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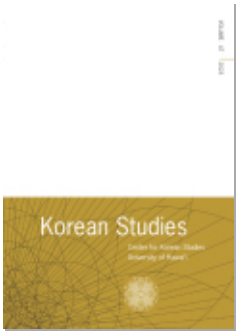

Korean Studies, Volume 47, 2023, pp. 375-406 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.2023.a908629*

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Albert Graves

This article introduces Korean gay space, place, and identity in Japan, as revealed in Tokyo's Korean gay bars that emerged at the start of Japan's Korean Wave in the 2000s. It focuses on the intersections of race and sexuality in interactions among the actors that produce and consume these establishments, exposing racialized spaces of desire besides those limited to white Westernness. It presents an overview of Korean gay identity against the backdrop of Koreaphobia in Japan and homophobia among *zainichi*, along with an examination of the Korean Wave, its impact on the queer diaspora, and the gay commodification of Koreanness. The study comparatively analyzes racial groupings in the bar, seeking clarity on the representations of self and other among gay Koreans and with gay Japanese. A series of conclusions are made: (1) Korean gay men's experience in Japan is shaped by having to contend with separate closets for race and sexuality, compounded by racism and homophobia from within their own communities dissociated from "Japan." (2) The Korean Wave has created a new category of desire among gay men through a middle ground or third space around a borderless, hybridized community of communities. (3) Korean gay bars simultaneously function as consumer spaces for what the author terms "proximate opposites" with Japanese, and as community centers for racially one yet ideologically divided Koreans. The study sets out to recover and preserve a history that would otherwise have been lost from memory with decades of scholarly inattention to its existence.

Keywords: Queer Japan, *zainichi* Koreans, *hallyu*, race and sexuality, gay bars, Ni-Chōme

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Introduction

Cross-cultural analyses of sexual subcultures organized on the basis of racial or national identity are relatively scarce in Asia.[1] This, to no surprise, includes the region's least ethnically and linguistically fractionalized nations of North Korea, South Korea, and Japan.[2] While there is an abundance of scholarly literature on the often isolated subjects of Korean diaspora and the gay community in Japan, almost none of it discusses these groups as one with respect to Korean gay men or other sexual minorities in Japan. Koreans in Japan are chronically subjected to heteronormative assumptions while gay men are presumed to be Japanese or white Westerners, as predetermined objects for comparison and of desire. Be it the gay community's disregard for the Korean diaspora or the Korean diaspora's disavowal of the gay community, there are persisting reasons for why these subjects remain distanced from each other even in academic discourse. However, as I will also discuss, there are also clear indicators of how the transversal quality of being both (or neither) Korean and (or) Japanese is a core component of identity for many who identify as *zainichi*[3] and gay in Japan.[4]

This article introduces the Korean gay community in Japan through its earliest commercially organized interactions in the 2000s. Prefacing with an overview of Korean gay identity as it has developed against the backdrop of Koreaphobia in Japan and homophobia among *zainichi*, I proceed to an examination of the Korean Wave and its impact on queer diasporic communities along with its commodification of Koreanness for gay men. Based on an ethnography from 2006 to 2007 of the Korean gay bars that surfaced in Tokyo's queer district of Shinjuku Ni-Chōme, the study comparatively analyzes intersections of race and sexuality in the interactions among actors sharing these confined spaces. In doing so, it seeks clarity on the representations of self and other intraracially among gay Koreans and interracially with gay Japanese.[5]

I make a series of arguments throughout my discussion. First, Korean gay men's experience in Japan is shaped by having to contend with two closets—one for race and the other for sexuality. This is compounded by racism and homophobia from within their own communities as seen in case studies by Iino[6] and Horie,[7] which they dissociate from "Japan." Contrary to arguments by scholars such as Itagaki who characterize Japanese Koreaphobia as a "cultural racism,"[8] I argue that there are also phenotypical references in Koreaphobic expressions in Japan—directed at an inferior race "within," rather than "without," race—which I support with an analysis of content found in print media and online forums.

Second, the Korean Wave has created a new category of desire among gay men through queer, masculine consumer spaces, which have materialized separately from their feminine counterparts studied by Phillips and Baudinette.[9] In the community's displacement by racial[ized] segregation and the hegemonic practices of Japanese and Western gay space in Ni-Chōme, I argue that the Korean gay bar becomes a middle ground or third space for the desires of a new borderless, hybridized community of communities inclusive of all consumer groups. These bars rely on commodified images of Korean men's hypermasculinity for gay men (in contrast to their soft masculinity for women), furthering the regional trend of "gay hegemonic masculinity"[10] later observed by Kong further afield in queer Asia.

Third, Korean gay bars simultaneously function as consumer spaces and community centers for separate subsets of the community, akin to Sunagawa's argument for Japanese bars as institutions for intimate bonds[11] rather than merely commercial interests, as countered by Ishida.[12] A series of accounts from the bar substantiates an interracial imaginary of what I term "proximate opposites," shared by mutually seeking "dominant, active top" Koreans and "submissive, passive bottom" Japanese. At the same time, there is an intraracial dynamic among Koreans, who find ways to harmonize with one another in one instance through their consciousness of racial oneness and clash in another on the political divide between North and South. This brings them together against other racial groups including the Japanese, but also exposes fractures through practices of discrimination against their own who do not conform to linguistic or ideological expectations.

The study aims to be a cross-cutting contribution to Korean studies and queer studies, steering the discussion of *zainichi* to bring attention to new angles from which to see them as sexual, sexualized, and sexualizing consumers and commodities. In queering the Koreans of Japan, it shatters the heteronormative mold in which they have been sealed, while also shaking up the discourse on Japanese gay men and their spaces of desire to accentuate the firmly established presence of Koreans—overlooked in academia but certainly not by their burgeoning group of admirers. While racial delineations are often blurred for my subjects, discussions of race and nation contribute to an intraregional dialogue that advances translocal connections in the study of queer Asia.[13] In the context of the bar, intersections between queer Korea and queer Japan are revealed (sans any presumed center or periphery), along with inter/intraracial connectivities that traverse geopolitical borders. In this way, the study pursues a much advocated for examination of queer Asia as comparatively transregional, global, and inter-Asian.[14] By recounting Tokyo's Korean gay bar scene in its

infancy, it sets out to recover and preserve a history that would otherwise have been lost from memory with decades of scholarly inattention to its existence.

Methodology

For over a century, bars have served as key fieldsites in the urban ethnography of sexual subcultures. Organized groups of gay men and others seen as deviants discovered at Chicago's saloons and speakeasies started to be morally rationalized by researchers in the 1920s, as subjects with spatially located and socially distinct lives.[15] At times, bars have been the only clear manifestation of such groups' existence altogether, as with US lesbians from the 1930s to 1950s.[16] The push of heterosexism and homophobia along with the pull of capitalism cast these marginalized members of society into the solace of bars, where a consciousness of sexual identity and community is developed. The study of these people at their haunts in city nightlife has often been the initial step toward their slow but steady destigmatization. Today, these are hardly the hideaways they once were. As globalization constantly reshapes identity politics and consumer trends, so, too, reconstructed are gay bars and the communities they host.

Since Japan's "LGBT boom" in the 1990s, Japanese gay bars have found themselves in the scholarly limelight (despite that earlier forms have been around since the 1940s and studied in the 1950s and 1960s),[17] with ethnographies conducted in Ni-Chōme by Sunagawa,[18] Ishida,[19] McLelland,[20] and Moriyama.[21] For many years, the discussion of gay Japan was confined to an ethnonational binary of "Japanese" and "foreigners." Corresponding bars categorized by preference for Japanese only (*naisen*) and open to—or, rather, targeted at—(implicitly, white Western) foreigners (*gaisen*), along with studies on them, wholly disregarded the presence of racially minoritized groups that straddle these spatial and social delineations.

Only in recent years has attention been directed to these othered members of Japan's gay community. In his interviews of Korean tourists, businessmen, and students in Tokyo, Baudinette[22] sheds light on the necessary question of Asian inclusivity in Japanese gay space. However, his conclusions are regrettably incomplete, with no reference to permanent residents or naturalized citizens—that is, those who have assimilated in society and are often regulars at bars, if not owners and staff. While they were the sole informants in his study, those with a transient presence in Japan represent only a fraction of Korean gay men in Japan. The rest are *zainichi* and

recent immigrants. It is also an incorrect assertion that there are no dedicated spaces for Korean men or their admirers in Japan.[23] As is the focus of this article, Ni-Chōme alone has had Korean bars since the 2000s (Table 1)—and this is not to mention those which have come, gone, and stayed in other areas such as Tokyo's Ueno and Osaka's Dōyama and Shinsekai.

Table 1. Korean Gay Bars in Tokyo by the Mid-2000s

Korean Gay Bars in Tokyo by the Mid-2000s

	STAIRWAYS OF HEAVEN 天国の階段 | 천국의 계단	SEOUL SOUL ソウル★ソウル | 서울 소울	ANYOUNG あんにょん | 안녕
Owner(s) *	Won Bin (South Korean)	Gilsu (South Korean)	Sunny (South Korean) Asuka ([South] Korean-Russian-Japanese)
Staff *	—	Park (*Zainichi* [North] Korean) Shin (Japanese) Chu ([South] Korean-American)	—
Interior	Fresh flowers, Korean seat cushions, widescreen TV.	TVs playing recent live music concerts in South Korea; posters of Won Bin, Rain, and Se7on.	TVs showing musicals and stage performances on mute; premium sound system playing jazz; marble floors.
SNS **	Twitter (2018.11) | 47 Followers	Twitter (2016.01) | 42 Followers HP (2016.05)	HP (2006.08) Twitter (2011.12) | 175 Followers Mixi (2017.01)
Introduction (KR)	[South] Korean gay bar in Tokyo's Shinjuku.	We do our best so that all of our customers can escape from everyday life and have a nice time at our bar. We provide a space where friends, lovers, and even those who come alone can enjoy a comfortable atmosphere without burden.	[South] Koreans working hard to make it in Japan. [South] Koreans here for business or tourism—relax and have a drink with Japanese friends!
Introduction (JP)	[South] Korean gay bar in Shinjuku Ni-Chōme.	Healing and a sense of escape from everyday life, whether among friends or lovers or those who come alone—that's the kind of space we provide to all customers who come to our bar. Please do try to visit us at Seoul Soul.	[South] Korean movies, dramas, music, cuisine—of course, a drink with [South] Korean friends!

*Owners and staff (incl. the researcher, referred to with pseudonyms) at the time of fieldwork from 2006 to 2007.
**SNS and related figures as of May 2022.

My own ethnography in Ni-Chōme employed participant observation and interviews at the Korean gay bars Stairways of Heaven, Seoul Soul, and Anyoung. At Seoul Soul, I worked as a *miseko*, or member of staff, in which capacity I managed to establish close connections with the "masters," or owners, and customers of my own and other bars—an advantage that comes with "labor participant observation," as Chung has termed from her own work at a Korean hostess bar in Osaka.[24] As a Korean-American, my belonging was welcomed and questioned by Koreans and Japanese. Hired as the young, "cute" face of the bar, I was assigned to come in on Fridays and Saturdays as the busiest nights, preparing from 7:30 PM, opening at 8 PM, and, depending on the day, closing anywhere between 5 and 7 AM. On occasion, I went out with my interlocutors, taking my fieldwork beyond the bar into quiet, casual restaurants at the crack of dawn. This stepping out of

the fieldsite also yielded chance encounters with others indirectly connected to the bar, as acquaintances of those directly connected to it.

Any study of racial and sexual place and identity within a spatially and temporally fixed space should be carried out with an awareness that race and sexuality do not necessarily couple to form a distinct, standalone sphere. On the contrary, as will be shown in examples to come, they may more often than not conflict with one another. There is also ambiguity as to who is Korean and whether all can be equally considered arbiters of Korean gay space in Japan. As a precarious member of this community myself, my own performance as a racialized and sexualized actor in the space of study inevitably "queered"[25] my research process and its findings—a result I take with openness and reflexivity, and an acknowledgment that there will always be much more to explored beyond any one person's capacity.

Korean Gay Identity in Japan

One Community, Two Closets

From the end of World War II, the 600,000 or so Koreans who chose to stay in Japan (or otherwise could not return to North or South Korea) came to be referred to as *zainichi*—alienated from the homeland which now saw them as traitors, while denied their rights as equal citizens in a "hidden apartheid" to which they would be subjected for decades to come.[26] Their children—outwardly indistinguishable from the Japanese—were born into, and raised with, an inner sense of Japaneseness yet also a threat of further "Japanization" and loss of identity as Koreans.[27] Despite that subsequent generations of *zainichi* had no reason or desire to "return" to Korea, they remained invisible in a purportedly heterogeneous nation of Japanese. *Zainichi* themselves contributed to that invisibility by staying in a national closet within their own society, averting marginalization at work and in relationships through their inherent ability to pass as Japanese.

In the 1990s, revived scrutiny over Japan's wartime atrocities in Korea caused a reactionary tide of Koreaphobia, instigating a mass outing of the *zainichi* community as a perceived extension of the "enemy" at home.[28] This precipitated the formation of hate groups in the 2000s with a purpose to "restore sovereignty" in Japan (*Shuken*) and fight against "special rights" for *zainichi* (*Zaitokukai*). Since then—fueled by reactive nationalism within the government and general public out of fears for national security[29]—hate speech and threats across major cities, outside schools and other

institutions, and on seemingly every online forum have attacked not only *zainichi* as invasive "cockroaches" but also everything remotely symbolic of Korea in Japan.[30] In their reverse victimization, Japanese through their Koreaphobia become defenders of a nation under siege by all Koreans. Their hate for Korea and Koreans is in this way a display of their love for Japan—its territory in the dispute over Dokdo/Takeshima, its culture against the Korean Wave, and its civilians abducted by North Korea. It did not matter that many *zainichi*, in fact, became disenfranchised with the homeland and transferred their children to Japanese schools as soon as the abduction issue came to light.[31] Recent immigrants were also not impervious to the rhetoric, with one tour guide I met at Seoul Soul saying to me in English, "I don't want to be Korean sometimes and I don't want to be Japanese. I just want to be a person."[32]

Despite its rationalizations, Koreaphobia in Japan is at its heart anchored in an obsession with the notion that Koreans are racially inferior. I am not convinced that this breed of racism is merely "cultural,"[33] but rather has clear intersections with white, Western racism based on a racial hierarchy that places Japanese above all others in Asia.[34] It is a racism characterized not by "race without race" but what I would alternatively describe as "race within race"—Koreans as a lower phenotype within a spectrum of "yellow" where the "whitest" (not in shade but in desirable features) are Japanese. Any casual reader can recognize this in Koreaphobic content such as the manga *Kenkanryu* (*Hating the Korean Wave*) and in discussions online, not limited to Japan's infamously racist (and homophobic) BBS 5channel but also across YouTube and other common platforms such as Japanese SNS Mixi. In *Kenkanryu*, Japanese characters have large, round eyes and short, petite noses, while their Korean counterparts are often illustrated with slanted eyes and sharp cheekbones. It is typical to see such menacing features portrayed also on yakuza and other antagonists, but it is no coincidence that delinquents and crime syndicates in the real world are regularly stereotyped as Korean. Even in text-based emoticons accompanying Koreaphobic messages online, snarled faces with the trademark eyes and cheekbones such as <ヽ‘д> are no rarity. Many variants of this can be seen in recent posts on Mixi (March 13 & 26, 2020), which redirect to sets of topical threads with comments disparaging Koreans as an "ugly" (*busu*), "inferior race" (*rettōshu*) with "beastly eyes" (*yajū no me*) who can't see the world around them because of their "thin eyes" (*hosoi me*)—no less, as "fags" (*okama*) and "homos" (*homo*) and who spread COVID and AIDS.[35]

Simultaneously with the backlash against Korea and Koreans in the 1990s, Japan's queer community was bursting out of its own closet amid a boom for all things LGBT. While those at the front and center of this media spectacle were gay men and their coming out stories,[36] they represented a relative few who saw any correlation between their sexuality and society, much less in the context of an identity.[37] The reactionaries in this case tended to be gay men themselves, disinterested in, confused over, and even perturbed by the hype around sexual liberation and gay rights—to them, concepts from a foreign agenda. If anything, their self-exclusion from the discourse was indicative of a consciousness fundamentally dislocated from that of their activist counterparts in or influenced by the West. As far as concerns Korean gay men in Japan, I argue its further function as a subtle (and, possibly, subconscious) form of resistance against a process of othering that occurs through the mass outing of gays among straights—in no dissimilarity to that of *zainichi* among Japanese. Korean and gay are, in this sense, assigned stigmas not inherently seen; and, as such, they can be stigmatized only when shown.

Japan vs. Korea and the West

The indifference of Korean gay men to the LGBT boom leads to a paradox of their sense of belonging in Japan. While Japanese gay men with experience living in the West often derided Japan as a constraining place for gays,[38] Koreans across the sea conversely gazed upon it as a safe haven from familial and societal pressures to marry.[39] In one of my interviews, Japan was idealized as a third way over a dually discriminatory imaginary of not only homophobic Korea but also the racist West. To the South Korean master of Seoul Soul, a *zainichi* customer who lived in San Francisco, and a Japanese customer who studied English, all were convinced that there was no such discrimination—homophobia or racism—in Japan.[40] The *zainichi*, referring to what he saw as an inordinate charity to developing nations by a benevolent Japan, went on to complain that the world had become overly critical of it. Japan was not only free from fault, it was a model of social progress.

For this trio as Asians, Japan was a racial haven from the West, and, to them as gay men, it was a sexual haven from Korea. Put in another way, Korea is not racist but it is homophobic, and the West is not homophobic but it is racist. The only truly welcoming place for a man who is Korean and gay, then, is Japan. While *zainichi* since the turn of the century have started to openly embrace their Koreanness and Japaneseness in a reformulated

identity as "Korean-Japanese,"[41] the Koreans in this instance align themselves more closely with Japaneseness (as adopted, for the South Korean) than Koreanness. Their position is seemingly motivated by a bias as gay men, with the implication that only straight *zainichi* would be proud of their Koreanness.

It is not illuminative, though, to say that the men's claims were not based in reality. Korea has racism, the West has homophobia, and Japan has racism and homophobia—indisputably so once the perspective of "where" is rearticulated. On Mixi, gay *zainichi* "Chan," too, disclosed that he had never seen or experienced discrimination against *zainichi* "face to face" (December 30, 2008). As such, he did not even consider there to be any reason to act in solidarity with the community. Yet, in his aside that such discrimination is, however, rampant within the gay community at bars and clubs and on SNS, he relegates Japanese racism to another sphere—a gay racism that exists outside Japan. This cognitive decoupling of the gay community and its racist practices from "Japan" is reminiscent of the exchange at Seoul Soul, even if I did not press the trio further on their thoughts. No matter what they believed about Japan, none could deny the racism of the community within Japan that indeed confined them (excluding the Japanese customer, of course) to the Korean bar in the racially segregated queer district of Ni-Chōme.

Still, for many Korean gay men in Japan, racism is a Western or, if anything, gay—not Japanese—problem, while homophobia is a Korean—not Japanese—problem. The paradox in relation to their sense of belonging in Japan is that it relies on a selective invisibility—as Koreans in the gay community and as gay men to other Koreans—along with a mental extrusion of these groups from the nation of Japan. They do not show, they are not seen, and, thus, there is no discrimination. When there is discrimination, it comes from anywhere but, even if within, Japan. As a result, "Japan" in the imaginary of Korean gay men who live there is centered as a racial and sexual safety zone away from what often seem to be mutually incompatible, if not outright opposed, racial and sexual communities on the periphery.

"Racist Gays" and "Homophobic Koreans"

The invisibility of Korean gay men in Japan can indeed be overshadowed by the hardships they face within the isolated Korean and gay communities of Japan. Iino has looked at instances where Japanese lesbians'

"disregarding"—and their disregard for such disregarding—of the *zainichi* among them formed a power imbalance at activist events to connect "Japanese who live in Japan" with "Asians who come from outside Japan."[42] In a reverse case, Horie examined *zainichi* pastors' homophobic remarks—and the church association's permissiveness of them—in opposition to a lesbian pastor's inclusion at an event on discrimination and human rights.[43]

Aside from religion, Confucian traditions preserved by Koreans throughout the diaspora fundamentally clash with the lifestyles of queer people. Gay *zainichi* filmmaker Nakata Tōichi intimates this in his personal documentary *Ōsaka Story*, which showcases the tensions of diasporic identity compounded with the barriers to being a dutiful son as a gay man. It is only one illustration of the complexities behind the balancing act of seemingly antithetical identities, and a clue as to why *zainichi* and gay identities have remained separate evolutionary processes. The accounts by Iino, Horie, and Nakata point to a common sentiment expressed on Mixi by "Sol," a gay *zainichi* with Japanese citizenship: "No matter where I go, I'll always be a minority" (April 29, 2008).

"Sol" is one of the few exceptions of gay *zainichi* who permanently retreated from Japan to the West, associating his experiences of racism and homophobia not with "racist gays" or "homophobic Koreans" but with Japan. In contrast to gay Japanese who have turned to the West for sexual liberation, "Sol" saw the US as a nexus to broaden his relationships with diasporic Koreans—connections he had not had in Japan, serving to remind that membership in a community is not always secured by default. His case exemplifies the "idealized" existence to which *zainichi* in recent decades relate as members of a diasporically nationalist community independent from any one nation as home or host.[44]

Other examples of this involve members of the diaspora with mixed heritage such as "Toniru,"[45] a gay *zainichi* with a Japanese mother. He, too, studied abroad in the US and had also lived in Korea. For him, he felt closer to Korean-Americans and Koreans in the US than with Japanese or Koreans in Korea, to whom he was always othered as a *zainichi*. Only in the US, he says, was that "sticker" peeled away (May 3, 2008). Asuka, one of the co-masters of Anyoung, has an even more complicated racial identity. Despite having a Korean-Japanese mother and a Russian-Japanese father, he did not consider himself to be Korean, Russian, or Japanese. As with "Toniru," Asuka's feeling of disconnect with any one race resulted in a reverence for the racial diversity he associated with the US, which, in turn, cultivated a fondness for other things American.

"Toniru" has since moved back to his hometown of Osaka where he is nonetheless content, and has even found the younger generation of *zainichi* to be more self-confident, as well as visible at gay bars where they had once been invisible (May 3, 2008). While he and Asuka imagine the West as an opportunity for racial liberation (in contrast to the earlier trope of a "racist West"), both men have chosen to make their homes in Japan. For "Sol" and "Toniru," the West was seen as a gateway to the diaspora (for Asuka, all races) rather than to Westerners. Indeed, at gay bars in the US, "Toniru" even felt intimidated by the Westerners around him as an Asian.

Park, the *zainichi miseko* at Seoul Soul, also set his gaze toward the West—but as an escape from the diaspora. For him, those who acted discriminatorily were other Korean gay men in Japan. Customers interpreted his inability to speak Korean as a marker of incompetence, shunning him as a "Korean without Koreanness."[46] His coping mechanism against this intraracial exclusion was to study English, as a mode of social mobility toward a perceived superiority over Japanese and Koreans. Considering Japanese to be above Korean in this linguistic hierarchy for Japan, Park concealed a degree of reverse discrimination against others in his own community who chose to (or, if not *zainichi*, could only) communicate in Korean instead of Japanese.

The collection of accounts introduced throughout this section demonstrates the transecting ways in which discrimination is experienced in Korean gay men's own communities, to reveal a complicated mosaic of their navigation in and out of racial and sexual closets and of their relationship with Japan. While it is impossible to homogenize the Korean gay struggle in Japan, a few generalizations can be made: (1) racial and sexual identities are informed by each other in the experience of intercommunity racism and homophobia; (2) the transversal quality of being both Korean and Japanese—or, for others, neither one—as gay men creates a consciousness of identity that does not perfectly fit into any one imaginary; and (3) as a result, racial and sexual hardships are for only few cognitively assigned to Japan, from which the majority do not seek to permanently escape but rather end up establishing their place.

The Korean Gay Wave
Hallyu and the Queer Diaspora

The Korean Wave (*hallyu*) has transformed the lives of Koreans around the world, perhaps nowhere more so than in Japan. Shortly after reaching its shores, *hallyu* converted a majority of *zainichi* into regular consumers of

[South] Korean media, including many with no prior exposure to Korea or Korean schools in Japan.[47] This consumption has cultivated a proud [apolitical] self-awareness of their Korean origin, reversing decades of shame from stigmatization with a renewed "attachment" (*aichaku*) to Korean names, language, and the *zainichi* community.[48] "Community spirit" has extended to broader Japanese society which, through its openness to Korean culture, relates in new ways to Koreanness, agents of which *zainichi* have acted to further interethnic exchange.[49]

Research into the *hallyu* fan cultures of Japanese women has shown a desire for the modernities of Korea[50] and the Westernized lifestyles of Koreans.[51] The soft power of media images that have changed deeply ingrained perceptions of Korea and Koreans has proven to be a formidable counterbalance against the steady onslaught of Koreaphobia in Japan. As further testament to its sway over Japanese society, *hallyu* has found itself featured in the traditional art of *rakugo* and capitalized on by even, ironically, right-wing nationalist politicians such as prime ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe.[52]

Hallyu has also had a transformative impact on queer Asia, though scholars have often disregarded queer communities in their discursive focus on its relationship with straight women.[53] In 2001, Korean society came face to face with transgenderism in a cosmetics ad that featured Harisu, a stage name fittingly adapted from the phrase "hot issue." In it she ravishingly stares into the camera, only to reveal an Adam's apple before breaking out into a quiet chuckle, presumably at the shock of all those watching who—surely, by accident—had been momentarily taken by "his" or "her" beauty. Harisu quickly went on to become a facet of *hallyu* as a singer and actress, and is still active today.

Her celebrity, however, was not always welcome by the trans community or other sexual minorities in Korea. Back when the controversial ad was released, I came across more than a few at Seoul's gay bars and online who disavowed her as an inaccurate portrayal of a trans person detached from the hardships of the community. Indeed, much of the reason for her acceptance in media is on account of her commodified image as a transcendental, genderless—rather than transgendered—superhuman.[54] Yet, regardless of how she is viewed, what matters is that she was seen; and it was this visibility that catalyzed what is today an increasingly queer (and queered) *hallyu* that pushes the social boundaries of gender and sexuality, at home and abroad.

No exception to this is *Winter Sonata*, the drama series that carried *hallyu* into Japan in the early 2000s. It was only one of many imports to

come that brushed aside hypermasculinity for an androgyny resemblant of male-role actresses (*otokoyaku*) from Takarazuka and "beautiful boys" (*bishōnen*) from boys' love (BL) manga[55]—media that, while also commonly assumed to be by and for straight women, owe their existence to inconspicuously queer producers and consumers throughout their histories. The transcultural flow of this soft masculinity from *hallyu* has shaped queer aesthetics and lexicons around the world,[56] paving alternative pathways for queer Koreans and other Asians to identify with race and sexuality in ways beyond those prescribed to them by the West.

Hallyu has also directly developed globalized queer cultures such as drag. Initial play with drag as a caricature quickly turned to the inclusivity of drag in its many representations, now even pushing its boundaries to territories where masculinities not represented before in media are starting to be accommodated.[57] This clears the stage for a broader representation of queerness among content creators, who are—with or without intention—reproducing commercialized personas in *hallyu*, amassing their audiences from its worldwide fan base.[58]

Koreanness as a Gay Commodity

Koreanness has come to be romanticized and sexualized across Japan, with idealizations of Korean men as beautiful, charismatic, and seductive—an essence of Western sophistication mixed with Japanese relatability, striking the right balance of "cultural distance."[59] Owing to their depictions in dramas, Korean men are fantasized about as spouses and partners, not only for their physical attractiveness but also for their financial stability[60] and familial bonds.[61] Their reverence as objects of desire has commanded the trends in hairstyles and fashion of young men across Japan, influencing a host of industries that supply and service them. *Hallyu*'s physical presence is most palpable at its feminine consumer spaces of Tokyo's Koreatown in Shin-Ōkubo.[62] Yet, despite its mass commodification of Korean men, the gendering of the area and its saturation with women as its target consumers has resulted in limited accessibility to gay men.[63]

Queer, masculine consumer spaces are much less conspicuous, isolated within gay bars tucked away in transient nightlife districts that sleep during the day. As with Osaka's Korean hostess bars, Tokyo's Korean gay bars are clustered in coexistence with Japanese businesses, and many of their Japanese customers traverse the boundaries of these "interethnic agglomerations."[64] In contrast, however, Korean gay bars are only

partially staffed by Koreans, many more of whom come in as customers. This means that Japanese and racially other *miseko* are tasked with producing Koreanness, and that Korean customers also become commodities of the bar. As gay men, producers and consumers of these spaces switch between discreet lifestyles outside the bounds of their districts which serve as "temporary refuges."[65] Koreanness as a gay commodity is thus spatially and temporally confined, and its fandom among gay men rests in a shared closet with their sexuality.

While Korean gay bars are oriented toward gay men, they are not exclusive to them and are occasionally patronized by straight men and women (normally, but not necessarily, accompanying gay men). Korean gay men's experience of otherness in society plays a pivotal role in their bars' practice of inclusivity. In this way, the bars introduce to the district not only new content in terms of Koreanness, but also a new character through their "by the bottle" system of *naisen* bars[66] with the open accessibility and "cosmopolitanism" of *gaisen* bars (which themselves mirror inclusive spaces found in the West).[67] As is the case with *hallyu*, the bars embody a "culture of resistance" to the mainstream—here, Ni-Chōme—with peripheral identities that hybridize Western cosmopolitanism while establishing a sense of cultural proximity among Asians.[68]

The resulting community spirit—closely resembling that of local and diasporic communities around *hallyu*—does not, however, equate to an activism that seeks autonomy from or assimilation into the discriminatory communities of Ni-Chōme (or Japan, for that matter). Rather, I see it as a subconscious, mundane act of self-preservation by a borderless, hybridized community of communities. Korean gay bars in this sense replicate the "disjunctive modernity"[69] of Japan's gay community as a whole, in its multidirectional currents of neoliberalism coupled with the absence of any progressive logic of sexual (and racial) rights—a fusion of globalization and tradition increasingly seen in queer districts across Asia.[70] The Korean gay bar consequently becomes a space where Koreanness and gay culture interchangeably exist not only for service to the community but also for the play of others.

This was on clear display when a couple of Japanese straight women came to Seoul Soul, stealing the stage to sing and dance and even flash their panties and grope the *miseko*. While this behavior stemmed from their trust in the space as a "place of safety," their presence would surely have been met with pushback had it become anything more than an occasional occurrence, as seen in precedents with the permanent takeover

of gay space by outsiders.[71] "Vivi," a Taiwanese regular at Seoul Soul, was another example of the bars' flexibility in catering not only to women but also to cultural representations besides Koreanness. Her presence alone often prompted sporadic exchanges and songs sung in Chinese, making the space a meeting place of cultures centered on a racially and sexually free "Korea in Japan." Few Japanese gay bars would have permitted entry to any of these women due to their gender, never mind their race or sexual orientation.

Owned by Korean gay men who resettled from—and thus have direct ties to—Korea, Japan's earliest Korean gay bars employed marketing tactics resembling those of their feminine counterparts in the appropriation of an instantly recognizable mishmash of *hallyu* heartthrobs. Stairways of Heaven (a rendition of the drama *Stairway to Heaven*), Seoul Soul, and Anyoung set out to capitalize on the new niche of gay desire for Korean sex appeal, plastered on posters and playing on screens set up in their interiors. In contrast to "Yon-sama," TVXQ, and other "flower boys" (*kkonminam*) worshipped in Shin-Ōkubo, the altar at gay bars was dominated by macho men (*sangnam*) such as Rain and Won Bin pictured as a soldier from the movie *T'aegŭkki*.

The *sangnam* as Korean gay bars' choice of representation is an intentional act by their owners to calibrate Koreanness with "gay hegemonic masculinity."[72] That is, Korean men are framed with an authoritative desirability as heteroperformative and neoliberally privileged subjects with fit bodies—qualities which are in turn pursued by gay men, in a phenomenon that has started to dictate preferences not only in Korea but across Asia.[73] While their customers may be sexually active or passive and seek any range of body types, the bars' alignment with this archetype of the Korean man carries on an enduring assumption that men at gay bars in Japan tend to be bottoms in search of tops—an observation recorded as far back as the 1950s.[74]

In the case of Seoul Soul, this representation was considered so necessary that the master hired a Japanese *miseko* who, with his "masculine" style, was often assumed by customers to be Korean. Irrespective of his Korean ability or connection to Korea, the look was all a *miseko* needed to embody the face of the bar. However, as was soon found, the bar is more than its looks, and Koreanness as a gay commodity must be based on more than mere fantasy. While some customers flirted with Shin, others questioned his belonging. His subsequent determination to fit in pushed him to start studying Korean; but no amount of fluency would change the fact that he was a racial outsider to both Koreans and

Japanese in this space of Koreanness. Park, in his inability to be Korean enough, is a reverse example of how Koreanness as a gay commodity demands more than reality, too. These cases couple to show the subjective and often incomplete quality of Koreanness at the gay bar—representations which tread beyond expectations of Korean blood (Park) and looks (Shin), into desires and needs to which only bars as both consumer spaces and community centers can respond.

Self and Other at the Korean Gay Bar

Korean Gay Bars in the 2000s

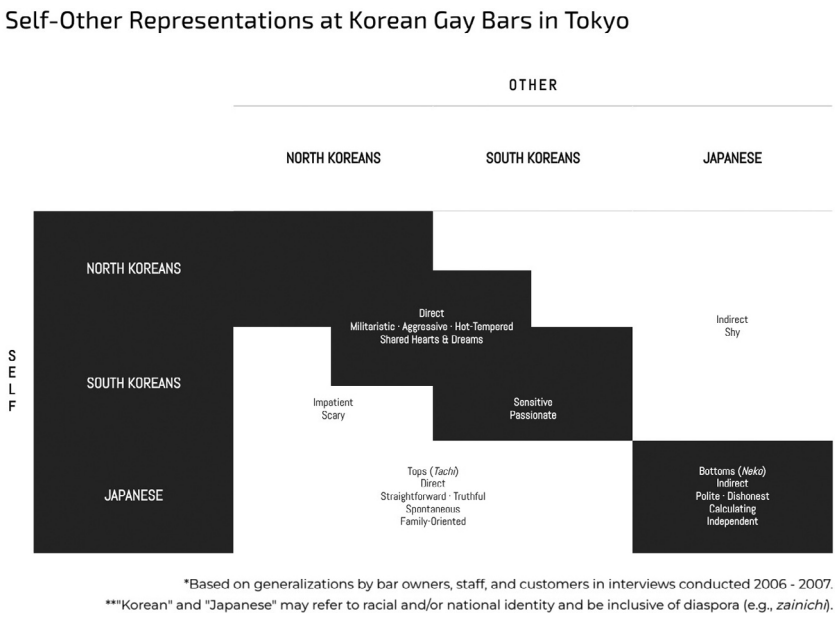
While there were reportedly as many as 3,000 Korean bars and hostess clubs in Japan by the 1990s,[75] they were part of a postcolonial legacy before the advent of *hallyu* and none are known to have serviced the gay community. At the same time, Ni-Chōme functioned exclusively for Japanese and, to a lesser extent, white Westerners. With all bars divided into *naisen* and *gaisen*, Korean gay men had no choice but to pass as Japanese or be pitted against them for the gaze of Westerners. Even with their entry, Koreans once found out are often asked to leave at *naisen* bars whereas at *gaisen* bars they are consistently ignored by Japanese, thereby making them "ethnosexual invaders" no matter where they went in Ni-Chōme.[76] Despite that Koreans and other Asians (and, indeed, black, brown, and other Westerners, not to mention mixed Japanese) occupy a sizeable chunk of bargoers, their existence in the gay community is, to repeat the phrase, disregarded. When Japanese gay men are confronted by the existence of Koreans among them, they are at best ambivalent about their disregard and at worst hostile toward their presence as thieves out to steal their [white] men with the competitive advantage of *hallyu*.[77]

Since the imposition of their own bars at the turn of the century, dedicated space and place have been carved out for Korean gay men along with those in pursuit of them among an expanding group of admirers in Japan. While there has been debate as to Japanese gay bars' function as institutions for the establishment of intimate bonds within the gay community,[78] there is no question that their Korean counterparts—in resistance to a lucrative mainstream—trade a degree of financial prosperity for the social impact they deliver to a marginalized group within the gay community. Masters and *miseko* demonstrate their role in community building by making the rounds to one another's bars as customers, keeping their personalized bottles of soju replenished and

celebrating special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries by splurging on champagne. The practice is a display of the bars' solidarity, and many regular customers make their own contribution to the community by rotating around the bars even if they have a preference for one over the others.

The subsections below focus on the prevalent representations of self and other among actors at the bars over the course of my fieldwork (Table 2). My analysis reveals overlaps and diversions in the identities of core groups in the bar discussed thus far: "Koreans" and "Japanese" as a racialized symbiosis on one end, and "North Koreans" and "South Koreans" as a politicized dichotomy on the other. Constantly shifting roles and relationships before a revolving door of audiences turn the confined space of the bar into a shared stage, constructing the bar's own fluid and dynamic identity in the process. As I present select exchanges that contextualize these self-other representations, I aim to sketch a clearer picture of the broader community that since rests somewhere between the *naisen* and *gaisen* bargoing communities of Ni-Chōme—as a consumer space for Koreans and Japanese, and as a community center for Koreans among Koreans.

Table 2. Self-Other Representations at Korean Gay Bars in Tokyo



Koreans and Japanese: "Proximate Opposites"

As products of *hallyu* situated in a commercial gay scene regulated by "types" (*taipu*),[79] Korean gay bars in Japan may seem to implicitly cater to a Japanese subject in search of the "Korean type" as his object. Yet, despite the myriad of established categories in gay slang—besides *naisen* and *gaisen*, covering everything from age (*fukesen* for daddy chasers, and so on) to weight (such as *debusen* for chubby chasers, which alone can be further classified by several subtypes of *debu*)—there is no clear term for a "Korean chaser." While many believe there to be subtle distinctions between Korean and Japanese faces (not necessarily in subscription to the stereotypes propagated in Koreaphobic material), expressions of desire in the bar did not normally take these superficialities into account. Rather, Korean men were part and parcel of Japanese customers' desire in the context of their fandom around *hallyu*; and, as with their fans among women, they were desired not only for their physical traits but for the whole package of representations. For Japanese gay men, these representations hinged on an imaginary of the Korean man as a close other and ideal contrast to the self, toward a racialized, symbiotic relationship I term "proximate opposites."

Incontrovertibly, the most recurrent trope about Koreans and Japanese of themselves and each other (and by others outside them) among my informants was of "direct" Koreans and "indirect" Japanese. A range of terms was used to establish this: Koreans considered themselves to be aggressive and hot-tempered while describing their counterparts as shy. Japanese phrased it as a truthful straightforwardness in contrast to their own dishonest politeness. These representations of self and other persisted even for those I encountered who presented themselves as outliers through contradictory statements or behaviors, such as a Korean tourist who repeated the comparison but admitted to his own shyness and a Japanese customer who quite courageously went on to me about his penchant for bestiality.[80] Obviously, one's directness or indirectness depends on the case, and there are endless factors that might switch them around pursuant to the dynamics at the bar.

In any case, the imagined polarity was a source of attraction for many who espoused it. One Japanese customer's last few partners were Korean, and he wanted his next one to be, too. "Japanese try to be polite and nice, but what they say is not always true," he explained. "Koreans tell only the truth, even if it hurts."[81] There are also the sexually charged connotations behind such personality types, with translations of "direct" and "indirect" into Koreans as dominant, active tops paired with submissive, passive

bottom Japanese—in an abstract way, personifying the sexual tensions between a militaristic Korea and pacifist Japan.[82] The pairing also syncs with bars' portrayal of Korean men as hypermasculine against the feminine, androgynous, and queer representations that popularize them in other consumer spaces. A Japanese customer who preferred Koreans because they are more handsome, built, and cooler, also complained that there are too many *neko* ("cats" [bottoms] in Japanese) in Japan. What he wanted was a *hyŏng* ("older brother" in Korean). This racialized juxtaposition of roles and even the languages used to convey them[83] binds the Korean and Japanese man to a predetermined sexual purpose, one that intrinsically exists to serve each other.

Contrary to *naisen* and *gaisen*, this racial coupling is not strictly monogamous. While *naisen* Japanese consider only other Japanese and *gaisen* Japanese only Westerners, Japanese at Korean gay bars are more flexible, even if only marginally so (which is one reason why there is no Korean-*sen*). The limits for both Koreans and Japanese at the bar tend to extend only as far as "Asians," reflecting the condition that partners are opposite in personality and sexual position yet proximate in terms of race. The customer in search of a *hyŏng* confessed to me that he did not like white or black men because they look scary and dangerous, have no warmth or compassion, and tend to be promiscuous.[84] Such racially derogatory sentiments were not rare in my observations, and their commonality only reinforces the Korean-Japanese mutual attraction as a desire between or outside—rather than within a gray area among—the desires at *naisen* and *gaisen* bars. For the Koreans and Japanese seeking each other, it is that balance of difference and similarity—but also, frankly, a mutually held racism and xenophobia—that makes them complementary and relatable partners.

There was, however, one bothersome difference for the Japanese men of this group; one which contrarily increased the value of Korean men as a commodity for Japanese women. That is, Koreans as excessively family oriented—a symptom of their sexuality governed by what Cho has termed "Confucian biopolitics."[85] This was an impression shared even by a Japanese customer who came to the bar by chance with his white Western partner and had no exposure to or interest in Koreans, attesting to the common imaginary (not limited to the gay community) of a conservative and collective Korea compared to a liberal and individualistic Japan. From the other side, Koreans, too, did not always share the mutual gaze with Japanese. As discussed, *zainichi* often seek to connect with other diasporic Koreans and may even resent Japan and

Japanese. The bar is no exception, as one *zainichi* customer who was a social worker considered the majority of Japanese to be overly pessimistic, which he associated with their independent mindset in resemblance to that of North Americans. His type was Latin men, whom he found to optimistic. While he is one of few who did not fit the mold of proximate opposites, he was a refreshing reflection of the bars' spirit of inclusivity. As Asuka, the Korean-Russian-Japanese co-master of Anyoung, once beamed to me: "This place is open to everyone, so we're happy. We're not just a Korean bar. We say *annyŏng* [hi] to everyone."

North and South Koreans: Separate Ideologies, Same Hearts

"Korean" is not an easy classification to make in Japanese. Besides the term *zainichi*, there is *chōsenjin*, in self-reference by *zainichi* North Koreans or for all Koreans derogatorily as colonized people by Koreaphobic Japanese, and *kankokujin*, in self-reference by *zainichi* South Koreans, [South] Korean immigrants to Japan, and for South Koreans by average Japanese.[86] Then there are their subclassifications: *kitachōsenjin* for North Koreans by South Koreans and Japanese, and *minamichōsenjin* for South Koreans by North Koreans. In later decades, *korian*, as a transliteration of "Korean" in English, came to be adopted to avoid these distinctions (and the stigmas embedded in them) altogether. Each of these identifiers carries subtle social and political nuances that infiltrate the otherwise sense of racial oneness among Koreans in Japan. In the bar, Koreans' intraracial interactions were in constant flux between mutual feelings of contempt and camaraderie amid opposing and shared representations of Koreanness, fragmenting the sexualized Korean monolith into sociopolitical groupings of North and South.

As commodified spaces, Korean gay bars in Japan are inherently South Korean; but, as community centers, they serve all members of the diaspora without distinction. Despite their apolitical intent, bars, when dominated by *zainichi* customers, often turned into pulpits to accentuate social and political identities aligned with North or South Korea. With the ability to switch between Korean and Japanese, many *zainichi* exhibited a shifting "process of identification"[87] within the bar, uniting against others in one instance and dividing among themselves in another. Contrary to *zainichi*'s reservation of Japanese in public and Korean in private, the bar as a liminal space between public and private, Japanese and Korean, meant that self-

identification was sporadically processed based on who else shared the space at any moment.

As with the divided homeland, hostilities in the bar were regularly traded between the North and South. Every Saturday at Seoul Soul, a group of *zainichi* North Koreans would enter and carefully scan the room. If they recognized compatriots, they greeted them heartily and social interaction proceeded in a manner typical at any gay bar—often, in Japanese. However, if there were South Koreans—*zainichi* or otherwise—conversations, in Korean, often became politically charged with the group's arguments in support of North Korea with respect to recent events in the media or current activities by Chongryon.

A couple things should be mentioned here. Z*ainichi* who went to North Korean schools in Japan often considered themselves to be overseas citizens of North Korea and staunchly embraced their language and ideology in resistance against South Korea and Japan. That language as taught to them was infused with such ideology, rendering it impractical for everyday, apolitical conversation,[88] inevitably putting any discussion at risk of politicization when in Korean. Also, at the time of fieldwork, tensions had peaked as a result of North Korea's foray into nuclear weapons testing along with disputes over the joint statement in response and other matters between Chongryon and Mindan. With these concerns in mind, South Koreans in the bar often remained cautious in their interactions with *zainichi* North Koreans.

This does not mean that *zainichi* North Koreans were less desirable to the bar, however. On the contrary—from a business standpoint, they along with other *zainichi* as locals were preferred over the South Korean tourist or businessman because of their consistent patronage. As a group they were also more dependable than Japanese customers, who with their racial privilege were not limited in terms of the bars available to them. In their constant purchase and replenishment of bottles kept at the bar, *zainichi* North (and South) Koreans secured their belonging in the space, indulgence by the master over less profitable groups, and, consequently, tolerance for their confrontational behavior.

Less often, but equally disruptive to the bar's atmosphere, were conflicts initiated by South Koreans. In one group of South Korean customers at Seoul Soul (it was not clear if any were *zainichi*), one member took to the soapbox to berate North Korea and claim that its history and culture were inherited from the South. A *zainichi* North Korean customer, whose presence sparked the tirade, sat in awkward silence with his Japanese partner until they were saved by chit chat with the *zainichi* [North Korean]

miseko Park. Regardless of whether the man was *zainichi*, his behavior is yet another example of how the bar can be converted into a battlefield between "us" versus "them" among the community it seeks to bring together. Karaoke was often the bar's secret weapon to defuse such tensions, reigniting the common interests between groups through song and dance—be it over nostalgic Japanese enka, trendy Korean pop, or, of course, anything campy and gay ("I Will Survive" and "It's Raining Men" were go-tos for the master of Seoul Soul).

Out of conflict, Koreans leaned heavily on their racial identity to emphasize the oneness of their homeland and sameness in heart, mind, and spirit (*kokoro*), despite the political divide. This narrative was doubly used to distance themselves from others including Westerners and even Japanese. A duo of South Korean and *zainichi* North Korean customers at Seoul Soul who met a decade ago credited their relationship to their shared Koreanness, which physically attracted them to each other leading to casual sex and had enabled them to communicate as close friends ever since. For this reason, they preferred Koreans over Japanese and went so far as to dislike anyone other than "Asians." Besides once again exposing the racist overtones of desire between proximate opposites, this example also reveals a separate category of racially autosexual desire harbored by a subset of Koreans who use the bar to find not Japanese but other Koreans in Japan.

As evidenced in the dilemma of racial identity for Park, the fact of one's Korean blood did not guarantee his inclusion in the flowery message of being one and the same with all Koreans. The majority of *zainichi* at the bar could speak Korean, meaning they went to Korean schools or otherwise studied Korean. Laurent and Robillard-Martel have discussed how language is seen as key to identity for today's young generation of *zainichi*, the majority of whom now go to Japanese schools but study Korean to preserve their heritage.[89] Yet, in their analysis of such "everyday forms of resistance" against Japanese homogeneity, they overlook the ways in which *zainichi* such as Park have had to contend with impositions of Korean homogeneity that consequently push them out of the *zainichi* community. *Zainichi* who cannot connect with one another through language or ideology—despite their self-identification in other ways[90]—are forced to resort to their own acts of survival (in the case of Park, identifying with countercultures in the West) when confronted by the community that disowns them in spaces such as the bar. With the wealth of scholarly literature on *zainichi*, this is a research topic that could be explored further as the resurgence in *zainichi* claiming their identity spreads across Japan.

Conclusion

In the past 15 years since the term of fieldwork for this study, around a dozen other Korean gay bars have surfaced in Tokyo—not only in Ni-Chōme but also in Ueno, an area traditionally reserved for older clientele—along with several others in Osaka's queer districts of Dōyama and Shinsekai. While only a fraction (including those in this study) have survived to this day, the scene has managed to flourish. *Hallyu* is no longer a passing fad but a force which has broken into the mainstream, internationally and domestically in Japan. With Korea's increasing soft power, expressions of Korean gay identity and desire have grown louder and prouder in profiles on all of the gay dating apps in Japan. What is clear is that, rather than merely a deluge of bars for its gay fans, *hallyu* has instantiated new modes of racial identification and queer sexual desire within Japan. The success of these bars has further paved the way for other ethnosexual spaces to arise in Japan, not limited to Chinese and Taiwanese gay bars since the 2010s.

Today, Korean gay bars are moving inward from the fringe, with appreciation turning into appropriation by a new subculture led by Japanese masters and *miseko* obsessed with K-pop. Outsiders now outnumber insiders, comparably to the influx of women and straight men at gay bars of the West,[91] raising questions of ownership of and entitlement to Korean gay space. The ongoing COVID pandemic has also restricted travel between Korea and Japan, which has only lessened the Korean presence and contributed to what is now a Japanese majority of *miseko* at Korean gay bars in Japan. With this occupation of space not originally of their own making, the Korean gay bar has become a "permeable, transitional space,"[92] not only for sexuality—with women and others besides gay men as consumers—but also for race, with Japanese as [re] producers. Yet, just as the representation of women within these boundaries results in the reformulation of gender relations, Japanese representation plays a direct role in reshaping race relations with Koreans.

Further research into the more recent Korean gay bars of Osaka could lend new insights to the findings of this study, both in terms of how Korean gay space, place, and identity have changed nationally and the ways in which they may diverge regionally (despite the doubtful claim that *zainichi* on the whole do not embody the regionialisms of Japan[93]). Osaka is home to three times as many Koreans as Tokyo, accounting for around 30% of all Koreans in Japan[94]—closer to 50% when including the surrounding region of Kansai.[95] Koreans—in Korea and Japan—who have been to Kansai

often characterize the region as being more "Korean" than Tokyo and its surrounding region of Kanto. Even if only anecdotal, cross-cultural comparative studies by region could indeed reveal closer connections between the Korean and Japanese gay communities of, for example, Busan and Osaka, than by "Korea" and "Japan."

It should also go without saying that a sizeable subset of Korean gay men in Japan can be presumed not to go to bars, and thus identify with their race and sexuality in ways other than any of those presented in this study. Korean gay bars in Japan are limited to the metropolis, with no alternatives for Korean gay men or their admirers in other areas besides the online space. Even for those in and around Tokyo and Osaka, gay bars are by no means cheap and thus require an amount of capital that could limit or shut out many to or from the community through class inequalities. Furthermore, regardless of their financial stability, Koreans and those drawn toward Korea may also identify with a disparate set of representations of Koreanness, and feel equally repelled by that dictated by *hallyu*, the bar, and the community. All of these are considerations that should be taken in the further study of this subject. Through the interplay of queer Korea(ns) and queer Japan(ese), this study for now has endeavored to at least scratch the surface of all that remains to be discovered amid the intersections of race and sexuality in queer Asia.

Notes

1. Concepts of, and distinctions between, race and nationality are often blurred for Koreans and Japanese, and may include or exclude members of the diaspora and those with regional associations (e.g., North and South Korea).

2. Alberto Alesina et al., "Fractionalization," *Journal of Economic Growth* 8, no. 2 (2003): 186.

3. *Zainichi* (lit. "in Japan") refers to Koreans and their descendants who have permanently resided in Japan since the end of its colonization of Korea.

4. Lawrence Neuman, *Review of Ōsaka Story*, by Toichi Nakata, *Education About Asia* 3, no. 1 (1998): 78.

5. "Race" in this article flexibly refers to any categorization of group identity believed to be biologically inherited, often involving overlap and conflict with concepts of ethnicity, nationality, and culture. "Racialization," by extension, is the imposition of that social construct on oneself or others.

6. Iino Yuriko, "The Politics of 'Disregarding': Addressing Zainichi Issues Within the Lesbian Community in Japan," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2007): 69–85.

7. Horie Yuri, "*Kotonaru hisabetsu kategorī kan ni shōjiru 'haijo' to 'rentai': Zainichi kankoku/chōsenjin kyōdōtai ni okeru 'rezubian sabetsu jiken' wo jirei ni*," *Seizongaku Kenkyū Sentā Hōkoku* 14 (2010).

8. Itagaki Ryuta, "The Anatomy of Korea-phobia in Japan," *Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): 60.

9. Kathryn Phillips and Thomas Baudinette, "Shin-Ōkubo as a Feminine 'K-pop space': Gendering the Geography of Consumption of K-pop in Japan," *Gender, Place & Culture* 29, no. 1 (2022): 80–103.

10. Travis Kong, "The Pursuit of Masculinity by Young Gay Men in Neoliberal Hong Kong and Shanghai," *Journal of Youth Studies* 23, no. 8 (2020): 1015.

11. Sunagawa Hideki, "*Shinjuku ni-chōme ga shōsha suru iseiai shakai*," in *Sei no Bunmyaku* 4, ed. Matsuzono Makio (Tokyo: Yūzan-Kaku Publishing, 2003), 196–225.

12. Ishida Hitoshi, "*Jendā to sekushuariti no shinkūken: Shinjuku ni-chōme homobā ni okeru shōteki sōgo kōi jissen*," *Journal of the Faculty of Literature, Chuo University* 203 (2004): 81–98.

13. Wei-cheng Chu and Fran Martin, "Editorial Introduction," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 4 (2007): 484.

14. Howard Chiang and Alvin Wong, "Asia is Burning: Queer Asia as Critique," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 58, no. 2 (2017): 123.

15. Gayle Rubin, "Studying Sexual Subcultures: Excavating the Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America," in *Out in Theory: The Emergency of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, ed. Ellen Lewin and William Leap (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 25.

16. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 99.

17. Mark McLelland, "Japan's Original 'Gay Boom'" (2006), http://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/145.

18. Sunagawa, "*Shinjuku ni-chōme*."

19. Ishida, "*Jendā to sekushuariti no shinkūken*."

20. Mark McLelland, *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (London: Routledge, 2005).

21. Moriyama Noritaka, "'*Ni-chōme ni suteru gomi nashi' to hito wa iu keredo*," *Yurīka* 46, no. 10 (2014): 246–53.

22. Thomas Baudinette, "Ethnosexual Frontiers in Queer Tokyo: The Production of Racialised Desire in Japan," *Japan Forum* 28, no. 4 (2016): 467.

23. Baudinette, "Ethnosexual Frontiers," 475.

24. Chung Haeng-ja, "In the Shadows and at the Margins: Working in the Korean Clubs and Bars of Osaka's Minami Area," in *Wind Over Water: Migration in an East Asian Context*, ed. David Haines, Keiko Yamanaka, and Shinji Yamashita (Berghahn Books, 2012), 192.

25. Alison Rooke, "Queer in the Field: On Emotions, Temporality and Performativity in Ethnography," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 25–39.

26. George Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid: The Korean Minority and the Japanese* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing, 1997), 20.

27. Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "Problems of Self-Identity Among Korean Youth in Japan," in *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*, ed. Changsoo Lee and George De Vos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 310.

28. Itagaki Ryuta, "The Anatomy of Korea-phobia in Japan," *Japanese Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): 58.

29. Apichai Shipper, "Nationalisms of and Against *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan," *Asian Politics & Policy* 2, no. 1 (2010): 57.

30. Itagaki, "The Anatomy of Korea-phobia," 60.

31. Ha Kyung Hee, "Cultural Politics of Transgressive Living: Socialism Meets Neoliberalism in Pro-North Korean Schools in Japan," *Social Identities* 24, no. 2 (2017): 194.

32. Fieldnotes, October 21, 2006.

33. Itagaki, "The Anatomy of Korea-phobia," 60.

34. Mark McLelland, "'Race' on the Japanese Internet: Discussing Korea and Koreans on '2-channeru'," *New Media & Society* 10, no. 6 (2008): 826.

35. Homophobic comments were triggered by the reports of COVID cluster infections at gay bars and saunas in Seoul in May 2020.

36. See, for example, Fushimi Noriaki's *Private Gay Life* (1991).

37. McLelland, *Male Homosexuality*, 231.

38. Ibid., 226

39. John Cho, "The Luxury of Love: Gay Men in Recessionary South Korea," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 158.

40. Fieldnotes, December 16, 2006.

41. John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 134.

42. Iino, "The Politics of 'Disregarding'," 78.

43. Horie, "*Kotonaru hisabetsu kategori*."

44. Shipper, "Nationalisms of and Against *Zainichi*," 58.

45. The Japanese transliteration of "*t'ongil*," a common reference to the reunification of North and South Korea.

46. Albert Graves, "Behind the Scene: Stories with the Master and Miseko of a Korean Gay Bar in Japan," *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 22, no. 1 (2022).

47. Kim Jiyoung, "The Effect of the Korean Wave Experience on the National Identity of Zainichi Koreans in Japan," *Annals of Japan Association for Urban Sociology* 28 (2010): 138.

48. Kim, "The Effect of the Korean Wave," 142, 144, 147.

49. Yoko Demelius, "Thinking through Community Spirit: Zainichi Koreans in Post-Korean Wave Japanese Communities," *Japanese Studies* 41, no. 1 (2021): 104–5.

50. Samuel Kim et al., "Effects of Korean Television Dramas on the Flow of Japanese Tourists," *Tourism Management* 28 (2007): 1351.

51. Millie Creighton, "Japanese Surfing the Korean Wave: Drama Tourism, Nationalism, and Gender via Ethnic Eroticisms," *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 31 (2009): 22.

52. Laura Miller, "Korean TV Dramas and the Japan-Style Korean Wave," *Post Script* 27, no. 3. (2008): 19.

53. See, for example, John Lie, "Obasan and Kanryū: Modalities of Convergence of Middle-Aged Japanese Women Around South Korean Popular Culture and Gender Divergence in Japan," in *Media Convergence in Japan*, ed. Patrick Galbraith and Jason Karlin (Kinema Club, 2016), 134.

54. Patty Ahn, "Harisu: South Korean Cosmetic Media and the Paradox of Transgendered Neoliberal Embodiment," *Discourse* 31, no. 3 (2009): 261.

55. Lie, "Obasan and Kanryū," 127.

56. For examples in Thailand, see Megan Sinnott, "Korean-Pop, *Tom Gay Kings*, *Les Queens* and the Capitalist Transformation of Sex/Gender Categories in Thailand," *Asian Studies Review* 36 (2012): 453–74.

57. Tiago Canário, "Queering the Wave: Drag Queens and Drag Kings in the K-pop Industry," in *Here Comes the Flood: Perspectives of Gender, Sexuality, and Stereotype in the Korean Wave*, ed. Marcy Tanter and Moisés Park (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 219.

58. Jin Lee, "'I Don't Understand What You're Saying Now, But You Are Cute, I Love You'," *Feminist Media Studies* 21, no. 6 (2021): 1046.

59. Lie, "Obasan and Kanryū," 129.

60. Creighton, "Japanese Surfing the Korean Wave," 30–1.

61. Kim et al., "Effects of Korean Television Dramas," 1343.

62. Phillips and Baudinette, "Shin-Ōkubo," 82.

63. Ibid., 99.

64. Chung, "In the Shadows," 200.

65. Susaki Seiji, "The Gay District as a Place of Residence for Gay Men and Lesbians in Japan: The Case of Shinjuku Ni-Chome," *Geographical Reports of Tokyo Metropolitan University* 56 (2021): 80.

66. For more on this system as compared to "by the glass," see Ishida, "*Jendā to sekushuariti no shinkūken*."

67. Jon Binnie and Beverley Skeggs, "Cosmopolitan Knowledge and the Production and Consumption of Sexualized Space: Manchester's Gay Village," *Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (2004): 52–3.

68. Lee Hyangjin, "The Korean Wave and Anti-Korean Wave Sentiment in Japan," in *The Korean Wave*, ed. Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 191.

69. Audrey Yue and Helen Leung, "Notes Towards the Queer Asian City: Singapore and Hong Kong," *Urban Studies* 53, no. 3 (2017): 750.

70. For case studies on this in Singapore and Hong Kong, see Yue and Leung, "Notes Towards the Queer Asian City."

71. Binnie and Skeggs, "Cosmopolitan Knowledge," 54.

72. Travis Kong, "The Pursuit of Masculinity by Young Gay Men in Neoliberal Hong Kong and Shanghai," *Journal of Youth Studies* 23, no. 8 (2020): 1015.

73. For case studies on this in Hong Kong and Shanghai, see Kong, "The Pursuit of Masculinity."

74. Kabiya Kazuhiko, "Lifestyles in the Gay Bars," in *Queer Voices from Japan: First Person Narratives from Japan's Sexual Minorities*, ed. Mark McLelland, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker (Lexington Books, 2007), 112–3.

75. Chung, "In the Shadows," 195.

76. Baudinette, "Ethnosexual Frontiers," 477.

77. Ibid., 480.

78. Sunagawa ("*Shinjuku ni-chōme*," 218) makes this argument, which is contested by Ishida ("*Jendā to sekushuariti no shinkūken*"), who considers them to be no more than a cluster of commercial businesses.

79. For more on this, see McLelland, *Male Homosexuality*, 115.

80. Fieldnotes, October 13 & 21, 2006.

81. Fieldnotes, October 14, 2006.

82. Graves, "Behind the Scene."

83. By contrast, the term *nii-san* ("older brother" in Japanese) in this context would feel awkward to younger, urban Japanese.

84. Fieldnotes, October 7, 2006. For more on sexual racisms including of *miseko* at Seoul Soul, see Graves, "Behind the Scene."

85. John Cho, "The Three Faces of South Korea's Male Homosexuality: Pogal, Iban, and Neoliberal Gay," in *Queer Korea*, ed. Todd Henry (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 265.

86. *Zainichi* "North" or "South" Koreans are referred to as such based on their self-identification, normally by membership in the respective resident organization Chongryon (North) or Mindan (South). It is not necessarily an identity of regional origin but rather of ideology, as explained in Sonia Ryang, "Koreans in Japan," in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, ed. Carol Ember, Melvin Ember, and Ian Skoggard (New York: Springer, 2005), 974–82.

87. Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 152.

88. Ryang, "Koreans in Japan," 976.

89. Christopher Laurent and Xavier Robillard-Martel, "Defying National Homogeneity: Hidden Acts of Zainichi Korean Resistance in Japan," *Critique of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2022): 47.

90. These ways include the display of ethnic markers such as names, which have been no less important, demonstrating *zainichi*'s respectability and responsibility as citizens of society, as pointed out in Demelius, "Thinking through Community Spirit," 98.

91. See, for example, the case of Manchester in Binnie and Skeggs, "Cosmopolitan Knowledge," 54–5.

92. Binnie and Skeggs, "Cosmopolitan Knowledge," 40.

93. Ryang, "Koreans in Japan," 980.

94. Ibid., 976.

95. Based on Mindan's figures of 320,000 out of 670,000, reported in *Japan Times* (October 9, 1998).

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