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Summary

Shifting away from the Public to Miscellaneous: The Case of Korean Schools in Tokyo

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There used to be 15 public Korean schools in Tokyo, Japan until March 1955. These schools were closed and restarted as miscellaneous schools from April 1955. Miscellaneous is a legal status of schools in Japan besides public and private. Due to this legal status Korean schools have been facing difficulties such as not receiving financial support from the Japanese government.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how public Korean schools in Tokyo closed in March 1955 and turned into miscellaneous schools in April 1955. This research was conducted through historical review of documents from the official record, diaries, and newspapers.

On 8th September 1951, the Treaty of San Francisco was concluded. Article 2-a of this treaty prescribed the change of territory between Japan and Korea, but there was no legal decision about the nationality of Korean residents in Japan. The Japanese government's interpretation of Article 2-a was that Korean residents in Japan should not be allowed to keep their Japanese nationality. As a consequence the Japanese government declared an official notification changing the status of Korean residents from Japanese nationals to "Alien" in April 1952. The Ministry of Education intended to close public Korean schools and to end compulsory education for Korean residents in Japan. Moreover, in the mid-1950s, communist ideas were spreading among some Japanese schools and Korean schools in Tokyo. This led the Ministry of Education to make a law towards teachers to stop them teaching communist ideas, while at the same time, the Board of Education in Tokyo imposed six specific rules towards Korean schools in the Tokyo area to force these schools to comply with Japanese law. Otherwise, if they did not comply with the law, schools would be closed. Even though Korean schools complied with the rules, the Ministry of Education and the Board of Education in Tokyo closed public Korean schools in Tokyo on 31st March 1955.

Furthermore, the representatives of Korean schools wanted to be isolated in their own community to keep their own education, so the representatives decided not to contest the notification to close the schools from the Board of Education in Tokyo. This decision from the representatives could not

happen without the support from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) government. In the early 1950s, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) had already started instructing Korean residents' movements to make a communist revolution in Japan. On the other hand, the DPRK also intended for Korean residents in Japan to work for the revolution for their fatherland, not for Japan. On 30th August 1954, the DPRK officially declared that Korean residents in Japan were overseas citizens. The declaration from the DPRK aimed to criticize the Japanese government who discriminated against Korean residents in Japan. At the same time, the declaration can be interpreted as a victory for the DPRK government over the JCP on who would instruct Korean residents in Japan. Furthermore, some nationalist Korean residents in Japan also desired to convert their movement for their fatherland. This conversion towards the DPRK also affected the instruction of Korean schools in Tokyo. For example the number of classes of Korean language and Korean history were increased and the overall education became more patriotic.

The closing of public Korean schools in Tokyo was important for both Japanese government and Korean residents' representatives. Keeping their schools public meant that Korean schools had to accept interference from the Japanese government. To eliminate the interference from the Japanese government, the only way was to accept the closing of public schools and to become miscellaneous schools. Thus, from April 1955, Korean schools in Tokyo were closed and turned into miscellaneous schools —— a state which continues to this day.

Recently some studies have shed light on public Korean schools in Tokyo. However, the focus of these studies are inside Japan. Therefore, these studies claim that the closing of public Korean schools in Tokyo was decided by the Japanese government single-handedly.

This paper attempts to combine both domestic and transnational frameworks to have a broader perspective. Since Korean residents living in Japan kept an active relationship with the Korean peninsula, and still do, a transnational perspective is needed to study the topic. The main finding of this research is that the Japanese government and some nationalist Koreans who were in charge of Korean schools shared a mutual interest in closing public Korean schools in Tokyo.