools.<sup>51</sup>

Professor Mizuno Naoki at Kyoto University, one of the instigators of the above-mentioned student movement, believes that interest in the eligibility issue has decreased since 2003, and little effort to abolish the categorisation of *gaikokujingakkō* is being made today.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, something must be said about the way in which the amendment of 2003 affected the Ch'ongryŏn schools' situation. Did the amendment have any influence on the statistics on Korean students accepted for national universities? Although Ch'ongryŏn has reliable figures it is most unwilling to disclose them. However, figures received from two Ch'ongryŏn high schools indicates that there has been no influx either of pupils to Ch'ongryŏn schools or of students from such schools to Japanese universities.<sup>53</sup> The change was rather one of principle; the same rights as were accorded to applicants from Japanese schools would also be accorded to those from Ch'ongryŏn schools. Moreover, thanks to the amendment, the oppressive double schooling which used to be a condition for passing the eligibility test was reduced, and thus it must have made their studies easier for pupils at Korean high schools in Japan.

### The Government and the Ch'ongryŏn Schools

Let us now take a look back in the history of the Ch'ongryŏn schools. In what way have their relations with the Japanese authorities changed? Generally the Ch'ongryŏn schools have been treated as almost non-existent; until 2003 they were consistently denied government subsidies and rights accorded to regular Japanese schools. The government authorities seem to have chosen not to actively deal with issues concerning such rights, so when university after university awarded eligibility to applicants from Ch'ongryŏn schools they did so on their own responsibility; when prefecture after prefecture recognised the schools as *kakushugakkō*, this was done without any interference by the government. The same pattern reappears in many different issues, such as the right to

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51 “.../ Ukeiresaki no gakkō no kobetsu no handan ni yori mitomeraretari, mitomerarenakattari suru fuateina jōtai ni okareteiru. /.../ Monbukagakushō wa, Ōbeikei no gakkō hyōka kikan no nintei o uketa mono ni kagiri, tokutei kōeki zōshinhōjin toshite Nihon no shiritsu gakkō to dōyōni zeiseijō yūgū shite suru kokuji o dashi, kokodemo Chōsengakkō o hajime to suru Ajia/Nanbeikei no gaikokujingakkō/minzokugakkō o sabetsu shiteiru.” “Daigaku nyūgakushikaku ni kansuru monbukagakushōan ni taisuru seimei”, <http://www.k-jinken.ne.jp/minzokukyoiku/bengoshikai.htm>

52 Interview with Mizuno

53 Statistics from Kōbe chōsen kōkyūgakkō and Tōhoku chōsen sho- chū- kōkyūgakkō, 2008

a discount on local trains, the right to subsidies for the schools, participation in choral competitions, and so on.

On one occasion after World War II, the Japanese authorities took active measures against the Korean schools, when they forced several schools to close in 1948, accusing them of subversive activities. The closing of the schools resulted in massive protests by the Koreans, especially those residing in the Kansai region (Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe with the surrounding area). During a demonstration, a boy of 15 was shot dead and hundreds of other co-demonstrators were badly injured. In those days this event was regarded as extremely serious by the occupation authorities, which, for the first and only time during the years of occupation, sent in its own troops to quell the disturbance.<sup>54</sup>

In 1949 the Japanese authorities dissolved Choryŏn, the forerunner to Ch'ongryŏn.<sup>55</sup> One important factor in this, according to Mizuno, was the Cold War. Japan was ruled by the Allied occupation until 1952, and the old contempt for Koreans as a race was replaced by fear of communist activities.<sup>56</sup> The authorities considered Choryŏn to be a purely communist organisation with close ties to a Soviet vassal state in the immediate surroundings of Japan, using rhetoric that was quite anti-Japanese. Choryŏn was dissolved according to a law later to be referred to as the anti-subversive activities act. As a direct result of the disbandment of Choryŏn, 90 schools<sup>57</sup> were shut down in October 1949. Just like Choryŏn, these schools had all their property confiscated. In February the following year, a second round of closures was ordered, this time involving 277 schools only indirectly connected to Choryŏn.<sup>58</sup> Among these were many Mindan schools.<sup>59</sup> The number of students in the North Korean schools dropped from approximately 60,000 to more modest 20,000 as a result.<sup>60</sup> The authorities indicated that the reason for the closures was the security of the country in a turbulent period. It might seem to be an exaggeration to shut down schools just because the country they represent has bad relations with Japan. Still, the fact remains that the decision to shut down the schools had a justification in law.

Bearing in mind that the Japanese authorities' persecution of communists in the 1930s and 1940s was unusually zealous,<sup>61</sup> and that the Cabinet Intelligence and Research

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54 Mizuno, 2003: 58, 59.

55 Yŏng-sŏng Ryang, 2004: 78.

56 Mizuno, 2003: 52, 53.

57 Mizuno, 2003: 61. Ninety-two schools according to Kwang-gyu I and Kil-sŏng Ch'oe, 2006: 153.

58 Mizuno, 2003: 61.

59 I and Ch'oe, 2006: 153.

60 Su-yŏng Chŏng, 1996: 300, 301.

61 Mitchell, 1980: 82, 83.

Office in 1965 depicted the Korean minority as a “serious and deep social problem”,<sup>62</sup> it is convenient to see a combination of the Cold War anti-communist mentality and the hostilities between Japanese and Koreans that had existed since at least the interwar period as lying behind the decisions of the government and the Ministry of Education. Mizuno too believes that the ministry’s treatment of the Ch’ongryŏn schools over the years has been and still is an expression of the fear of communism and the Cold War mentality, even though this is difficult to prove concretely. Latter-day problems such as the DPRK’s test-firing of missiles and abductions of Japanese citizens probably also had an effect on the Ministry of Education’s decision of 19 September 2003.

Despite such factors, it is important to note that the rationale for the ministry’s attitude towards the Ch’ongryŏn schools, at least prior to 2002–2003, did not have to be based on racism or ideology, but could in fact equally be justified on a purely objective basis. After all (to suggest an alternative approach), it is the ministry’s responsibility to make sure that the nation’s education system meets certain standards and that children’s knowledge of the Japanese language does not decline. It all seems to be a matter of interpretation. One approach could be valued more highly than another, and the concept of “discrimination” should always be regarded in the light of the standards of the society concerned.<sup>63</sup> The other *gaikokujingakkō* were treated more or less equally to the Ch’ongryŏn schools. The treatment before 2002–2003 was bad, but at least it was consistent, and a relative justice prevailed within the *gaikokujingakkō* group.

### About the Categorisation of *Gaikokujingakkō*

What were the Ministry of Education’s reasons for introducing the three subcategories of *gaikokujingakkō* in 2003? Why was it so important to emphasise this classification within the *gaikokujingakkō*?

There is an obvious connection between the Ministry of Education’s attitude towards the Ch’ongryŏn schools and the critical voices, mainly within the conservative ruling parties, the LDP and New Conservative Party (NCP), which were heard at the time (in September 2002) when the DPRK acknowledged the abductions of Japanese citizens. It is hard to ignore the fact that relations between the governments in Japan and the DPRK are quite cold. Thus the decision of 2003, introducing the subcategorisation of *gaikokujingakkō*, could be said to have been taken on grounds of foreign policy, or even ideology.

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62 “Waga kuni ni ejū suru iminzoku ga, itsumademo iminzoku toshite todomaru koto wa, isshu no shōsuminzoku toshite shōrai konnan shinkokuna shakaimondai to naru koto wa akiraka dearu. Higa sōhō no shōrai ni okeru seikatsu to antei no tame ni, korera no hitotachi (zainichi chōsenjin) ni taisuru dōkaseisaku ga kyōchō sareru yuen dearu. Sunawachi ooini kika shitemorau koto dearu.” [If an ethnic group living in Japan permanently retain its ethnicity, it is obvious that it will become a serious and deep social problem in the future. For the sake of the life and stability in our mutual future, we emphasize on the assimilation policy towards these people (ethnic Koreans in Japan). In other words we should let most of them return to their country.] Yōng-sōng Ryang, 2004: 79.

63 “Diskriminerig” [Discrimination], *Nationalencyklopedin* [The National Encyclopedia], vol. 5: 20.

Although some events in the history of the North Korean schools can be regarded as relevant measures taken by the Ministry of Education in order to protect the education system or the children's freedom of thought, it is harder to discern any logic or relevance in some other cases. For instance, one might think it is relevant to force persons from *gaikokujingakkō* to pass an eligibility test before entering a national university in Japan, as they have not gone through the standard education prepared by the authorities. However, the special treatment of the English-speaking international schools, which was proposed in October 2002, is much less logical.

The same could be said about the decision of 19 September 2003 that university applicants from schools whose homeland had no diplomatic relations with Japan need to undergo individual appraisal, as the connection between an ethnic minority resident in Japan and Japan's diplomatic relations with their country of origin is irrelevant to education.

There is no defensible pedagogical justification for the decision, as among all the different *gaikokujingakkō* in Japan it is the Ch'ongryŏn schools that most resemble *ichijōgakkō* in terms of teaching and curriculum.

## Conclusion

### *The Eligibility Issue*

The issue of eligibility for entry to a national university is not only a question of eligibility but rather, to some people, has become a symbol of the struggle for history between the Korean schools and the Japanese government. It is a matter of Japan's responsibility for its actions during the post-war period, rather than its responsibility for actions committed during World War II.<sup>64</sup> This standpoint is worth keeping on mind. Is the issue of eligibility for entry to national universities actually about something other than how many tests an applicant has to pass in order to enter a university?

### *The Financial Aspect*

The author also discerns a financial aspect of the debate. One secondary effect of the extended recognition coveted by the Ch'ongryŏn schools was, without doubt, the associated financial advantages. The main problem of these schools today is Ch'ongryŏn's financial straits, but if they enjoyed government support and local subsidies on the same level as the private *ichijōgakkō* these schools would have a fairer chance to operate. Today's classification of Ch'ongryŏn schools as *kakushugakkō* makes an expansion of government subsidies to include these schools impossible. Since the amendment of 2003, a subcategorisation of *gaikokujingakkō* has existed that is unfavourable to the Ch'ongryŏn schools. It relates to the question of deductible donations and the fact that

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64 Yŏng-sŏng Ryang, 2004: 80, 81.

only the international schools were awarded the status of legal persons for the public good. Persons donating money to a Ch'ongryŏn school have no right to deduct those donations from tax. This is due to the schools' *kakushugakkō* status.

Judging from the Ch'ongryŏn schools' reactions to the amendment of 2003, the decision was regarded with restrained satisfaction: something obvious had been gained – a right they should have had all the time – without the desirable status the international schools received. However, even their subsidies remained on basically the same level as before the amendment. The financial secondary effect was, in fact, non-existent for the Ch'ongryŏn schools.

In other words, we can establish that the amendment of 2003, in reality, reduced the discrimination against Ch'ongryŏn schools in relation to Japanese schools, and thus brought relief to people who aimed to enter national universities. This far, it really did represent an improvement. On the other hand, the amendment was, on a symbolic level – after all, this is a matter of the authorities' official standpoint – even more discriminatory than before, at least seen in relation to other *gaikokujingakkō*. What used to be an “equally” mistreated group is now divided into three not-equal groups. This present discrimination within the *gaikokujingakkō* group is above all a matter of financial advantage.

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