

INTRODUCTION

When There's Nothing Left

One day, Hong Hūiūn disappeared. She stuffed a small bag with clothes, Chinese yuan, a few bits of jewelry and ran into the rain. Cutting across fields and avoiding main roads, each step took her farther away from her home and closer to the Yalu River separating North Korea from China. There she met the flimsy boat that was to take her across the flooded waters. Just moments after setting out, Hūiūn's guide spotted an armed border patrol and was forced to dock on a small island. It was cold and dark. The pounding rain had retreated to a lazy drizzle. The flickering lights of Dandong seemed so close, but there was nothing to do but wait. Eight hours passed until it was safe to move on. In the soft glow of the early light, tired and scared, Hūiūn made it to the Chinese side of the river, where she met a second guide. She changed her clothes, stuffed her wet things into a plastic bag, and followed her companion until they arrived at the home of a *Chosŏnjok* (Korean-Chinese) couple who rented her a room for the night. Hūiūn recalled, "The next day I took a bus to Dandong. My relief at reaching China was fleeting. Dandong is dangerous, as it's full of *hwagyo* [ethnic Chinese who live in North Korea] who recognize North Koreans and turn us into the police. The Chinese police have the power to send you back. And if you're sent back, the government punishes you."¹ Realizing the danger, Hūiūn had her host buy tickets for a Shenyang-bound train. "I said nothing for the entire ten-hour journey. I was too frightened of someone recognizing me as North Korean." Three days after leaving her home, Hūiūn arrived in Shenyang, the capital of China's Liaoning Province. A cousin of the man who had sheltered her outside Dandong met her at the station. "There're so many Koreans in Shenyang, so I felt safer there," she remembered. Hūiūn found a place to stay, but she was fast running out of money. "I couldn't find work, because I couldn't speak Mandarin. The owner of the hostel introduced me to another Korean-Chinese woman who agreed to help. She took me to a poor part of the city. From there, I moved into an apartment that was cheap, but had almost no running water or electricity."

In a dilapidated corner of Shenyang city, among poor Chinese and other escapees from North Korea, Hūiūn befriended a woman who helped her find a job making noodles in a fast food restaurant. She worked twelve hours a day, every day, returning to a single apartment with one toilet that she shared with eleven other women. “It was so, so hard. But there was nothing left for me in North Korea,” she recalled. Hūiūn remained in China for three years before she contacted the Japanese consulate in Shenyang with the help of some Japanese activists operating secretly in the city.² Several months later, she boarded a plane with a consulate employee and flew to Japan.

Hong Hūiūn was born in 1983, in Ryongch’ŏn-gun, in North P’yŏng’an Province, North Korea, to parents who had migrated from Japan in the early 1960s. Now living in Osaka, Japan, she is a survivor of one of the worst famines in modern history, a former member of the North Korean elite, and the fourth generation of her family to move between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Hūiūn’s family was comparatively wealthy in North Korea. They benefited from the generosity of a well-heeled aunt who owned property in Osaka’s gambling industry. Her aunt sent money and clothes to her family. Her mother traded the things that arrived from Osaka and used Japanese yen in the black markets. In the end, it was not hunger that drove Hūiūn to leave North Korea, but rather a lack of personal and political freedom. “I was frustrated that I couldn’t say or do what I wanted to do. It was suffocating. I thought life would be easier in Japan.” Leaving North Korea gave Hūiūn some of the freedoms she had imagined, but arriving in Japan without money, status, or belongings brought with it new, unexpected problems.

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Migration is among the greatest challenges confronting the global community in the twenty-first century, as conflict, climate change, and food shortages compel more people to leave their homes than ever before. We need to understand how migration transforms individuals, families, communities, and countries, and how it reconfigures the societies to which migrants relocate.³

For refugees—people compelled to leave their home and country when it seems like there is nothing left to stay for—migration offers new hope, as they attempt to start life away from violence and trauma. For receiving societies, the influx of a new and culturally different group might generate social tensions, at least for a time, as the new population attempts to integrate, or simply keep to themselves. But the skills, entrepreneurship, and resilience of these agents of transformation are often regenerative, the presence of these new groups rejuvenates stagnating postindustrial societies, infuses insulated

cultures with new life, and presents dynamic solutions to the social instability of ageing societies and declining birth rates.

This book examines displacement and migration. It also explores the strategies used by individuals and families compelled to move at great personal cost, through often deeply hazardous routes, arriving in lands that may or may not bring the better life they seek for themselves and their children. I examine these patterns through the stories of Korean families who, despite experiencing loss, trauma, and dislocation, manage to remake themselves in the process of transplanting their lives. The voices and experiences of the forced migrants in this book and the ways in which their micro transformations are reshaping communities and nations contribute to the argument that migration is not a problem to be solved nor are refugees a threat to the nations that receive them. Instead, the vignettes throughout show that migration is both a strategy and a solution—for the refugees who serve as innovators, entrepreneurs, and agents of social, cultural, economic, and political transformation, and for the societies they socially and demographically transform.

The Age of the Refugee

In the past fifteen years, the volume of people forced to flee from their homes has risen sharply. As of 2020, some 80 million people around the world were displaced within their own country, up from 43 million in 2009. The global COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted mobility and migration—with travel restricted, borders closed, labor migration suspended, and assistance to asylum seekers considerably slowed down. Whether migration will soon return to pre-pandemic levels is yet to be seen, but it is likely that people will continue to look to migration as a way of managing the stressors of conflict, climate change, economic immiseration, and political persecution.⁴

The global refugee population has seen alarming growth, doubling in the past decade to around 26 million (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [UNHCR] 2018), roughly the current population of Australia. Of the world's refugee population, 68 percent originated in just five countries. Around 1 million are Rohingya fleeing ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military. Long periods of conflict and instability have compelled a further 2.7 million Afghans to leave their country, and 2.3 million people are currently displaced outside South Sudan (UN International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2019b, 39). Around 4.2 million people are fleeing political turmoil and socioeconomic instability in Venezuela, and 5.5 million Syrians have fled a horrific civil war. The impacts of people escaping conflict, dwindling resources, extreme weather events, and political

persecution are felt on a global scale. Migrants and migration have become foundational issues of debate in domestic politics across the world, such as in the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union and the rise to power of far-right governments in Europe and beyond. And yet several million refugees from the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, and another 5 million or so from South America pale in comparison to what we can expect in coming years. Some estimates put the number of people displaced by climate change at more than 140 million by 2050—think everyone in Australia, South Korea, and Thailand combined (World Bank 2018). Less-conservative estimates put the number of people fleeing the effects of a warming planet at around a billion by 2050 (Climate Foresight 2019). A billion human beings displaced by rising sea levels, the extinction of consumable marine life, the salination of arable land, extremes of nature like tsunamis, hurricanes and bush fires, and a warming earth that renders large swaths of the planet uninhabitable. A billion people. Migration, in particular the forced movement of people from their homes, is changing the world in unpredictable and unprecedented ways, and what we are seeing now is only the beginning.

Of course, mass migration is not new. Since prehistoric times, individuals, families, communities, and entire ethnic groups have used migration as a strategic response to the effects of changing climate, to conflict, to persecution and to fluctuating resources needed for lives and livelihoods (see Castles and Davidson 2000; Castles and Miller 1998). During the twentieth century, people used migration as a response to stressors of war, famine and ideological division. Globally felt pressures arising from the collapse of empires and the upheaval of global labor markets fractured communities and families, displacing individuals on a massive scale. Such movement tends to be labeled as forced migration. Forced migration is often contrasted with voluntary migration, where people move for marriage, employment, education, or higher salaries. But the binary of forced versus voluntary movement hides more than it reveals. Migration can arise as a response to a combination of negative and positive pressures. For example, long-term economic decline at home (a push factor compelling a person to leave) can arise at the same time as shifting political sands precipitating the emergence of economic opportunities elsewhere (a pull factor directing a person toward a particular destination). Even the way in which we understand a forced migrant is complex and changeable. For instance, extreme hunger may force a person to leave home and become internally displaced within their own country,⁵ but subsequent persecution while displaced may compel that same person to travel outside their country, thus rendering them a refugee.⁶

People displaced by seismic, historical changes experience migration in highly personal ways.⁷ But even under the most desperate of circumstances, the choices made before, during, and after leaving home—often decisions made by a family—are careful calculations that take into account logistics,

such as the amount of food needed to last a journey, the policies of the countries of transit and resettlement, the safety and costs involved in using people smugglers, and the challenges of traveling as a kin group.

In the twenty-first century the growing number of people displaced within and outside of their countries is presenting new and unforeseen challenges to nations around the world. Countries—national communities—have been described as imagined, as comprised of members who think of themselves as sharing particular traits with one another—religious, linguistic, cultural, and political similarities (Anderson [1983] 2006). The idea is that, although you may never meet most of your fellow citizens, they hold similar values that make them more like you than someone, say, in a village just over the river in the neighboring country. Refugees are commonly thought of in opposition to the imagined community, as a provocation to the sovereignty of nation-states and the ability of governments to safeguard their populations. In particular, refugees' alien cultural practices, religions, and languages, and their transnational connections are pointed to as a threat to the safety and imagined singularity of citizens in nation-states (de Haas, Castles, and Miller 2020, 12). A friction between people on the move and those staying put—between the mobile and the sedentary—polarizes public opinion and reshapes political dynamics on a global scale. Even during what Edward Said called, “the age of the refugee, the displaced person, [and] mass immigration” (Said 2000, 174), refugees and displaced people are presented in opposition to the supposedly sedentary nature and timelessness of a country's citizenry, people whose moral bearings are located in their imagined connections both to each other and to the soil of the nation-state (Malkki 1992, 32; Simmel 1971).

The stigma of rootlessness that follows a forced migrant does not simply melt away after arrival in a new country.⁸ Displacement and resettlement are messy, overlapping, and emotionally complex processes in which it is difficult to delineate where one ends and the other begins. Physical emplacement, beginning with arrival in the host society, does not mark an end to the experience of being displaced. A refugee may spend years, decades even, experiencing both geographical and emotional transition from the point of initial departure to a time when they are permitted to resettle and are psychologically ready to begin life in their new home (particularly if they are detained while awaiting the results of an asylum claim). Migration, displacement, and the challenges of seeking refuge are thus disorientating experiences, during which time a person never fully occupies one space but exists both here and there concurrently, in a state of being that resembles an in-between or liminal existence (cf. Turner 1967).

The result of living everywhere can be that you belong nowhere. Migrants, forced migrants in particular, do not fit neatly into the ideologies and nationalist imaginaries of nation-states. Hannah Arendt suggested that a loss of home emerges because of the inability of the nation-state to spare a place for the displaced person within its political organization (Arendt 1973,

293–94). Since a refugee does not fit, since they are without place, they instead represent a polluting influence on the ostensible purity of the nation. The host society reads the symbols of the displaced person’s pollution—unfamiliar religious, linguistic, political, and cultural practices—as evidence of their failures. The need to purify, to cleanse a person of the more salient aspects of their foreignness, is prevalent with the case of migrants moving to escape conflict, famine, an oppressive government, or other forms of life-threatening crises. A refugee fleeing such hardships becomes the physical manifestation of these struggles—bringing the war, the hunger, the persecution to the doorstep of the host society. In order to manage the symbolic threat posed by such a corrupting influence, the host society may attempt a transformation of the new arrival from polluted to pure—from unknown to known.

Reshaping and reconceptualizing the outsider into a familiar version of humanity means transforming them into a likeness to which a degree of acceptance can be offered. Such a change often takes place under the watchful eye of the state and by means of state-sponsored health, cultural, language, and employment programs (see Ong 2003). In Sweden, for example, as part of a national drive to integrate immigrants who arrived after 2010, municipalities provided free language training; also, immigrants who were more advanced in their Swedish were even paid to keep learning. But simply turning a foreigner into an insider is rarely the intended outcome of these processes, since acceptance of the newcomer is always contingent on his or her behavior. As we will see throughout this book, that acceptance can be rescinded by the host society at any time.

The disciplinary regimes imposed on displaced people reflect public sentiment and policymaking on migration issues in the host society. Refugees seeking asylum in Australia since 2012, for example, have been subject to mandatory offshore incarceration and an average of a year and a half’s detention while they await the result of their asylum claims. In the Australian case, rather than attempting a purification of the outsider, the government has pursued a draconian approach to human management that keeps the polluting influence at a distance from the national community—outside the national discourse and outside the national concern. But displaced people are not outside of history, nor they are outside of the territorially rooted logics of the nation-state. Even in a time of global capitalism and national identities, the identities of displaced people and migrant populations are inseparable from nation-states (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc [1994] 2000, 8).

Migration and the experiences of being displaced do not mean that a person is without community or familial networks. Nor does being physically distanced from the homeland mean a person stops thinking about or being connected to home. Migration does not imply a break from the past, “rather the migrant must be understood as inhabiting two worlds simultaneously” (Thapan 2005, 15). With one eye on the past and one on the

future, memories and practices of the home left behind subsequently inform an immigrant's resettlement, providing a cognitive scaffolding for their understanding of the social, economic, political, and gender dynamics in the receiving country. These practices are sometimes interpreted as symbols of a failure to assimilate—the continued use of one's mother tongue in public, cooking food unfamiliar to the palates of the host society, unfamiliar ways of celebrating and mourning.

Such cultural expressions are, on the contrary, important demonstrations of belonging and identity. These things almost inevitably continue to reorient a person's sense of home just as they reshape the host society, especially for displaced people and refugees traveling with nothing other than their memories. The 1970s arrival of Vietnamese "boat people," who were refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in Southeast Asia, for example, changed Australian society and transformed the Vietnamese who arrived on its shores. Just a few years after the end of the White Australia policy that restricted immigration to people of European descent, the resettling of tens of thousands of Asian refugees not only changed the cuisine and culture of the land down under, but also provoked a rethinking of what an Australian was "supposed" to look like. Since that time, Australia has come to rely on semi- and high-skilled immigration as a means of economically energizing, upskilling, and diversifying its labor market, while pushing back against the social and economic challenges of an ageing population.

In contrast to the Australian experience, Japan has shown reluctance to using immigration as a means of filling labor gaps and supporting an ageing population. Tokyo's sensitivity with regard to issues of immigration is particularly noticeable in the country's record on asylum seekers. Japan is a generous donor state. In 2019, for example, it contributed more than US\$126 million to the UNHCR, the fifth-highest donation behind Sweden, Germany, the European Union, and the United States (UNHCR 2019). But the country's checkbook humanitarianism stands in sharp relief to the reality that it rarely grants requests for asylum. Between 2010 and 2017 the number of refugees who arrived in Japan increased by 1,600 percent, with more than twenty thousand asylum applications received. And yet in 2017 Japan granted refugee status to only 20 people.⁹ While the UN has requested that Tokyo help by granting more asylum applications, the government has been loath to do so, citing the ostensible ethnic homogeneity of the country as a reason why the country is unable to accept more refugees.¹⁰

Home

Displaced people have often experienced major moments of social, political and economic change in heart-wrenching, deeply personal ways. The

intergenerational mobility of the families in this book contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between an emotional attachment to home(s) and everyday feelings of rootlessness, between the lived reality of belonging to many communities and the imagined experience of belonging nowhere. The idea of home as a place rooted within national borders is often taken as an axiomatic fact: supposedly, if you live in a country for an extended, but undefined period of time, if you adopt the cultural characteristics of the host society well enough to make invisible your differences, speaking, consuming and acting like everyone else, and if you imbibe the symbols and histories of the national community, memorizing national anthems and celebrating patriotic holidays; if you do these things, you are assumed to occupy a place within the community. Rootedness and an attachment to earth, bricks and mortar is equated with normative understandings of belonging. And belonging to a national community is imagined as a timeless, defining human trait. But rootedness is not required for community. Nor does home need to be a material manifestation of belonging.

Migrations reshape connectedness to home, but they do not erase those relationships. Refugees' personal narratives and family stories challenge the idea that stasis within political borders is the only way to create a community. Mobility across time and space has encouraged the people whose stories are described in this book to develop a sense of attachment to multiple places, not just one. Indeed, returning migrants often move back and forth to the homeland on multiple occasions. Each time, their return is accompanied by the realization that their memories of home as it was, do not reflect new realities. Instead, home as it is remembered has become an idealized or exaggerated version of the past. Home—people and places—change during the time away. Migrants also change. A returnee's experience of finding their place in the homeland encourages a reevaluation of their place in the world, in some cases teaching them that a person does not need to be displaced to feel without a place, nor does a person need to be without a home in order to feel without roots.

Families for whom mobility has become central to their self-understanding present alternative, but not uncommon ways of imagining belonging and identity. Belonging not to a single place, but to a multitude of homes in multiple countries at the same time. But at a time when more people are migrating than ever before, militarized borders and high-tech walls reinforce singular modes of belonging by force, when necessary. People on one side of the walls are likely to imagine themselves as immobile, permanent, and unified, while those on the other side are thought of as untrustworthy and parasitic. But the intimate narratives of belonging, displacement and mobility in this book expose the limitations of national identities and nationalist

thinking as a means for organizing communities in the modern world and preparing for the future.

The Japanese Underclass: A Window into Migrant Life

There remains in Japan the widely held belief that Japanese society is a homogenous association of likeminded individuals comprising a racially pure collective. This belief is an ideological façade that emboldens both the government to turn away asylum seekers and the public to ignore immigrants who comprise the country's underclass—Nepalis, Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans. These immigrants work in Japan's factories, fields, and supermarkets; as caregivers for the young, the elderly, and the sick; as meat packers and food vendors; and as service staff in cafés and fast food restaurants. They often live in peri-urban areas of large cities, or in inner-city ethnic neighborhoods that sometimes verge into ghettos. As in so many postindustrial countries, Japan's immigrant communities shore up the economic foundations of society, providing the services Japan needs in roles the Japanese people are reluctant to take, and they are largely invisible to the mainstream society they serve.

The Korean families who form the focus of this historical ethnography comprise a long-marginalized demographic in Japan. In some instances, individuals have managed to transcend the limitations of membership in this underclass common to first generation immigrants: a lack of fluency in speaking the host language, the absence of professional or personal networks from which to engage in lucrative and status providing career options, legal exclusion from the benefits of the nation-state, and the disdain, avoidance, or even misdirected sympathy of the majority society. The experiences of families and individuals in this book, across generations of migration, echo the experiences of migrants everywhere: some try to assimilate; deemphasizing all visible ties to the country they left in an attempt to reform themselves in the image of the good citizen. In such cases, the new arrival throws themselves into a process of reshaping—mastering the nuances of the local language, dressing like a local, actively avoiding coethnics and even fabricating a backstory to hide or reshape the what, where, and why of life before arrival. Others consciously remain in socially segregated ethnic communities, finding comfort in the familiar. Some acquiesce to exploitative work conditions in the hope that it will be a steppingstone to something better; still others engage in entrepreneurship in an attempt to create new opportunities. Sometimes, there seems no other choice than to succumb to their assigned positions, in roles shunned by the host society. In the pages that follow, each of my informants travels one or more of these trajectories,

embracing the new opportunities afforded them in some cases, clinging to the identity and memory of a homeland in others, while sometimes slipping into the abyss of despondency and despair, hoping that things will be better for the next generation.

A part of Japan's invisible underclass are the Koreans whose families have moved back and forth between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Between 1959 and 1984, some 87,000 Koreans and 6,750 Japanese migrated to North Korea from Japan as part of a "repatriation project" organized by the governments of North Korea and Japan, with the oversight of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The most telling misnomer with regard to the events discussed in this book is that the mass exodus of Koreans and Japanese to North Korea was a repatriation at all. This expression, "repatriation," suggests that those who left for North Korea were returning home. The reality, as shown in chapters 1 and 2, is that the people who migrated to North Korea, the vast majority of whom were originally from southern areas of the Korean Peninsula, went as a response to untenable social and economic conditions in Japan. My own use of the term reflects both a need to distinguish emigrants to North Korea from Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea)-born Koreans, and an understanding that those who left often felt an ideological affinity for North Korea's ethnonationalism. But even individuals who may have once considered themselves loyal to Kim Il-sung's DPRK were not prepared for what awaited them in the ideological homeland.

The majority of repatriates, including Huiün's parents and grandparents, whose story opens this book, arrived in North Korea with hopes for better living and working conditions, as promised by Kim Il-sung and the DPRK's apparatchiks in Japan. But since the early 2000s, a small group of around three hundred men, women, and children have returned to Japan, some escaping persecution or poverty, all desiring a new start. This book tells their stories and situates their voices in the broader geopolitical contexts of the time.

The people I refer to as Zainichi returnees commonly resettle in Osaka or Tokyo, in ethnic Korean communities. "Zainichi Korean" is the Japanese label applied to Koreans who initially migrated to Japan from the Korean Peninsula during and in the years immediately following the Japanese colonial period (1910-45). Since that time, the new generations of Koreans resident in Japan—Zainichi Koreans—have, to various degrees, assimilated into mainstream Japanese society. For many Zainichi Koreans, their relationship to their host society, to their homelands and to their Korean/Japanese identity remains complicated (see Ryang 2009, 1-20).¹¹

While most returnees I worked with are Korean, a minority are ethnically Japanese, the wives and children of Zainichi Koreans who went to North Korea as part of the repatriations. By returning to Japan, Zainichi returnees

and their family complete a migratory loop between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago that spans almost a century.

Early Korean Mobility

The story of Koreans on the move is embedded within macrolevel, socio-political processes that shaped twentieth century Asia: the rise and fall of imperial Japan, the expansion and collision of US and Soviet geostrategic interests, and the division of the Korean Peninsula into two ideologically antagonistic states on the frontlines of the Cold War. Korean families moving from Japan to the DPRK forged an unusual migratory path at a time when most mass movements traveled away from the communist world, to the Western Bloc. But migration between the Korean Peninsula and Japan and then from Japan to the DPRK is just one of a number of mobility threads that connected and scattered Korean families throughout East Asia and beyond.

There are currently around 7.5 million ethnic Koreans living outside the Korean Peninsula, the result of around 150 years of outward movement propelled by conflict, land reforms, state-directed labor projects, and emerging economic opportunities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; MOFA-ROK, 2019). Beginning in the 1860s, following the Qing government lifting a ban on non-Manchu migration to Northeast China, a growing number of Koreans moved north of the Tumen and Yalu Rivers, cultivating vast lands for rice cropping. As a result of several waves of migration to China, the Russian Far East, and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kim 2003, 101–27; Ryang 2000b), to South America in the 1960s (Buechler 2004; Park 1999), to the United States following the passing of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act (Light and Bonacich 1988), of forced migrations to Central Asia in 1937 (Yoon 2012, 419–21), and skilled-labor migrations to West Germany and the Middle East from the early 1960s (Light and Bonacich 1988, 102–25), the Korean diaspora is globally dispersed, the greatest numbers concentrated in the United States, China, and Japan (MOFA-ROK 2019). Across a century and a half, Korean families have been compelled to leave their homes as a response to the violent expansion and contraction of imperial and national boundaries in Asia and the shifting of geostrategic and economic influences and alliances in the post-World War II era.

In the past twenty-five years, Koreans from the DPRK have left their country in unprecedented numbers (outside of the large number of refugees generated during the 1950–53 Korean War). The largest out-migration occurred in response to the 1990s nationwide famine that affected all but the country's elite.¹² The famine, often referred to as the Arduous March

by North Koreans, emerged in the years following the collapse of the Cold War world order. Specifically, the crumbling of the Soviet Union in 1991 ended the economic assistance the DPRK had hitherto received from its main trading partner and sponsor. Unable to borrow money from the global credit markets and unwilling to press for financial relief elsewhere, North Korea's economy slid further into decline.¹³ As North Korea's state food rationing—the Public Distribution System—ground to a halt, chronic shortages emerged across the country.¹⁴ The famine led to the deaths of approximately 600,000 to 1 million people by starvation and malnutrition-related diseases (cf. Goodkind and West 2001; Haggard and Noland 2007; Robinson et al. 1999). During a period of nationwide shortages, widespread unemployment and high rates of mortality, an unknown number of North Koreans were displaced within their country, while others were compelled to cross the Sino-Korean border in search of work, food, and opportunities to trade.¹⁵

The majority of people crossing into China would later migrate home, their returns reflecting both the difficulty of onward migration from China and the emotional pull back to villages, homes, and family in North Korea. But a small minority continued on to South Korea, Japan, and beyond as refugees. Among the men and women forced to migrate to survive is a small number of people who had been directly or indirectly (children or grandchildren) part of a mass exodus from Japan. This book is the first to explore their stories.

Postwar New Beginnings in Japan

At noon on 15 August 1945 Emperor Hirohito announced the end of the Pacific War. As news of Japan's surrender spread across the country and throughout territories occupied since its 1931 invasion of Manchuria, ordinary Japanese considered their lives as a defeated nation. For millions of newly liberated people working in the coalmines and industrial facilities of the empire, the end of the war prompted new questions on identity, the future, and the sovereignty of Japan's colonies. These questions were perhaps most sharply felt by Koreans living on the Japanese archipelago.

The industrialization and modernization of Japan began with the 1868 Meiji Restoration and included an extended period of economic growth supported by a militarized territorial acquisition.¹⁶ At its peak, Japan controlled territories including Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, large areas of China, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, and Burma. The growing Empire of Japan needed a huge pool of labor to work in shipyards, mines, fishing fleets, spinning mills, military posts, and colonial law and order positions. By extending the 1938 National Mobilization Law, Tokyo was

able to recruit people from within its territorial acquisitions, particularly from Korea.¹⁷ Japan tightened its control and exploitation of Korea by minimizing the imagined ethnic and cultural differences between themselves and the Koreans, so that Korea's absorption into Japan appeared as a natural stage in the racial and imperial unity of the two peoples.¹⁸ But military defeat ended Japan's imperial experiment.

The surrender of imperial Japan concluded thirty-five years of colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula. During the occupation, millions of Koreans were displaced by Japanese land reforms and in service to the military government. Some people had migrated to such places as Japan or Manchuria by choice; others were compelled to move by unemployment, a loss of arable land, or promises of a better life in service of the emperor. At the time of Japan's capitulation, there were around 2 million Koreans living in Japan.

Following defeat, Japan changed tack, shifting from imperial expansion to strategic alignment with the United States and economic integration within the globalizing free market. Such a dramatic change required the Japanese to withdraw from their shattered conquests and reimagine themselves as bounded by the borders of the archipelago—as a national rather than an imperial community. The shift from empire to nation rendered Japan's huge colonial workforce, the human consequence of an imbalance of power between colonial master and colonized servant, superfluous to requirements. Concerned about the effect that a surplus of labor would have on the struggling postwar economy, the Japanese government, under the supervision of occupying Allied forces, arranged for the repatriation of Koreans in Japan.

By spring of 1946, some 1.4 million Koreans had returned to a homeland that US and Soviet forces had divided at the 38th parallel. American forces moved up the peninsula and occupied the area that in August 1948 became the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea). The Red Army occupied the territory north of the dividing line, land that in September 1948 would become the DPRK. The overwhelming majority of Koreans leaving Japan around this time returned to southern Korea. Only 351 individuals are recorded as having repatriated north of the dividing line prior to 1959.¹⁹

Once the dust had settled, around 650,000 Koreans remained in Japan. Their reasons for staying varied: some resented the restrictions on the amount of property each person was permitted to take with them back to Korea, and some had made new lives for themselves in the industrial centers of Osaka, Kobe, or Tokyo.²⁰ Others had nothing to return to, having lost contact with family and friends during the war years. Some Koreans were deterred from returning by rumors that conditions in the homeland were becoming desperate, with poverty and disease widespread, and ideological unrest fomenting. Distance was no protection however, and even Koreans who stayed in Japan would not escape the ideological fissures that divided the homeland.

Divisions in Japan

The Korean community in Japan soon split along ideological lines that mirrored the division of the Korean Peninsula. Although the majority of Koreans in Japan originated from the southern half of the peninsula, most politically supported the DPRK, founding in 1945 the North Korea-sympathizing League of Korean Residents in Japan (Chae'il Chosönnin Ryön-meang or Choryön).²¹ Allied occupiers forcibly disbanded Choryön in 1949, and it was not until May 1955 that Korean labor activist Han Duk Su founded the organization today known as Ch'ongryön.²² Ch'ongryön has since functioned as North Korea's de facto embassy in Japan, responsible for both coordinating informal political relations between the two countries and for managing North Korean business interests in Japan.²³ The organization has been a lightning rod for anti-Korean sentiment in Japan, and has been accused of participating in the abduction of Japanese citizens, of funneling large amounts of money to Pyongyang, and of operating spy networks throughout Japan.²⁴

In the same period, anticommunist Zainichi Koreans created the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Chae'il Han'guk'in Koryumindan/Mindan) in 1946. Each side claimed to represent the rights and welfare of Koreans in Japan. But those sympathizing with North Korea were better organized and more capable of rallying support to their cause.

The relationships of the two Koreas to Ch'ongryön and Mindan would have a lasting impact on Koreans in Japan. Both organizations claimed to be preparing their members for a return to the homeland, but only the North Korean government was active in providing funding, ethnic education, and employment to Zainichi Korean communities. Amidst the reordering of nationality and citizenship in postwar Japan, Ch'ongryön schools fostered an identity as DPRK nationals, and taught North Korean history and language to Zainichi Korean students, many of whom had never seen the homeland (Ryang 1997, 3).²⁵ Mindan, in contrast, failed to secure funding from Seoul. South Korean president Syngman Rhee regarded Koreans in Japan with suspicion and was loath to support what he imagined as enemies of the fledgling ROK. The DPRK's willingness to provide financial and material assistance meant that North Korea and Ch'ongryön enjoyed broad support among Zainichi Koreans. But again, events in the Koreas would prove inescapable to Koreans in Japan.

Following several years of skirmishes, on 25 June 1950 North Korean forces launched a general attack across the 38th parallel. The ensuing conflict, and the destruction and huge loss of life on both sides, made it difficult and undesirable for Zainichi Koreans to return to either side of the divided peninsula. After three years of fighting, during which time some 4 million people were killed including an estimated 2 million civilians (Cumings

2010, 95), the division of the two Koreas solidified into the communist north and the capitalist south. The ideological schism within the Zainichi Korean community was similarly entrenched.

The 1953 armistice between the United States, China, and the DPRK established a ceasefire on the Korean Peninsula and necessitated the lasting presence of US troops in South Korea. The postwar years also saw changes in the United States–Japan relationship. In 1952, for example, the United States ceded control of Japan back to the Japanese government. This period marked the beginnings of Japanese efforts to regulate trade and taxation by shutting down the black markets that had emerged across the country. As a part of Tokyo's efforts to reestablish law and regain control over the economy it moved to legally define who would and would not be included in the new Japan. At the time, fear that the Japanese archipelago was overpopulated worked in parallel with a paranoia that the newly distinguished foreigners were a threat to the security and ethnic purity of the nation. Consequently, instead of trying to incorporate Zainichi Koreans into Japanese society, the government looked for opportunities to export them.

Tokyo decided that the best way to deal with the human excesses of its imperial decline was to ship it to North Korea. In other words, Japan outsourced its minority problem as its modernizing trajectory momentarily aligned with North Korea's economic and geostrategic aims. Within just a few years, tens of thousands of Koreans, several thousand Japanese, and even a handful of Chinese had left Japan for North Korea in what was one of the largest mass movements from the capitalist to the communist world. Life in the DPRK for some repatriates offered unexpected opportunities. A few repatriates with membership in Ch'ongryŏn and whose families were relatively wealthy were moved into homes in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang. Others favored by the regime were allocated housing in cities outside the political center, such as Ch'ŏngjin, Sinŭiju, or Hamhŭng. In urban landscapes that still bore the scars of American bombing, the state set repatriates to work in industrial, educational, and agricultural positions. But because their propaganda and economic value eroded over time, repatriated Koreans soon represented diminishing returns for Pyongyang. For the majority of families who went to North Korea, their new homeland would present a lifetime of challenges.

This book uses declassified archival evidence, ethnographic research, and the voices of returnees from North Korea to show that Japan and North Korea's reordering of national sovereignty created a transient, multi-territorialized community of people with ties reaching across East Asia. The personal accounts in the chapters that follow offer a glimpse into what it means to be displaced in the modern world and to exist as an outsider to the national community, and how, in the age of mass migration, identity and belonging remain highly contested, unstable concepts.

Liberated into Statelessness

Postwar Japan was not the only place experiencing a demographic, economic, and political realignment. Massive population movements took place throughout the United States, Asia, Europe, and Africa as part of an ethnic unmixing (Brubaker 1998) of people following World War II. During this period, colonial administrators, officials, scholars, and bureaucrats moved in the direction of retreating powers (toward the colonial center), while former subjects of predominantly European powers moved toward the colonial periphery, returning to newly independent countries that often faced a long struggle toward economic and governmental stability.

Japan's imperial expansion had mirrored that of European powers in terms of its assimilation practices and an emphasis on modern forms of governance and technological development.²⁶ In turn, its contraction and subsequent rebirth as a liberal democratic nation presented similar challenges to those experienced by other empires in decline. Following Japan's capitulation, and as bureaucrats and soldiers hurriedly retreated in the face of advancing Soviet and American forces, the Asia-Pacific region experienced a frenetic reordering of people. The withering Japanese imperial order used and subsequently discarded Koreans, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Burmese; these people made up a veritable army of low-skilled workers displaced first by the demands of an expanding militant state and subsequently by shuttered mines, bombed infrastructure, and retreating armies. Many former Japanese subjects found that liberation gave way to statelessness. Statelessness ushered in fears of lost livelihoods and economic precarity. There seemed few options but to leave Japan.

Huge geopolitical ruptures trigger movements in a multitude of directions. For some, unexpected changes prompt a desire to return home. During a migrant's time away, the ethnic homeland may have changed beyond recognition, reshaped and reimagined by economic development and industrialized conflict. Migrants' experiences in the cities and villages to which they return, their feeling of being out of place while surrounded by landscapes of familiarity, is a common feature of diasporic communities. As part of the twentieth century's unmixing of populations, millions of Jewish descendants, for example, "returned" to Israel for the first time (Remenick 2002, 2009), ethnic Hungarian labor migrants relocated from Romania (Fox 2007), *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans) migrated to Germany from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Rock and Wolff 2002), and ethnic Spanish "returned" from South America to Southern European countries (Cook-Martin and Viladrich 2009). In some cases, the time between the initial out-migration and the return spans several generations. Ethnic Japanese, for example, initially emigrated to South America in the early twentieth cen-

ture, with many returning some eighty years later, during Japan's economic boom (de Carvalho 2003; Takenaka 2009; Tsuda 2003, 2009).

In the aforementioned cases, return to the ethnic homeland exacerbated feelings of displacement, but also opened possibilities for the emergence of new ways of being in the world and new understandings of belonging. Most North Koreans who leave their country travel south. Democratic, highly urbanized South Korea is at the polar opposite to what they have previously experienced. North Koreans arriving in South Korea may have high expectations regarding the economic opportunities in their new home. However, South Korean dramas, films, and music smuggled into North Korea on DVDs and USBs shape expectations that are rarely met (Chung 2008, 1–27; Lankov 2006, 120). Instead, North Koreans south of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) occupy a socioeconomic position in South Korean society on a par with working-class Korean-Chinese migrant laborers (Hough and Bell 2020; Seol and Skrentny 2009). North Korean refugees are tolerated, but are not regarded as equals within the host society. At best they are regarded as living testament to the political and economic superiority of South Korea. At worst, they represent a threat to the “cocoon of the safe, familiar, established society” (Bauman 2004, 67). North Koreans' incongruous cultural traits contribute to their feelings of marginalization and disorientation, things like unfamiliar accents and vocabulary, understandings of fashion, and consumer habits that differ from cosmopolitan, image-conscious socialites of Seoul, South Korea's capital. These differences, some skin-deep while others cutting to the very core of a politically divided Korean identity, are wrapped up in discourses of nationalism, gender, and modernity that exacerbate points of tension between new arrivals and the host society.

Koreans returning to Japan in the post-Cold War period experience similar feelings of tension and uncertainty in their relationship to both the sending and receiving societies. But among *Zainichi* returnees, return migration is particularly complicated, as even returnees born in Japan are not ethnic returnees because they are ethnically Korean, not Japanese. As Koreans returning to Japan, they return to a diasporic Korean community in Japan. There are two broad categories of return migrants: people born in Japan and people born in North Korea.²⁷ With these nuances in mind, the two categories I use are birth returnee, referring to a person born in Japan who returns to the land of their birth; and imagined returnee, a person arriving in a place that was manifested only in family memories and consumables.

Many birth returnees now remaking home in the urban sprawl of Tokyo or Osaka were children when they left for North Korea. Returned to places they left long ago, they experience difficulty feeling at home in Japan, largely because of the significant social, economic, and political changes that have taken place during their absence. Now in their twilight years, birth return-

ees seek to reconnect with once familiar places and people. For imagined returnees, people born in North Korea to parents of repatriates, migration to Japan is a meeting with the inherited memories of parents and grandparents. But their secondhand memories are slippery recollections of others' experiences, and there is often a significant disparity between an imagined returnee's inherited memories of Japan and the reality of contemporary life in Tokyo or Osaka. For both birth and imagined returnees, memories of Japan rarely prepare them for the challenges that arise following their arrival.

Gateway to a New Life

Osaka has long been both a trading hub and a gateway to the rest of Japan. Made up of many small towns threaded together by the Japanese rail system, the edges of Osaka city spill over into neighboring areas, rapaciously devouring the surrounding suburbs. In the winter, darkness descends around four o'clock in the afternoon and a haze settles under the arches of the low-crouching rail bridges and throughout the undercover malls running south to north across the city. Seeping out of the standing bars and barbecue restaurants located on the periphery of the shopping areas, this fog carries with it a distinctly meaty odor. The haze becomes especially thick in the early evenings, when workers, stopping for a beer and a snack on their way home, provoke the cooking fires to burn with greater intensity.

With its bustling wholesale markets, Korean and Chinese restaurants, and signs written both in Korean and Japanese scripts, Tsuruhashi, Ikuno ward, in the center-east of the city, is a halfway house for newly arrived migrant workers.²⁸ It is a place where immigrants from neighboring East Asian countries begin life in Japan, while speaking their native languages and engaging with others who understand what it is like to be an outsider in Japan. Tsuruhashi played an important part in Japan's empire building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁹ During the colonial era, a direct ferry connected Cheju Island and Osaka, carrying thousands of Koreans looking for work in the factories that sprang up to supply the Japanese military. By the mid-1950s, some 20 percent of Koreans in Japan lived in Osaka city,³⁰ often working physically demanding jobs in the formal and informal labor markets. Tsuruhashi is less known for being home to two of Japan's more notorious Zainichi Koreans. Ko Yonghŭi, mother to the current leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, was born in Tsuruhashi, and migrated to the DPRK as part of the repatriation project. And would-be assassin Mun Segwang also called this corner of Ikuno ward home: On 18 July 1974 Mun stole a Smith & Wesson pistol from a Tsuruhashi police station and attempted to murder South Korean president Pak Chŏnghŭi. Running with his pistol in hand, Mun fired wildly, missing his target and

instead killing the president's wife, Yuk Young-soo. He was later hanged in Seoul prison.

Tsuruhashi is now home to an area of commercial and residential buildings that together constitute Osaka's Koreatown. Riding west using the Sennichimae subway line that bisects Osaka, a prerecorded Japanese voice announces the Tsuruhashi stop as “the home of Korean barbecue [*yakiniku*] and offal [*horumon*] restaurants.” The doors slide open and the smell of roasting meat fills the nostrils. The sights and sounds of traders selling kimchi, freshly slaughtered animals, and plastic-wrapped clothes resemble markets in South Korea or China more than they do most commercial areas of Japan. Shops on the main street of Koreatown sell South Korean cosmetics, Korean pop music and dramas, imported foodstuffs, alcohol, and locally made fresh food. Following the emergence of the “Korean wave,” Ikuno ward has become a hot spot for domestic tourists wanting a taste of Korea, but without the hassle of getting on a plane.

While researching this book, I lived in Osaka, in a dilapidated apartment on Koreatown's main street (figure 0.1). I spent my first months managing a tatami mat flea infestation, carried into the apartment by rats nesting in the walls. Most mornings I awoke to the dull “dunk dunk dunk” sound of knife-hitting-wood, as the elderly women on the other side of the street from my apartment prepared the day's kimchi for sale. Other days I was woken by



Figure 0.1. Tsuruhashi's Koreatown is lined with shops selling Korean products. Photo taken by the author.

the same women, yelling their morning greetings at other shopkeepers in thick Cheju Island Korean.³¹

Older returnees from North Korea talked to me about their experiences in postwar Japan. They also told me of the disappointment they felt in the years following their repatriation to the DPRK. They described cold winters shivering without heating, and ground so hard with frost that nothing would grow. A few recalled lives of privilege among the DPRK's political elite, others spoke of scavenging for food in the mountains and selling their findings in black markets. Returning to Japan after such a long time away comes with its own challenges. Interviewees who had left Japan in the 1960s described returning to a country that had changed beyond recognition. For these people, the sights and sounds of contemporary Osaka, of Tsuruhashi and Koreatown, offer few clues alluding to life as it was a half century earlier.

The Journey

This book examines the lives of families who have moved between Japan and the two Koreas across three generations. In the process they have engaged with five key strategies: intramarriage, identity management, emotionally directed mobility, activist engagement, and imagined belonging.³² Their memories of strategic movement and resettlement show that, although displacement is often characterized by desperation, refugees are in fact innovators, entrepreneurs, and agents of transformation with the potential to regenerate the societies where they settle.

Each chapter and the strategies described therein highlight the relationship between memory, mobility, belonging, and the reconfiguration of individual identity, of communities, and entire societies. The first chapter explores postwar Japan and the movement of tens of thousands of people to North Korea. I show how migrants create their own powerful retellings of history that exist alongside, and sometimes eclipse, official state narratives. For the migrants in this book, Cold War politics unfolded, writ-small, in Korean communities, tearing families apart and carving a dividing line between Koreans who supported the DPRK and those who supported the ROK. As ideological alliances hardened, a rare moment when the interests of Japan and North Korea overlapped (from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s) allowed for an exodus of Zainichi Koreans to the DPRK. I argue that what I call the vernacular memories of returnees from North Korea—the micro-histories of families and minority communities—are at odds with official, nationalist histories of modern Japan. The tension that subsequently arises, between vernacular memories and nationalist discourses, unsettles common understandings of Japan as having been victim to North Korean duplicity with regard to the repatriations, suggesting instead that Zainichi

Koreans migrated to North Korea as a response to increasing ethnic discrimination and economic suffocation in Japan.

Chapter 2 examines the strategic use of alliance building through intra-marriage between migrant families. Korean families in Japan and those who subsequently emigrated to North Korea created such alliances to survive the painful emotional, economic, and social chaos of displacement. Straddling the boundary of oral history and ethnography, the genealogies of two families in particular reflect the geopolitical upheavals taking place in East Asia at the time. For seemingly powerless migrant families, decisions on who to marry, who to avoid, when to leave and who to send are moments for stabilizing lives and livelihoods threatened by dramatic global disruptions.

In the third chapter, I examine how Zainichi families managed and deployed inner and outer identities as a way to survive the vicissitudes of life in North Korea. Local North Koreans often viewed repatriates as no different from Japanese. Repatriates responded to having their ethnic identity scrutinized in different ways, some by resisting the majority society pressures. I show that resistance took the form not of explicit antistate protest, but rather of “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985), whereby the ordinary, everyday actions of people ostensibly lacking in power have broader, political implications. Some repatriates, for instance, tried to hide their outsider status, understanding that to survive in North Korea meant obfuscating the peculiarities that set them apart from local North Koreans. Others realized that they would always be outsiders in North Korea, and so mobilized feelings of marginalization to build transnational family connections back to Japan. Such acts of quiet dissidence were materialized through practices such as cooking Japanese food, storytelling in the Japanese language, nostalgic recollections of life before repatriation, and, most importantly, sending and receiving letters and gifts to family who had remained behind. A deepening sense of emotional attachment to the people and places they had left behind in turn incited an unexpected questioning of self-identity and new imaginings of home.

While returning to Japan may reconcile a sense of long-distance yearning, new arrivals' lack of relevant skills, qualifications, and knowledge of the host society create unexpected challenges. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between emotions and mobility, in particular how emotional rather than economic drivers play a crucial part in the strategic choices made before and after leaving North Korea. The families in this book chose to pursue resettlement in Japan, a place where they neither speak the language nor have experience with everyday life, instead of South Korea, a country with which they share cultural and linguistic qualities and are entitled to economic benefits as North Korean defectors. In choosing Japan, they make strategic decisions motivated by highly personal emotional attachments—real and inherited—from family, and by the hope that they will find social

support among kin, friends, and other Koreans. Further to these emotionally directed movements, I show how the dramatic socioeconomic changes that took place in 1990s' North Korea have had a ripple effect in the lives of North Koreans in exile. Interviewees' accounts of surviving the North Korean famine reveal how shifting understandings of labor and gender roles in North Korea—in particular, the rise of the female capitalist—shape both returnees' emergent social networks and their understandings of what constitutes success in Japan.

The fifth chapter examines returnees' strategic reliance on, or avoidance of, civic organizations as part of their resettling in Japan. All of the returnees I met had experience with Japanese civic groups; many had found work, accommodations, and the beginnings of a social network through these groups. But returnees' engagement with activist groups emerges within a power dynamic in which activists exercise a moral authority over new arrivals. Specifically, civic groups in Osaka and Tokyo claim possession of new arrivals through gift giving. In a perversion of good intentions and best wishes, the moral economy—an economy of altruism—that has emerged between an already vulnerable group and the people who help them further endangers returnees. Giving, an everyday act that binds families and communities together, obligates returnees to the organizations that help them escape North Korea. The obligation to repay a debt that can never be satisfied subsequently compels returnees to participate in high-profile, high-risk activism. In doing so, Zainichi returnees again put themselves and their family at risk of reprisals from the North Korean government.

Chapter 6 draws on three ethnographic cases to illustrate the fracturing of the self that often arises from multiple migrations, and the lengths to which displaced people go in order to imagine belonging within the host society. The vignettes within this chapter reveal a vulnerability, especially the tendency of displaced people to feel caught between worlds and located outside of time. Some also experience this liminal existence as a time in which to shape new subjectivities by locating one's self among fragments of the past. I highlight returnees' strategic use of remembering and forgetting as a means by which some manage to develop an attachment to Japan. In doing so, I underline the importance of the relationship between memory and displacement, suggesting that, wherever they go, pathologizing refugees' pasts, in particular their relationships to the homeland, makes it even harder for them to find peace in the places they resettle.

People forced to migrate to escape dangerous, restrictive, or economically perilous lives do so at great personal cost. They face isolation, exclusion, poverty, and scorn, and most are integrated—either temporarily or more long term—into the underclass of their host society. To survive the experiences of downward mobility and its limitations—or to escape those experiences—they demonstrate the survival techniques outlined in this book to

varying degrees of success. Forced migrants are a self-selecting group; they enter into hardship at great risk, to create a better life. As a result, despite the many hardships they endure, they are survivors. The concluding chapter examines the ways in which the strategies detailed above enable individuals, families, and communities to remake themselves and transform the places in which they settle, shifting the cultural, demographic, economic, and political dynamics of their host society forever.

Notes

1. The term “*hwagyo*” refers to Chinese who have spent time in one or both of the two Koreas.
2. Civic organization members helped Hüün contact the Japanese consulate general.
3. In this book I use the IOM definition of migrant; “migrant” refers to any person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons (IOM 2019a).
4. For a brief but insightful discussion of how the COVID-19 pandemic could impact global migration, see the UN IOM report, “Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic” (Gamlen 2020).
5. According to the UN ‘Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement’, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border (UN Economic and Social Council 1998).
6. According to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, refugees are persons who flee their country due to well-founded fear of persecution due to reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and who are outside their country of nationality or permanent residence and, due to this fear, are unable or unwilling to return to it (UNHCR 1951).
7. In this book I focus on the experiences of IDPs and refugees, but I will use the adjective “displaced” to refer to anyone forced to leave their home and seek shelter elsewhere.
8. I draw on Erving Goffman’s understanding of stigma. Goffman explains, “While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind—in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; some-times it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity” (Goffman 1963, 12–13).

9. Japan's low refugee intake is reported in *Business Insider* (Chan 2018).
10. The UN request is also reported in *Business Insider* (Wilson 2017).
11. In Japanese, the word “Zainichi” refers to a foreigner residing in Japan. However, the expression has been appropriated by long-term Koreans in Japan to distinguish them from the Japanese population and from later waves of migrations from South Korea. I use the expression “Zainichi returnee” to refer to ethnic Koreans who migrated to North Korea only to return to Japan in recent years. For a comprehensive account of Koreans' experiences in Japan see Sonia Ryang's *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin* (Ryang 2000b), and Sonia Ryang and John Lie's *Diaspora Without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan* (Ryang and Lie 2009).
12. Although the DPRK Constitution grants citizens the “freedom to reside in and travel to any place,” the reality is very different (Haggard and Noland 2007, 169–70). Internal movement and movement beyond the country's sovereign borders requires government permission. Permission is not always granted. Because of the draconian restrictions on movement, citizens who leave the DPRK often do so without government permission and are subsequently vulnerable to punishment if apprehended.
13. For more on the North Korean economic collapse see Smith (2015, 136–64).
14. The Public Distribution System is the rationing system by which the DPRK state distributes food to citizens. Distribution occurs in accordance with a quota system, in which food allocation is determined by age, gender, occupation, and political status.
15. The exact number of North Koreans who left for China is uncertain. Courtland Robinson (2013, 54) estimates that in 1998 there were around 75,000 North Korean refugees in Northeast China, and that by 2009 that figure had dropped to around 10,000.
16. For more on the Meiji Restoration, see Jansen (2002), 333–494.
17. More than 1 million Koreans were brought to Japan as labor and military conscription from 1939 to 1945, according to the Japanese Home Ministry (B AG 232 105-002 “Problème du rapatriement des Coréens du Japon, dossier I: Généralités.” 27/02/1953–11/10/1957. Inoue, Masutarô. 1956. “The Repatriation Problem of Certain Koreans Residing in Japan.” Japanese Red Cross Society, 1 October 1956, 1).
18. For more on Japan's colonial assimilation policies, see Caprio (2009).
19. Specifically, 233 Koreans went to the north on 15 March 1947 and 118 went on 26 June of that same year (B AG 232 105-002 “Problème du rapatriement des Coréens du Japon, dossier I: Généralités.” 27/02/1953–11/10/1957. Inoue, Masutarô. 1956. “The Repatriation Problem of Certain Koreans Residing in Japan.” Japanese Red Cross Society, 1 October 1956, 6).
20. Lee notes, “SCAP [Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers] had issued a directive forbidding any repatriate to take with him more than 1,000 yen or objects of equivalent value” (in Lee and De Vos 1981b, 59). Japanese authorities impounded any money or items valued above this limit.
21. Choryŏn was succeeded by a variety of political organizations, of which the most important was the Koreans' United Democratic Front (*Minsen* in Japanese or *Minsŏn* in Korean).

22. The League of Koreans was dissolved on the orders of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) on 8 September 1949, ostensibly for carrying out communist activities. (See B AG 232 105-025 15/07/59-15/07/59, p. 31). Furthermore, the Japanese government shut down 350 ethnic Korean schools supported by the League (Shipper 2010, 59–60; Tai 2004, 358).
23. The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, “Ch’ongryŏn” in Korean and “Chōsen Sōren” using Japanese pronunciation, is one of two main political organisations representing Zainichi Koreans, and has close ties to North Korea.
24. In the 1980s, suspicions arose within Japan that North Korea had kidnapped Japanese citizens from the country’s Northwest coastal areas. This came to a head in September 2002, with a meeting between DPRK head of state, Kim Jong-il and Koizumi Junichiro, then Japanese Prime Minister. For reasons still unclear, Kim confessed to Koizumi that North Korean agents, ostensibly operating without his knowledge, had abducted 13 Japanese, five from Europe and eight from Japan.
25. For more on identity, nationalism, and citizenship in postwar Japan and how these things shaped Zainichi Korean identity, see Kashiwazaki (2000, 13–31).
26. For a comparative understanding of Japan’s assimilation policies see Caprio (2009, 19–48).
27. These categories are further complicated because a number of returnees to Japan are ethnically Japanese as opposed to Korean. The majority of the individuals I worked with during my research, however, are ethnically Korean.
28. The official website of Ikuno ward states, “The population and density of Ikuno-ku are the sixth largest in Osaka city, but are declining. The number of foreigner registrations is the largest in the city, and one out of four residents here is of foreign nationality. The proportion of senior citizens is also higher than the overall Osaka city average” (Ikuno-Ku website n.d.).
29. For a historical treatment of Osaka city as a site of East Asian modernity, see Cronin (2017).
30. B AG 232 105-002 “Problème du rapatriement des Coréens du Japon, dossier I: Généralités.” 27/02/1953–11/10/1957. Inoue, Masutarō. 1956. “Fundamental Conditions of Livelihood of Certain Koreans Residing in Japan.” Japanese Red Cross Society, November 1956, p. 4.
31. My research took place in Japan, South Korea, and Switzerland. Multisited research presents particular challenges, in terms of the costs associated with traveling back and forth between sites, and the difficulty of building rapport with interlocutors when you are constantly on the move (cf. Marcus 1995), and the experience of working with findings from multiple sites at the same time. I consciously navigated these challenges by working with North Koreans in South Korea with whom I had previously worked from 2010 to 2012 and, while in Japan, by building relationships with interlocutors over several months before requesting a formal interview. While I was in South Korea, I interviewed North Korean escapees about their relationship to repatriates from Japan. I then moved my research to Japan and began to work with returnees. I realized during my initial research in South Korea that digitally recording interviews changed the dynamic of the experience, sometimes fostering an anxiety in the interviewee. Consequently, I wrote freehand notes and carried out multiple interviews with each interlocutor, documenting the life histories of participants in the repatria-

tion project and those of their children and grandchildren. I complimented oral accounts with ethnographic research into the everyday experiences of migrants from North Korea in Japan.

32. The term “intramarriage” refers to the joining of families with similar ethnic and migratory histories.