For those with more than just a casual interest in modern Japan, the once widely held notion of it as a remarkably homogeneous, socially harmonious nation has been exposed as a historically constructed and carefully maintained fiction—one that conceals a diversity of groups of various ethnic and social backgrounds in order to deny their claims to membership in the nation and facilitate discrimination and exploitation. Over the past four decades, scholars of Japan working in a variety of fields have produced a wealth of studies on groups such as the Ainu, Okinawans, Koreans, and the burakumin. These studies have also dealt with the prevalent discrimination that all these groups have faced in Japanese society. Indeed, the exploitation, prejudice, and marginalization that they have suffered, and their struggles to combat such treatment, have been the focus of most studies on minorities in Japan.

While such a focus is certainly justified, in the process of exploring the marginalization of these groups, researchers have in one sense duplicated the very situation that they set out to draw attention to: individual minority groups and their position vis-à-vis the majority society are thoroughly examined, but usually in a manner that suggests the particular group in question is the only exception to an otherwise valid paradigm of Japanese homogeneity and social harmony. That is, for all of the minority groups named earlier, extensive bodies of literature exist in which the other minorities in Japan generally receive only passing mention at best. This is somewhat surprising, not only because these groups have faced similar discriminatory treatment in terms of employment,
housing, and marriage, but also because the stereotypes of moral degradation and deviance from “proper” social norms that are used to justify such treatment vary only slightly from one minority to the next. The near total lack of a comparative approach in the study of Japan’s minorities is particularly striking in regard to the Korean and buraku minority populations, which have worked many of the same jobs and in many of the same industries, suffered similar problems of discrimination and exploitation, and in many cases even lived together in the same communities.¹

My intention in pointing out this lacuna is not to cast aspersions on the merits of previous scholarship in these fields. The single-minority focus of such scholarship is understandable if we consider that explorations of the prewar history of minority groups—particularly the Korean and buraku communities—emerged in the context of vigorous movements waged by each group to combat discrimination and win greater civil rights in postwar Japanese society.

The influence of the postwar minority rights movements over the character and focus of contemporaneous research is most striking in regard to the burakumin. Scholarly interest in the prewar history of the buraku minority and its struggles against discrimination expanded rapidly starting in the 1960s, when the buraku liberation movement (buraku kaihō undō) entered a new, contentious phase in its development. After the Japanese government issued its landmark “Report of the Dōwa Policy Deliberative Council” of 1965, a rift opened in the liberation movement between activists who sought to use the report to push for progressive legislation, and those who remained wary of government intentions and shunned reliance on the state.² In the increasingly bitter factional

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¹. Throughout this study, I shall follow the practice of Japanese researchers of the history of the burakumin and use the term “buraku” as an adjective in reference to the burakumin and the areas in which they live (e.g., “buraku communities,” “buraku laborers,” and “buraku economy”).

². The report declared that the problem of anti-buraku discrimination was “a matter involving basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Japan,” and as such was “both the responsibility of the state, and at the same time a matter of importance for the nation as a whole”; see Dōwa taisaku shingikai, “Dōwa taisaku shingikai tōshin,” p. 223). This landmark report was very progressive in many ways, but the Buraku Liberation League eventually split along political lines over the questions of whether to support the report and the various dōwa (harmonization) programs that
dispute that followed, scholars were asked to bolster the claims to historical legitimacy of one of the two sides in the debate by portraying it as the true ideological heir to the Suiheisha, the buraku liberation movement of the 1920s and 1930s.³

Despite the acrimonious political factionalism that fueled this debate, during the late 1960s and early 1970s research by both sides regarding the so-called buraku problem and the prewar buraku liberation movement employed a formulaically Marxist frame of analysis, a point of view inherited from the pioneering studies conducted by activists and scholars during the 1920s and 1930s. Some, for example, explained the persistence of anti-buraku discrimination into the modern period in terms of “feudal remnants,” whereas others viewed it as a contradiction inherent in the rise of Japanese monopoly capitalism.⁴ In either case, all scholars seemed to agree that the buraku problem was inextricably entangled with the emperor system, although the exact nature of this connection was rarely clarified beyond the notion that “where there is noble, there is base” (ki areba sen ari).⁵

Another area of general agreement for scholars during these otherwise contentious years was the tendency to view the buraku minority as essentially proletarian in character, although the exact nature of its connection to the wider Japanese proletariat remained open to debate. Linked to this assessment of the fundamental character of the burakumin was a view of the Suiheisha as a movement with intrinsic connections both to class struggle and to those social movements that promoted class struggle, although on this point, too, there was much debate about the

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Uesugi, Tennōsei to buraku sabetsu, p. 13. The phrase was originally coined by Matsumoto Ji’ichirō, whose central role in the pre- and postwar movements against antiburaku discrimination earned him the appellation “the father of buraku liberation.”
The Suiheisha (Suiheisha) movement emerged in the postwar period in Japan, aiming to address the discrimination and social exclusion faced by the burakumin, a historically marginalized group. The movement sought to challenge the societal norms that perpetuated prejudice against the burakumin. The Suiheisha, like other postwar activist movements, was influenced by the rhetoric of class struggle, drawing parallels between the burakumin and the broader Japanese working-class movement. However, the characterization of the Suiheisha as an ardent ideological movement opposing the state faced criticism for not accurately reflecting the movement’s ideological commitment. This debate was influenced by new research currents that challenged traditional narratives about the institutionalization of outcaste status. For instance, Amino Yoshihiko’s research on the medieval roots of the forebears of the early modern pariah groups argued against the notion that the early Tokugawa rulers were solely responsible for the discrimination faced by these groups. This research highlighted the economic instability and exploitation faced by the burakumin as a result of Japan’s developing capitalist economy. The Suiheisha’s identity politics, while influenced by the broader proletarian movement, also had its own unique characteristics that contributed to its distinct trajectory.
which continued to plague the burakumin in the modern era. Admitting that institutionalization was an important legal milestone, Amino argued that the social stigma that gave rise to outcaste status had its initial roots in the treatment of groups of what he termed *jiyūmin*—“free people” who led lives less tied to agriculture than most nonelite members of society and performed services that were thought to rid society of malevolent influences.7 Other researchers have looked at the formative impact that the rise of the modern nation-state in Japan and the modes of Western thought imported concomitantly with it had on perceptions of early modern outcasts, leading to the formation of the buraku minority. Casting aside the “feudal remnants” thesis, Uesugi Satoshi has authored a pioneering study on the historical and legal processes that resulted in the so-called “Kaihō-rei” (emancipation decree) of 1871, which did away with legally sanctioned pariah status, but paradoxically contributed to the rise of modern forms of anti-buraku discrimination.8 Likewise, both Hirota Masaki and Imanishi Hajime have explored the rise of new forms of discrimination in relation to the burakumin and other groups deemed to be outside of mainstream society during the early Meiji period.9 Fujino Yutaka, too, has focused on the effects that social Darwinism, ideologies of eugenics and hygiene, and imperialism had on the production of modern prejudice and discrimination against the buraku community.10

Recent scholars have applied similar frames of reference to explore the construction both of discriminatory views of the buraku minority and of the ideologies that prewar buraku activists mobilized to combat these views, in the context of the formation of the modern nation-state in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan. Fujino Yutaka’s work on the Suiheisha has revealed diverse influences such as nationalism and reverence for the emperor, religious idealism, and minority ethnic nationalism.11 Kurokawa Midori has explored the image of the burakumin maintained

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9. See Hirota, “Discrimination in Modern Japan,” pp. 603–11, and *Sabetsu no shisen*; as well as Imanishi, *Kindai Nihon no sabetsu to sei bunka* and *Kokumin kokka to mainoriti.*
by state authorities and various strata of majority society from the early Meiji period onward, as well as the way in which burakumin of various social strata and political inclinations reacted to such stereotypes in constructing new identities for themselves. Her work on this latter aspect is particularly insightful, in that it reveals discrepancies between the way Suiheisha leaders and the rank and file understood their identity as burakumin. In a similar vein, Sekiguchi Hiroshi has focused on the motives of ordinary burakumin who joined the Suiheisha during its earliest years or created grassroots organizations to combat discrimination and to express their political culture and minority identity.

As was the case with scholarship on the buraku minority in the early postwar period, scholarship on Koreans in Japan also focused on the minority’s impoverishment and their struggles against the discrimination and exploitation that had engendered it. The earliest works of this sort were surveys of living conditions and community formation among the Korean minority conducted by Japanese and Korean-minority researchers starting in the 1950s and 1960s. For the most part, these surveys focused on the poverty and oppression experienced at that time by the Korean community, although some also contained background information on the prewar development of the minority community in Japan. Studies of a more historical nature produced during this period usually examined a particular episode or aspect of the prewar experience of the Korean minority, such as the violent persecution and killing of Koreans in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.
From the 1970s onward, the history of the Korean minority received increasing attention. Iwamura Toshio, a historian of prewar leftist social and political movements, was one of the first to offer a comprehensive history of the minority and its relation to the Japanese working class during the prewar period. Along with Iwamura, and very much at the forefront of a more sustained interest in minority groups, were researchers such as Pak Kyōngsik, who was himself a first-generation member of the Korean minority community and whose research interests also included modern Korean history. Pak’s work on the minority’s history explored a wide range of pre- and postwar aspects: community formation, labor history, political and social movements, labor conscription of Koreans during wartime, and government policies for forcibly assimilating minority groups.

These scholars made profoundly important contributions to our understanding of Korean minority history. Just like scholarship on the buraku minority during the 1960s and 1970s, however, research on the Korean minority produced during the 1970s and 1980s tended to portray the minority as possessing a firm proletarian class consciousness. Furthermore, such scholarship connected this commitment to class struggle to a zealous nationalist effort to liberate Korea from Japanese colonialism. Here too it is important to note that such an image was justified to an extent: the vast majority of Koreans in prewar Japan were laborers, and Korean involvement in leftist unions and in other groups espousing anti-capitalist platforms was a feature of the minority for much of the period in question. Likewise, the Korean minority’s dissatisfaction with Japanese rule expressed itself through the anti-imperialist platforms of such organizations. By focusing on the most ideologically motivated, outspoken portion of the minority, however, such research suggested a level of ardent Korean nationalist activism and ideological commitment that was more accurately attributable to students and a relatively small number of organized laborers than to most minority Koreans, who were generally employed in menial occupations, living in isolated communities, and


17. See, for example, Pak Kyōngsik, Chōsenjin kyōsei renkō no kiryoku, Tennōsei kokka to zainichi Chōsenjin, Zainichi Chōsenjin undōshi, Zainichi Chōsenjin, and Zainichi Chōsenjin seikatsu jōtai (kaihō-mae).
having a wide range of reactions to life in Japan, including apathy and even support for Japan and its empire (though supportive views were generally dismissed as aberrant betrayals of the minority’s proper ethnic consciousness).

Whatever the limitations of such research, however, Pak Kyōngsik and other scholars of his generation laid a solid, enduring foundation for the field of Korean minority studies in Japan, and inspired a new generation of researchers to explore further facets of Korean experience in pre- and postwar Japan. Scholars in research groups such as the Zainichi Chōsenjin Undōshi Kenkyūkai (Society for Research on the Korean Movement in Japan) organized around Pak Kyōngsik to publish articles on a wide variety of Korean issues in the journal Zainichi Chōsenjinshi Kenkyū, which explored the history of the minority from vantage points such as local history, women’s history, labor history, and oral history interviews. A central figure in the society, Higuchi Yūichi, has produced detailed explanations of wartime policies toward the Korean community in Japan and the Korean reaction to these at a time when overt dissent was practically impossible. Also representative of this trend in scholarship is the work of Kim Ch’anjōng, who has used oral history interviews and archival sources to record the subaltern histories of Korean factory girls, day laborers, coal miners, and residents of Osaka’s largely Korean Tsuruhashi area. In a similar vein, Matsuda Toshihiko’s exploration of Korean participation in prewar electoral politics has revealed a largely neglected class of political entrepreneurs among the minority. On the level of local history, Horiuchi Minoru has provided new insights into community formation and labor activism among Koreans in Hyogo Prefecture.18

Within the contexts of labor migration, state policy, and the ideological contradictions inherent in Japanese imperialism, researchers in Japan have more recently connected the study of the Korean minority in Japan with other, more general research on various aspects of Japanese history. Nishinarita Yutaka has examined the prewar minority from a variety of...

18. Higuchi, Kyōwakai: Senjika Chōsenjin tōsei soshiki no kenyū; Kim Ch’anjōng and Pang Sŏnhi, Kaze no dōkoku; Kim Ch’anjōng, Ame no dōkoku, Hi no dōkoku, and Ihŏjin wa Kimigayo Maru ni notte; Matsuda, Senzenki no zainichi Chōsenjin to sanseiken; and Horiuchi, Hyōgo Chōsenjin rōdō undōshi.
angles, including its migration and settlement patterns, the labor recruitment and control policies aimed at it, levels of education among the minority, and the dynamics of wage discrimination. Hur Kwangmu has delved into the rising presence of Koreans within the most impoverished sectors of urban Japan and shown how welfare commissioners and other administrators appealed to popular stereotypes in instituting a “double standard” that barred most Koreans from access to public relief, while Japanese who were in fact better off managed to qualify. Finally, Oguma Eiji has examined the way the Japanese empire employed a rhetoric of inclusion in order to justify its control of colonial populations whose cultures were vastly different from that of the Japanese, and how some among these populations—including many Koreans in Japan—attempted, but failed, to use this ideology to their own advantage by calling the state to task for its hypocrisy.

English-language scholarship on both minorities has drawn much from the findings and approaches of researchers writing in Japanese, while at the same time bringing its own problem consciousness to the analysis of these minority situations. For many writing in the 1950s and 1960s, these minorities were viewed primarily in terms of the challenges that their movements for national liberation and civil rights posed to the Japanese state. This was especially true of early scholars of the Korean minority, writing within the context of the increasingly frigid Cold War in East Asia. David Conde appears to have been the first to examine the minority and its historical origins in the prewar era, suggesting that its transnational character presented difficult problems for American occupiers attempting to maintain order in Japan. Shortly thereafter, as Japan stood poised to regain its independence, Edward Wagner’s The Korean Minority in Japan, 1904–1950, published in 1951, attempted to provide a greater understanding of the Korean situation in Japan and its history to the English-reading world. Appearing more than a decade later, Richard Mitchell’s study of the minority was in much the same vein as these earlier works: all were focused mainly on the situation of the

Korean minority within the developing contexts of prewar and wartime labor mobilization, the Cold War, and relations between the two Koreas and Japan—and all voiced a concern with what they saw as the radicalism of postwar political activity among the minority.23

Other researchers viewed these minorities in terms of race relations and explored the economic, social, and psychological effects that discrimination by the majority society had on the Korean and buraku communities. The anthropologist and psychologist George DeVos, together with Hiroshi Wagatsuma and Changsoo Lee, took the lead in introducing these aspects of the Korean and buraku experiences to an English readership.24 These surveys of minority populations and the problems facing them contributed greatly to a more nuanced appreciation of a society generally assumed to be “homogeneous.” At the same time, however, by echoing a concern for the problems of racism and race relations that had emerged from the American experience of the civil rights movement, these studies had a tendency to treat the difference and the discrimination in static terms, rather than exploring how images of difference—conceived in terms of race or otherwise—developed over time.

Researchers from the 1980s onward have benefited from the wealth of historical studies produced by their Japanese colleagues during the postwar decades, while bringing their own perspectives to bear on these minority issues. Ian Neary’s groundbreaking study of the prewar buraku liberation movement documented the interactions between the Suiheisha and the state—interactions that, in many ways, brought the autonomous organization more into line with state conceptions of welfare and social organization as Japan mobilized for war in the 1930s.25 On the Korean side, a rising interest in issues of labor migration, imperialism, and ethnicity in the West led scholars of Japan such as Michael Weiner to revisit the subject of the Korean minority community. Weiner’s two works on the minority explore the rising radicalism of students in response to Korea’s loss of independence during the early twentieth century as well as the Korean community’s roots in the “push-pull” dynamics of labor

migration that occurred amid exploitative colonial agricultural policies and rapid industrialization in Japan during World War I. Furthermore, he analyzes the ideology of Japanese imperialism with regard to this growing Korean presence, and explains how the contradictions inherent in this ideology led to discrimination and a bureaucratic inability to deal effectively with what came to be known as the “Korean problem” during four decades of Japanese rule over Korea. Most recently, Ken Kawashima has shown how the very tenuousness of opportunities for Korean employment and housing in Japan were built into a system of exploitation that the capitalist state used to keep Korean wages low while shutting the labor migrants out of the majority job market.

My approach to understanding the histories of the Korean and buraku minorities is indebted to the scholarship of previous researchers writing in Japan and abroad, particularly those whose work has appeared since the late 1980s. I share their interest in the connection between the ideologies deployed in the rise of the modern Japanese nation-state and empire and in how these stereotypes applied to Koreans and the burakumin. I also share a concern—most prevalent in the works of Fujino, Kurokawa, and Sekiguchi, but also present in those of Higuchi, Oguma, and Weiner—for probing the complex ways in which minority individuals and their communities reacted to marginalization, stereotyping, and the subsequent state efforts at minority incorporation. Given the striking parallels between these two minority communities in terms of their socioeconomic position in Japanese society and the degree to which they were ostracized from the majority, I compare the buraku and Korean experiences of marginalization and their reactions to it on a variety of levels, and juxtapose the state policies that were designed to control and incorporate them. Against this backdrop, I also explore how members of the two minorities viewed and interacted with one another during the quarter century leading up to Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War.

An examination of how images of each of these groups evolved in the eyes of the Japanese majority will show how the differences that marked these groups as minorities were constructed through a complex interaction of forces that arose simultaneously with modernization and imperialism.

27. Kawashima, Proletarian Gamble.
Introduction

In addition, the stereotypes of burakumin and Koreans that were in currency by the end of World War I provided the backdrop against which state policies to encourage greater minority assimilation and incorporation into mainstream society were formulated, and shaped the conceptions of minority identity that activists from within these communities reacted to in their own movements. While regional differences in the views and treatment of minorities—particularly the burakumin—may have been observed in Japan during the late nineteenth century, part of my argument here is that prevalent images of these minorities were in a very real sense “homogenized” nationally just as they were propagated by the popular press during the Meiji decades.

Chapter 1 traces the marginalization of Koreans and burakumin within the context of the ideologies that informed it from the 1870s through the first decade of the twentieth century. In regard to the burakumin, it begins by revealing how the abolition of pariah status, premodern views of defilement associated with outcaste communities, and measures enacted to achieve a more modern and efficient documentation of the population combined to create the burakumin as a modern minority of national scope. The pre-Meiji ideas about outcaste identity examined here would continue to inform views about the nature of buraku minority identity well into the modern period, although they would come to be interpreted through a new, increasingly standardized vocabulary. Likewise for the Koreans, the chapter explores the declining stature of Korea’s image as a culture of Confucian learning during the Bakumatsu years, its subsequent portrayal as a backward country in “civilization and enlightenment” discourse, and its rapid recasting as a nonviable state populated by lazy and insouciant subjects and led by an incompetent monarchy. Analyzing the discourse on burakumin and Koreans in parallel from these starting points, the chapter shows how subsequent stereotypes informed by ideologies such as social Darwinism, hygiene, and eugenics—all pivotal modes of thought in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Japan—cast both burakumin and Koreans as the antithesis of the proper Japanese citizen by ascribing to each a strikingly similar set of undesirable traits. The study also shows how this process of constructing minority identities received input from various levels of majority society, creating multilayered and contradictory conceptions of what the Koreans and burakumin were like—contradictory images that ultimately made it
extremely difficult for a minority individual or group to behave in a manner that would not be seen as affirming some prevalent stereotype against them.

Starting in Chapter 1, I use the term “discrimination” to refer to the ostracizing treatment in word and deed that Koreans and burakumin faced. The reader may wonder why I do not employ the term “racism,” since these attitudes and actions would be called “racist” if they were applied to ethnic or racial minorities in societies where more-or-less observable differences, such as skin color, act as signifiers of belonging to a minority group. My preference for a term that seems more general and thus less descriptive, however, arises from two considerations. The first is that in Japanese discussions of the problems faced by these minorities, the term employed is sabetsu, which translates to “discrimination,” rather than the Japanese phrase for racism, jinshu sabetsu—literally, “race discrimination.” Whenever the latter term appears in Japanese discussions, whether during the time period under consideration or today, it is only used in reference to problems in other societies and cultures. The reason for this was that those discussing how the Koreans and the burakumin related to the Japanese tended to avoid characterizing their difference from the majority in racial terms. This reticence may have been connected to a similar hesitance to use the concept when describing the Japanese people; although Japanese scholars of the 1890s generally embraced a worldview informed by social Darwinian views of humanity, they were not entirely comfortable with the racial hierarchy they inherited from the West, which placed Japanese below the white races. Perhaps for this reason, from the turn of the century onward Japanese scholars writing on Japan began to emphasize the importance of minzoku—a nebulous term that suggests bonds of a shared culture and history, similar to equally slippery English terms such as “nation” and “ethnic group”—over jinshu (“race” in the biological sense). Using a description of the Japanese that appealed to common history and culture, rather than one that relied on race, also provided ideological justification for Japanese imperialism. As Oguma Eiji has demonstrated, starting from the latter

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half of the Meiji period, most scholars in prewar Japan agreed that the Japanese people were the result of a long history of racial blending. Many argued that it was this very proclivity to absorb diverse racial elements and assimilate them into a culturally homogeneous whole, centered on the imperial clan, that endowed the Japanese with a unique capacity for incorporating and improving other peoples. Discourse on the nature of Koreans and burakumin developed within the context of the broader concern for justifying Japanese imperialism through appeals to this assimilative power of the Japanese. In state rhetoric as well, once burakumin and Koreans had been incorporated within the empire they became subjects of a benevolent, fatherly emperor who ruled with “impartiality and equal favor” (isshi dojin)—to use a commonly employed phrase—over all his subjects, no matter their backgrounds.

The reader may still object that all of this is of little concern: since “race” is itself a social construct, applied arbitrarily to groups perceived to possess some common trait deemed to be significant, the label “racism” can be applied to discrimination against any group that is construed as sharing characteristics that define them as “different” from the majority. Although this is a valid point, given the strong connection for those of us from English-speaking cultures between “racism” and “race” as a set of phenotypic markers—most commonly and notoriously skin color—the use of the term “racism” to describe the discrimination faced by Koreans and burakumin in Japan runs the risk of reifying the difference between these minorities and the majority and characterizing the relationship between discriminator and victim as one that was much less ambiguous than it really was. “Passing” in majority society was always a possibility for burakumin and Koreans, but that only made the threat of having one’s “true nature” revealed all the more ominous for those who tried it. By the same token, although I use the term “minority” in reference to both the Koreans and the burakumin, I do not mean to suggest

30. Memmi, Racism, pp. 17–18. Memmi further points out that in the absence of an observable trait on which to hang the racial distinction, one can always be invented.
31. A similar idea seems to be at work in our preference for the term “anti-Semitism” over “racism” when referring to discrimination against Jews, even though there are anti-Semites who would claim that Jews belong to a separate race.
by this that empirically observable differences exist that set the people belonging to either group apart from the “majority.” I simply use the term as a kind of shorthand to refer to a group that is marginalized from mainstream society, based on discursively constructed conceptions of difference employed for specific social and political purposes.

The experiences of buraku and Korean individuals and communities and their responses to the discrimination and exploitation they faced are explored and compared in Chapters 2, 4, and 6. Chapter 2 focuses on the late Meiji years, when Japan fought two wars on the Korean Peninsula that solidified its status as an imperialist power in East Asia. The heightened sense of popular patriotism that heralded the achievement of a modern nation-state led to increasingly negative stereotypes about burakumin and Koreans in Japan. The reactions and opinions of elite members of these minorities—business and community leaders, in the case of the burakumin, and students enrolled in Japanese universities and technical colleges, in the case of Koreans—were distinctive and telling. That is, despite their opposing views of the Japanese victories—buraku community leaders reacted with patriotic pride, whereas Korean students came to understand that these developments represented a grave threat to Korean sovereignty—both exhibited a similar understanding of their position and role in their respective communities. Buraku elites saw themselves as the rightful leaders and reformers of their communities who should serve as an interface between the group and majority society, whereas Korean students nominated themselves as intellectual leaders for what they hoped would become a popular movement to protect Korea’s autonomy by modernizing its culture. Their realization of the nation—be it Japanese or Korean—and their place in it, however, came at the price of a problematic relationship with the less fortunate whose best interest they claimed to represent.

Chapters 4 and 6 examine the responses of organized minority rights movements—specifically the Suiheisha, formed in 1922 to combat antiburaku discrimination, and a variety of student and labor organizations established by Koreans, but most prominently the Zainihon Chōsen Rōdō Sōdōmei (Federation of Korean Labor in Japan)—and the communities they represented during the period of liberal “Taishō democracy” and years of intensifying mobilization for war, respectively. The focus of this analysis is the politics of minority identity; that is, the ways
in which members of both the Korean and buraku minorities defined their identities as minorities in the changing historical contexts examined, and at multiple levels in their social movements and in the communities where they lived. Koreans and burakumin, like groups facing discrimination and oppression everywhere, frequently negotiated and redefined their identities vis-à-vis majority society and the state in an attempt to gain advantages such as government concessions, gaining the moral high ground over a prejudiced majority, or fostering a sense of pride and increasing solidarity among members of the minority group. This process of negotiating and redefining identities could be carried out consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and reactively, on organizational as well as individual levels, but insofar as these identities were never fixed and always contested, the process was inherently “political.”

Throughout this negotiation process, minority organizations, communities, and individuals had to contend with the stereotypes and prejudices that the majority held against them (the identity that the majority ascribed to the minority) as well as the state and its policies of assimilation and control. Minority identities were thus defined and redefined in a sort of dialectical process by which some of the views promoted by majority society were rejected, and others were incorporated and turned to the minority’s advantage. In addition to these domestic elements, international events and currents of thought—such as the Wilsonian idea of national self-determination, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the concept of an international proletariat—formed minority visions of who they were and how they related to state and majority society. The identities they arrived at through this process were contained within a field of possibilities bordered by identification with majority Japanese society on one side; assertion of historical, ethnic, and even racial differences from the majority on another; and appeals to class affiliation with the proletariat on yet a third.

Just as Korean and buraku identities were never fixed, they were also continuously contested between movements and their minorities because, despite what many activists claimed, neither minority was a homogeneous community. In fact, the comparisons in this book show that both minority communities displayed a greater degree of socioeconomic stratification than much of the older literature on burakumin and Koreans admits. A bourgeoisie arose within both minority communities, and
despite differences in the conditions and historical moment of its appearance within each group, in both cases this most successful class within minority society found itself confronted with very similar problems in defining its own position vis-à-vis both majority society and its connection to its own minority community. The paths to socioeconomic advancement that minority individuals took and their opinions about the Japanese nation and empire, on the one hand, and their minority’s place in these, on the other, reveal the extent to which their success removed them from the world of less fortunate Koreans and burakumin, and imparted to them attitudes prevalent in majority society.

Bourgeois Koreans and burakumin were not the only ones to sometimes disagree with activists’ interpretations of what it meant to be a Korean or burakumin. Although groups like the Suiheisha and Korean labor unions projected the image of minority communities joined together in solidarity by a strong sense of common purpose, the motivations and concerns of the leaders often differed significantly from those of the rank-and-file members. In particular, the leadership of minority movements was greatly influenced by general trends observed in other social movements in Japan at the time, and they responded to the situations and government policies confronting them in ways that usually mirrored such trends, even if this meant that they portrayed the identity of the minority group in ways that ignored the beliefs and day-to-day concerns of the rank and file. Fluctuations in the degree of support for minority movements among the subaltern of the minority community, as well as the words and deeds of rank-and-file members, provide glimpses of how the less ideologically and politically motivated among these minorities perceived their place in Japanese society.

Far from opposing the rhetoric of the state on all counts, minority activists consciously appealed to such ideologies as a means of decrying the hypocrisy of the state and majority society for permitting discrimination to continue. This was particularly true of the Suiheisha, as revealed in activists’ statements about the emperor’s place and role in the Japanese nation and Japan’s “peerless” national polity. For their part, representatives of the Korean minority were less likely to invoke such rhetoric, but when they did, they used it similarly: as a critique of the status quo treatment of the minority by the majority and the government. This is not to suggest that such declarations of allegiance to the ideals of the nation
were necessarily feigned; I argue, to the contrary, that the degree to which Suiheisha activists and a few Koreans continued to pursue this line of rhetoric in condemnation of discrimination eventually led to their co-optation by the state during the war, precisely because they found themselves left with no autonomous ideological space from which to resist the rhetoric of mobilization, despite the persistence of discrimination.

The advent of anti-establishmentarian minority movements in the early 1920s, and their subsequent embrace of Marxism and other radical ideologies, encouraged the government to focus greater attention on achieving a cohesive society, in part by solving the problems posed by minority groups. The government attempted to bring about this cohesion through suppression, co-optation, and control. Suppression of radical ideologies and those who promoted them was largely the province of the police, and for most of the 1920s and 1930s all minority activists who espoused “dangerous ideas” were treated similarly. Policy initiatives aimed at co-optation and control, however, were formulated specifically for Koreans or burakumin, and were distinctive to each. These policies and the ideologies that buttressed them during the comparatively liberal 1920s and the following period of increasingly stringent social control and mass mobilization during the 1930s and Pacific War years are examined in Chapters 3 and 5, respectively. These chapters focus on the twin concepts of yūwa (融和, “harmony,” “conciliation,” or “integration”) and dōka (同化, “assimilation”), which dominated the rhetoric of policies designed for both minorities. Yūwa implied a variety of vaguely defined notions, all connected to the idea that the government should combat the socially divisive influence of discrimination against minorities by urging the majority to discard its prejudices and accept burakumin and Koreans as fellow subjects of the emperor. In contrast, dōka, although in many respects no less vague in content, required that burakumin and Koreans change their lifestyles to conform to the idealized conception of how proper Japanese lived and behaved. The logic of assimilation demanded this transformation even though in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these minorities had been cast as the antithesis of the image of ideal Japanese behavioral norms. Previous researchers of both minorities have commented on the ideology behind the assimilation programs each minority group endured, and the insensitive, high-handed nature of the policies that resulted. A parallel reading of the policy platforms and official pro-
nouncements regarding each minority, however, reveals that although both groups were urged to assimilate to majority norms of behavior and discard their “aberrant” ways, there were important points of divergence between the policies that eventually emerged for each minority community. These differences ultimately resulted in a much more coercive set of policies for the Korean minority than for the burakumin, and exposed the degree to which the state judged the allegiance of minorities to the nation based on their adherence to superficial cultural norms, and extended a certain amount of acceptance to them in return.

Chapter 7, the final chapter of the book, explores how the two minorities interacted and viewed one another against this complicated historical backdrop. I analyze this relationship through the multiple lenses of their organized social movements, the industries that employed workers of both minorities, and the buraku communities that became home to growing Korean settler populations from the 1920s on.

Such an approach is novel, but the question of interactions between Koreans and burakumin has drawn the attention of previous researchers. Scholars of buraku history writing in the 1970s occasionally took note of what they saw as instances of Korean-buraku solidarity in the face of exploitation during the prewar period. One such work was Kobayashi Sueo’s Zainichi Chōsenjin Rōdōsha to Suihei Undō, published in 1974. Others devoted sections of studies to describing an interminority solidarity born of a mutual recognition that both Koreans and burakumin suffered discrimination and exploitation, due to a combination of ethnic and class prejudice, from Japanese who were better off. These accounts, written in the period when scholarship served the interests of the buraku liberation movement’s identity politics, give a strong impression of minorities finding common cause and forming a “united front,” but the accounts of mutual cooperation they relate are anecdotal at best. A representative example is Hijikata Tetsu’s story of a single Korean who lived in a buraku community in which few other Koreans resided. Kobayashi’s work has even greater problems: in spite of its title, Korean Laborers in Japan and the Suihei Movement, only half of the book examines

32. Kobayashi Sueo, Zainichi Chōsenjin rōdōsha to suihei undō.
33. See the section entitled “Chōsenjin no nakama to,” in Hijikata, Hisabetsu buraku no tatakai, pp. 261–70.
relations between Korean and buraku laborers, and then only in the context of a single incident—a 1931 strike at the Taki Fertilizer plant in Hyōgo Prefecture—in which the Suiheisha played only a minor role in supporting the strikers.

The gradual move away from scholarship written to concur with the identity politics of postwar minority rights movements has opened up a view of minority-majority relations that extends beyond a simplistic dichotomy of oppressor versus oppressed. Within this trend, some scholars have turned their attention to the manner in which the minority that they focus on—be it Koreans or burakumin—came to be influenced by the other. In addition to the aforementioned works by Hur, Kurokawa, and Nishinarita, which all mention the economic and residential impact of one minority community on the other, Kim Jungmi’s critical evaluation of the Suiheisha and its successors in the postwar era has revealed provocative evidence that many in the buraku liberation movement held discriminatory attitudes toward other Asians, including Koreans.34 And at the subaltern level, Ha Myōngseong’s analysis of Korean entry into and eventual domination of the lowest levels of the prewar labor market in cities such as Kyoto and Osaka shows how Korean migrants gradually displaced burakumin from industries that had traditionally relied on buraku labor, while establishing a presence within buraku communities.35

These studies certainly add to our understanding of the complexity of the situation faced by Koreans and burakumin during these years, and suggest a variety of directions for comparative analysis. And yet, in all of them, the “other minority” appears solely as a situation to which the minority in question reacts, or as a condition that influences its experience in some formative way. In Ha Myōngseong’s study, for example, the labor market and community of the burakumin provide the work and living environment for Korean migrants to the Kansai-area cities he explores, but the reaction of burakumin living and working there to the Korean arrivals is not explored. The case is similar for Kim Jungmi’s study: buraku liberation activists’ attitudes toward Koreans and the question of Korean independence appear, but the nature of Korean activists’ attitudes toward the buraku minority is left unexamined. My

34. Kim Jungmi, Suihei undōshi kenkyū.
35. Ha, Kanjin Nihon imin shakai keizaishi.
aim in Chapter 7, then, is to put the relationship between these minorities at the center and so illuminate the subtle interdependencies that animated the Korean and buraku experiences during this time.

That much of this history is defined by misunderstandings and mutual animosities will come as little surprise to those familiar with the histories of immigrant and minority groups in other national settings. Yet it would be far too simplistic to view this as a case of similarly disadvantaged groups taking out their frustrations on one another; instead, what this book shows is that there were very specific reasons why these two minorities failed to form lasting bonds of cooperation, despite parallel movements to combat discrimination during the prewar period. On the subaltern level, in the communities where Koreans and burakumin both lived, majority prejudices, cultural and economic factors, as well as the state’s separate policies to assimilate and mobilize each minority, all intervened to inhibit the appearance of a more cohesive relationship.

Since interminority relations such as these took place in buraku communities that, willingly or unwittingly, became host and home to significant numbers of Korean migrants, part of the book has a local focus. Reliable information on such communities is often hard to come by, however; prewar newspapers, for example, usually did not make overt reference to the “special status” of the buraku communities they covered (for fear of inviting vociferous censure from the Suihesha for divulging such facts), and historians writing in the postwar era have avoided mentioning communities by name for similar reasons. Thus although it is relatively easy to find out where Korean communities were located, it is not always easy or even possible to determine if a given Korean community was located in a buraku area. For this reason, I focus on a small number of buraku communities in which Koreans settled during the 1920s.

36. Scholars writing from the 1960s through the middle of the 1980s usually referred to specific buraku communities by pseudonyms or by the first letter of its name as it would be spelled in the roman alphabet. The point of this circumspection was to prevent individuals and organizations from using the information obtained through such works to discriminate against residents of these areas in marriage, employment, and access to schools of higher education. Since the late 1980s researchers have gradually abandoned the practice.
Introduction

and for which there exists a detailed and reliable trail of evidence gathered
from local newspaper articles, police and local government reports, ac-
counts in minority organization publications, and oral-history interviews
of those still living in the community who have a thorough knowledge
of its pre-1945 past. Two such communities in particular receive a great
deal of attention here: Yanagihara (also referred to as Higashi Shichijō or
Sūjin), located in the city of Kyoto; and Yasunaka, located within the
orbit of metropolitan Osaka.

This book connects the histories of two of Japan’s largest minority
populations to the modern history of Japan in novel ways. It also re-
covers some of the complexity of the Korean and buraku experiences in
Japan during a time when the rapid achievement of modernity and em-
pire both marginalized these groups in new ways and placed them in an
ambiguous relationship with each other and with the majority culture.
How did the state and these minorities themselves confront this ambi-
guity and make sense of their place in Japanese society? How did they
view one another within their shared, ambiguous position in the Japanese
empire? The answers to these questions provide new insights into how
minority Koreans, burakumin, and the majority culture came to know
one another and interact during the final decades of Japan’s empire and
beyond.