

Trans-Boundary Networks and Koreans in Japan: From the Perspective of Jeju Island, Korea

庾喆仁 Yoo Chul-In

Cheju National University

Several times since 1995, I have visited the district of Ikuno in Osaka, which is known as the Jeju Island community in Japan. During my fieldwork, my key informant Mr. Park used to tell me, "If you are a native of Jeju Island, you must have acquaintances here in Japan. However, you are not, so I help you." He came from Samyang-dong, Jeju Island, Korea, in 1973 when he was twenty-four years old. After completing his military service, he stowed away to Japan where his maternal aunt and neighbors were living. A native in Jeju Island, who is his high-school alumnus and my colleague, introduced me to him.

If you introduce yourself as a man or a woman from Jeju Island to Jeju Islanders in Japan, you usually hear about their family, relatives, or alumni living in Jeju Island. On the contrary, if natives of Jeju Island are told that you are from Japan, they may talk about their connections to Japan. One Japanese graduate student remembers her entry into Haengwon-ni, a village of Jeju Island, for her fieldwork in 1994. "When I told that I came from Japan, people responded as follows. 'My father lives in Japan, but I don't know where he is.' 'I have been to Japan. At Kansai airport, you know, I worked there. It's me that constructed the bridge to the airport.' 'Do you know the *yakiniku* restaurant called Tsuruichi in Tsuruhashi? I had once worked there.' I was very surprised that they perceived Japan to be so close to their village." (Ijichi 1997)

Even without the presence of any Japanese or any researcher to ask them to do, some natives of Jeju Island would talk to each other about their experiences in Japan. At a banquet for the elderly held in Seonheulli, a village of Jeju Island, on Parents' Day (May 8), 1998, I happened to hear several men in their fifties at a table talk about their work experiences

and the current wages of a casual unskilled laborer in Japan. As I asked one of them, Mr. Ahn, about his experience, he said, "I had visited Japan six times during the 1980s. I went there with the visa of three-month-long stay for visiting my family-in-law, and then extended my stay for another three months. I could work for six months at each visit."

The above examples show that there have been close connections between Jeju Island and Japan. Nowadays almost every family in Jeju Island has one or more of their family members or relatives in Japan. Some are the original colonial immigrants who moved to Japan during the Japanese occupation and remained after liberation in 1945, and their offspring born in Japan. Others are the stowaways who sailed to Japan illegally during the post-liberation era and at last settled down. Taking advantage of trans-boundary networks between Japan and Jeju Island, so many Jeju people, particularly over forty, have an experience of living and working in Japan as an illegal stowaway or a casual migrant worker for a considerable period. This paper intends to examine how the trans-boundary networks work for chain migrations of Jeju Islanders in Japan and what such networks mean to natives of Jeju Island.

Stowing Away for Family Reunions

Compared with mainland Koreans, so many Jeju people had flocked to Japan during the Japanese occupation. That comes partly from the fact that they had easy access to Japan with a direct sea route: There was the ship called *Kimigayomaru*, a carrier of cheap labor force, bound from Jeju Island to Osaka. The population of Jeju Islanders in Japan in 1934 reached 50,053, one-fourth the size of the total Jeju Island population (Sugihara 1998: 77). During the post-liberation era, the proportion of Jeju people to Koreans in Japan has been still very high in that the population of Jeju Island has been only about 1 percent of the total population of Korea. In 1974, the population of Jeju people in Japan was 101,378, which was about 16 percent of total Korean population of 638,806 in Japan. In 1988, Jeju population in Japan was 117,687, about 17 percent of total Korean population of 677,140 in Japan (Koh 1996: 9). The 1988 population of Jeju people in Japan, like the demographic statistics in 1934, corresponded to about 23 percent of the population of Jeju Island as a whole.

The first-generation Jeju Islanders who moved to Japan during the Japanese occupation and remained after liberation are the roots of stowing away from Jeju Island during the post-liberation era. Some Jeju people stowed away for family reunions, as was the case with Mr. Aota. Mr. Aota was born in Osaka, Japan, in 1938. He had lived with his parents and grandparents there until he was taken to his great-grandmother living in Hwabuk, Jeju Island in 1942 in order to take refuge from World War II. During the Japanese occupation, Jeju Islanders living in Osaka used to send their young children to their parents or relatives living in Jeju Island in order to concentrate on making a livelihood (Lee 1989: 82), or deliver their children in Jeju Island (Ryang 2000: J74). After Korea's liberation from Japanese occupation in 1945, the children left behind in Jeju Island could not reunite with their parents in Japan. In 1957 after graduating from a senior high school, Mr. Aota stowed away on board a trader of scrap iron from Yeosu harbor in the mainland Korea to Osaka. There was no official trade between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan until the ROK-Japan Normalization Treaty went into effect in 1965. In those days, however, Korea used to export lots of scrap iron to Japan.

Mr. Aota succeeded fortunately in one trial of stowing away, while Mrs. Chang had tried to stow away three times in two years for the family reunion. She was born at Moseulpo in Jeju Island, her mother's hometown, in 1950, while her father had lived in Tokyo, Japan, since 1920. After her mother stowed away to Tokyo eventually, she lived with her married elder sister. When she was graduated from an elementary school, her parents called her to come to Japan. At last, in 1963, Mrs. Chang succeeded in the third trial of stowing away, when she was only thirteen years old. She came to Japan alone, being afraid lest she should not see her father's face at least once before he dies.

Stowaways for family reunions are the legacies of colonial migrations and the early postwar conditions in which the human rights of Koreans in Japan were neglected. Koreans in Japan became completely stateless in 1952; there were no diplomatic relations between Korean and Japanese governments until 1965.

Stowaways Seeking for a Job

During the late 1960s and 1970s when nationwide rural-to-urban

migrations peaked in Korea, many Jeju Islanders dared to stow away to Japan, seeking for a job. Stowing away to Japan followed chain migrations that are common in rural-to-urban migrations in Korea as well as in Koreans' immigration to the United States (cf. Light & Bonacich 1988). Chain migrations arise when newcomers settle in the same locality, as did kin or friends who preceded them. For a permanent residence or a temporary work, other rural residents in the mainland Korea chose the cities nearby or metropolises such as Seoul, while Jeju Islanders moved to Osaka or Tokyo in Japan where their kin, friends, or neighbors were residing. Due to chain migrations, people from the same village in Jeju Island mostly operate or work in the same household industry in Japan: Gonae-ri people on bags, Beobhwan-ni people on rubber, Moseulpo people on glass-lens, and so on.

Mr. Park, the aforementioned key informant, is one of stowaways who came from Jeju Island in order to seek for a job in Japan. He had served in a military camp near Busan harbor where there was a passenger ship bound for Jeju Island. He used to go to Busan harbor when the ship bound for Jeju Island was about to depart. He met there an acquaintance from the same village in Jeju Island that turned out to be a broker for stowing away. Since he had neither a certain plan nor a prospective job after completing his military service, in 1973 he came to Osaka where his maternal aunt and neighbors were living.

While Mr. Park happened to meet a broker at Busan harbor, Mr. Sweater from Aewol-up in Jeju Island went intentionally to Busan and stayed for a month at the inn famous to prospective stowaways from Jeju Island. Mr. Sweater said, "If you stayed there for a month, you learned how to stow away to Japan." He was born in Osaka in 1939 and returned to Jeju Island with his family after liberation. In 1968 he succeeded in stowing away to Osaka where his relatives were living, leaving his wife and three children behind in Jeju Island. Six years later, his wife also stowed away and joined him in Japan, still leaving their three children behind in Jeju Island. It was when their first child was twelve years old and the last child seven years old that his wife stowed away to Osaka.

Mr. Sweater is not an exceptional stowaway who left his family behind in Jeju Island. Mr. Choi from Gimnyeong-ni also stowed away, leaving his wife and one child behind at home. He got on board a trader

of frozen fish bound for Osaka in 1973 when he was twenty-seven years old. His brother-in-law living in Osaka helped him to get a job in a domestic factory run by other Jeju Islanders. Because he was an illegal sojourner without an alien registration card, he could not visit his home at all. He said, "*Milhangja* [a stowaway] without an alien registration card is a kind of garbage." He managed, however, to stay and work for ten years in Japan before he was arrested.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the stowaways who worked hard in the district of Ikuno were scarcely arrested partly because they usually worked on the first floor of a domestic factory and stayed on its second floor, and partly because in those days Japan was short of labor force. They were, however, arrested if they were reported to or inspected by the police. Some of them were banished, while others became registered aliens eventually if they married a registered alien or a Japanese and also had an evidence of staying considerably long in Japan. If it was possible for them to become a registered alien, stowaways sometimes surrendered voluntarily to the police, as was often the case with married women. Mrs. Kimchi did that when her first child was about to go to an elementary school, after staying illegally for about twelve years.

Casual Migrant Workers

Jeju Islanders used to go out of the island in order to make a good sum. Traditionally *haenyeo* [female divers] have been to Japan as well as the mainland Korea since the early period of Japanese occupation. They are typical seasonal casual workers sojourning outside the island. Thanks to the Korean government's policy for free overseas travel, during the 1980s many Jeju men and non-*haenyeo* women had joined in casual work in Japan. Like stowaways following chain migrations, casual workers from Jeju Island take advantage of trans-boundary kinship networks between Japan and Jeju Island. After receiving a permission of three-month-long stay in Japan for visiting their relatives, they worked illegally. If they extend their temporal stay for another three months, they can work for six months at each visit.

The large disparity between the Japanese and Korean currency exchange rates encourages Jeju people to go for work in Japan. At the banquet I introduced earlier, those who had once worked in Japan

admitted that, because of the exchange rate, they could get more money in Japan than in Jeju Island, even if they did the same kind of work. They recalled what the Japanese and Korean currency exchange rates were at that time when they had worked as a casual worker in Japan. They also confessed that they could do such-and-such a manual work in Japan because they did not lose their faces there. Korean immigrants in the U.S. also state frequently that in Korea they cannot do such a work, but they are doing it because they are in America (Yoo 1991).

Needless to say, casual workers from Jeju Island go to Japan in order to make a good sum. They might manage to save a large amount of money partly because they had no time to spend it, and partly because they could not speak Japanese. Mr. Koh in Gonae-ri, a former casual worker, told me that people spent money here in Jeju whenever they got it, but in a foreign country they did not. Mr. Ahn, the aforementioned former casual worker in Seonheul-li, said, "People would become a rich man if they work here with the same spirits as in Japan." Mr. Koh had visited his mother living in Japan five times from 1980 to 1987. In 1981, he returned from Japan with a good sum enough to purchase one hectare of the orchard for citrus cultivation. From 1987 when the citrus was produced, he did not go to Japan any more.

For some Jeju men, however, the fact that they could have a mind-set to do any kind of work seems to be more important than the fact that they could make a good sum. Mr. Koh said to me, "Before I went to Japan, I did not work at all. I did not do even agricultural work and had spent a time while drinking. In those days, men in Jeju Island usually depended on women's earnings. While I went to and returned from Japan several times, I could do any kind of work. From my work experience in Japan, I learned how to work."

Discussions

Compared with those who came from mainland Korea, relatively so many Jeju people remained in Japan after liberation (Moon 2000) because economic conditions in Jeju Island were not good in those days. Generally speaking, however, those who had a large amount of money returned back to Korea, while those who did not remained in Japan. During the post-liberation era, quite a few Jeju Islanders dared to stow away to Japan for

family reunions or seeking for a job, following their family members and relatives who preceded them. Some of them were “U-turnees,” as were the cases with Mr. Aota and Mr. Sweater. While Mr. Aota stowed away for the family reunion in Japan, Mr. and Mrs. Sweater’s stowing away resulted in a dispersed family between Jeju Island and Japan.

Since the 1980s, more of Jeju Islanders have become casual migrant workers in Japan, making use of trans-boundary kinship networks. For example, a half of total households in one village of Jeju Island has been to Japan for work (Ijichi 1999: 95-96). As of 1994, 32 persons of 24 households among total 42 households have been to Japan: 4 persons of 2 households worked in Japan during the Japanese occupation; 2 persons of 2 households stowed away during the 1960s and returned; 26 persons of 21 households were migrant workers during the 1980s. Among 26 migrant workers during the 1980s, 3 persons were born or had lived in Japan during the Japanese occupation.

Why and how did so many Jeju people become stowaways or casual workers in Japan? First of all, there are very strong networks between Jeju Island and Japan at an individual level as well as a village level. Almost every village set up a monument for those who contributed financially to their home village while living in Japan. Their success stories have stimulated Jeju Islanders who want to make a good sum to go to Japan. Secondly, characteristics of Jeju families make Jeju people more likely to go to Japan and leave their family members behind. Weak solidarity and individualism of Jeju family maximize a family’s income. Living separately among family members is not strange to Jeju Islanders.

Japan is still an important key word in the life-world of Jeju people, as she was during the Japanese occupation. It does not simply refer to a foreign country, but to family members or relatives living in Japan. For Jeju people, Japan has become the place that they can visit at will in order to make a good sum because they have relatives there. On the contrary, Moon Kyung-soo (2000), a second-generation Jeju Islander, states that *zainichi* [being in Japan] Jeju Islanders conceived in Japan are not like Jeju people, but more like Koreans. From their own perspective, Jeju natives in Jeju Island may regard *zainichi* Jeju Islanders as Jeju people.

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Abstract

庾喆仁 (済州大学校)

韓国済州島から見た在日コリアンの越境ネットワーク

今日、済州島在住者のほとんどには日本に家族ないし親族がいる。彼らの中には、植民地時代に渡日し1945年の朝鮮解放後も日本にとどまった者及びその子孫がいる一方で、解放後に非合法的に渡日し定住した密航者もいる。日本と済州島の国境を越えたネットワークを利用しつつ、非合法的密航者または季節労働者として日本での在住・労働経験を持つ済州人は、特に40歳以上の世代には多く見られる。本論文は、国境を越えるこのようなネットワークが済州人の連鎖的移民にどのように作用したのか、また、そのようなネットワークが済州島在住者にとって意味するものは何なのかを明らかにしようとする試みである。