

# Towards a New Perspective on *Zainichi* Korean Identity: A Discursive Analysis on the Historicity of *Daburu* (Doubles)

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**Abstract** | This study explores the identities of the *daburu* (doubles)—the individuals born of *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese parents—through their discursive practices in Japanese society. The *daburu* often experience identity crises as they share traits of the two ethnic groups differentiated by their experiences and identities as the aggressors (Japanese) and victims (Korean) during the colonial era. However, as my study finds, the *daburu* cannot easily express this ambiguity in the “aggressor-victim dichotomy” as historical problems and discrimination against the *Zainichi* Koreans persist in Japanese society. In this context, the *daburu*’s “ambiguity” itself can be easily misunderstood as a counter-discourse that blurs or erases the identity and historicity of the *Zainichi* Koreans. The main purpose of this article is to critically reexamine this misperception by process-tracing the actual accounts and discursive practices of the *daburu*. The *daburu*’s accounts reveal their efforts to overcome the rigid “aggressor-victim dichotomy” that is often imposed on the process of defining their identity. My study shows a clear style in their writing practice that intends to avoid any stereotypes while narrating their story. Overall, I find that such discursive practices by the *daburu* can provide a new perspective for the studies on the identities of *Zainichi* Koreans that have revolved primarily around the debate between ethnic nationalism and social constructivism while addressing the identity problems of *Zainichi* Koreans. The discursive practices of the *daburu* have significant implications on the possibility of creating a new public sphere where individual *Zainichi* Koreans and *daburu* can freely express their experiences and history, thereby connecting them to new discourses that can expand the horizons of existing perspectives on *Zainichi* Koreans.

**Keywords** | *Zainichi* Koreans, *daburu* (doubles), diaspora, identity, historicity

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## Research Purpose

The most prevalent discourse that outlines the asymmetric relations between Japanese and *Zainichi* Koreans since the colonial period has been the “aggressor-victim” paradigm. The aggressor here is a segment of Japanese society that places the *Zainichi* Koreans into a separate group through continued hate speeches against them, which reveals the persistence of colonialism in the postwar period. The victims are *Zainichi* Koreans, who have tried to counteract this trend by constructing counter-discourses that emphasize the damages incurred on their people by the Japanese since the colonial period.

Apart from the aggressor-victim framework, however, the studies on the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans have undergone great changes and progress in both Japanese and Korean academia. As it is becoming ever more apparent that the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans can no longer be confined to existing parameters, such as blood lineage, nationality, or ideology, there are growing efforts both within academia and beyond to redefine the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans. Amongst these efforts to address this “new reality” of *Zainichi* Koreans, however, the most significant phenomenon is the *daburu* (doubles), the individuals born from *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese parents.<sup>1</sup> While the details will be addressed later, the *daburu* belong to neither side of the “aggressor-victim dichotomy”—neither the Japanese nor the *Zainichi* Korean communities. Instead, each side tries to win them over and exclude them from their communities simultaneously. Caught in between these two ethnic strongholds—the Japanese and *Zainichi* Korean communities, where asymmetry has long defined their relations—the *daburu* have become another unique “category” or ethnic group. Indeed, no single characteristic can define the experience of *daburu*, as the *daburu* do not necessarily act in unity—not all *daburu* function as a “bridge” between the Japanese and *Zainichi* Koreans, nor do they depreciate themselves as the *daburu*.

Then what are the *daburu* actually experiencing? How do their experiences change along with the evolution of social conditions surrounding the *Zainichi* Koreans? Indeed, in reference to the *daburu*, many people are already realizing that the “ethnicity” cannot be defined merely by blood lineage or nationality. To

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1. In this article, “*Zainichi* Koreans” refer to Koreans who migrated to Japan under the Japanese colonial rule and their descendants residing in Japan, regardless of nationality. The “mixed” children born between *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese are referred to as *daburu*, which is a common term used in Japan. For more details on *daburu*, refer to the section entitled “*Daburu*: Who Are They?” of this article.

address these new circumstances, can the *Zainichi* Koreans invent an “alternative public sphere” (refer to the subsection “‘Alternative Public Sphere’ and the Discursive Practices” of this article) for individual *Zainichi* Koreans and *daburu* to share their diverse experiences and connect them into a new discourse? I find that such questions are important for research on *Zainichi* Koreans to capture this “new reality” of the community.

In this light, I will critically examine the previous studies on the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans. Then, by delving into the discourses and cases on *daburu*, I will illustrate how their discursive practices can create an “alternative public sphere” that will enable new discussions on the identities of and changing reality for the *Zainichi* Koreans.

## The Perspectives on the Identity of Koreans and Their Historicity

### 1. Research Trends on the Identity of *Zainichi* Koreans

*Zainichi* Korean society is traditionally defined by their “pure” Korean blood lineage and their active efforts to maintain their nationality (South Korean/North Korean), use Korean names, and learn their native language, Korean. Rooted in such ethnic fundamentalism, the *Zainichi* Korean community has been a closed group, which sought to strengthen their solidarity by excluding and marginalizing others who did not share these traits. This was one of their strategies to protect themselves against the exclusionary policies of Japan during the colonial era.

As implied above, the solidarity among the *Zainichi* Koreans, shaped from their common ethnicity, seems to be weakening and becoming ever more fragmented as the lives and experiences of the *Zainichi* Koreans further diversify and become more individualistic. However, it is my observation that the discrimination against the *Zainichi* Koreans continues to appear in the form of discrimination against an “ethnic group.” In this regard, although the ethnicity may be no longer adequate in defining the identity of the *Zainichi* Koreans, their ethnic bonds with other *Zainichi* Koreans continues to be an important factor to individuals in the group.

In order to grasp such complex and multifaceted implications of ethnicity in *Zainichi* Korean society, we need to consider the lens or “framework” through which we examine the diversity in their identities. There are two main research trends in the studies on *Zainichi* Korean identity. The work by Fukuoka Yasunori (1993), a pioneer in identity studies, should be discussed first. Most

importantly, Fukuoka argued that the identities of *Zainichi* Koreans vary depending on their simultaneous desires to dissimilate from and assimilate to Japanese society. And as he elaborated his theory, he found that their identities could be divided into five different categories: pro-homeland, pro-overseas Koreans, pro-symbiotic relations with the Japanese, pro-individualism, and pro-naturalization. By interpreting the stories of the *Zainichi* Koreans into these five categories, Fukuoka tried to illustrate the diversity in their identities. Nonetheless, Fukuoka's study is limited for the following reasons: First, his framework remains fixated on a unilinear spectrum between dissimulation and assimilation, in which the identities tend to be measured by the varying level of "nationalism" among the *Zainichi* Koreans; second, although Fukuoka's study was initially devised to illustrate the multiplicity of identities of the *Zainichi* Koreans, his dissimulation-assimilation spectrum also fails to move beyond ethnic fundamentalism. Indeed, many relevant studies fall into this ethnic fundamentalist category, the "first research trend" among the existing literature.

The "second research trend" on the identities of *Zainichi* Koreans was strongly influenced by social constructivism. Social constructivism asserts that what we perceive as the reality or knowledge of the world is always a product of imagination or socio-cultural construction. *Zainichi* Korean studies began to apply this theory in the late 1990s. To elaborate, the most groundbreaking aspect of this "second trend" in *Zainichi* Korean studies is their effort to convey how their ethnic identity is also a social construction, and thereby expose the violence embedded in such ethnic fundamentalism. According to Jung Yeonghae (2013, 15), for instance, the ethnic identity of the *Zainichi* Koreans is constructed upon the suppression and sacrifices of female *Zainichi* Koreans. Also, the study points out and strongly criticizes how the myth of "pure blood," which was devised to reinforce the ethnic solidarity among *Zainichi* Koreans, ended up excluding and alienating the *daburu*. To Jung, "emancipation of their people cannot be possible if their means to defend themselves against imperialism become exclusionary to others."

However, the main limitation or dilemma of these social constructivist studies is that by revealing how "ethnicity" is a mere political construction, the studies delegitimize the *Zainichi* Korean community itself, which is founded upon their common "ethnicity." Put differently, it is inappropriate to question whether the solidarity of *Zainichi* Koreans is "a natural ethnic phenomenon or political construction." It is because the question fails to address the existing discrimination against the *Zainichi* Koreans in Japanese society that makes it inevitable for them to bond together under their shared ethnic identity. In this sense, while social constructivism may be "correct" in theory, the theory is less

applicable to the studies that aim to emancipate an ethnic group from discrimination.

As illustrated, the existing literature on the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans, especially ethnic fundamentalism, is no longer adequate to address the “reality” of *Zainichi* Koreans who are still living under the influences of ethnic discrimination and historical problems. In this context, we need to figure out a “third trend” in *Zainichi* Korean studies that can provide an alternative framework to address the increasing diversity in their identities, without regressing into the vicious circle of ethnic fundamentalism.

## 2. “Alternative Public Sphere” and Discursive Practices

Ethnic fundamentalism often begets exclusion and marginalization of “others” because the discourse is constructed upon unidirectional communication. In the process of defining the “others” by their ethnicity, for instance, the “identifier” only reflects upon their experiences, without engaging in dialogues with the “identified” others. The identifier reinforces their own identity by this unilateral “othering” process. In order to overcome such unilateral discursive practices, it is necessary to create numerous “spaces of appearances”—spaces of equality where people can meet one another, engage in dialogue, exchange their opinions and debate their differences, and search for some collective solutions to their problems, a kind of “public sphere” as put forth by Hannah Arendt. A “third research trend” is emerging in *Zainichi* Korean studies that are beginning to draw attention to the microscopic analysis of how both *Zainichi* Koreans and others discuss “ethnicity” and *Zainichi* Korean issues. This trend focuses on analyzing the discursive practices and the implications of a “new framework” to capture the diversity in *Zainichi* Koreans’ identities. Yamaguchi Ken’ichi (2011, 84-101), for instance, looks into the civic organization, Wind Sendai (*Paramu Sendai*), and argues that the construction of a “public sphere,” as put forth by John Dewey, is possible, as the organization is an example of the mutual efforts made by *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese to bridge their societies. According to Yamaguchi, the Wind Sendai aims to establish a public sphere by building “intimate relations among the individuals.” On the basis of these social bonding methods, the organization seeks to alleviate individuals’ difficulties in communicating their opinions, especially due to the practice of “spirit of harmony” (*wa no seishin*) that prevented direct expression of opinions in modern Japanese society. Another relevant study is by Seo Akwi (2012), who researched the movement against the relocation of *Zainichi* Korean schools. The movement was led by first- and second- generation *Zainichi* Korean women,

who attended a night middle school in Osaka after becoming free from their chores as wives and mothers, as their children became adults or their husbands passed away. Seo focuses on demonstrating how these *Zainichi* Korean women, who played little role in the existing *Zainichi* Korean movements, came to create an “alternative public sphere,” and became the central agents of their activities. These studies highlight the key tasks for current *Zainichi* Korean studies: refuting the ethnic fundamentalism and unilateral discursive practices embedded in the previous studies, and at the same time, generating a realistic alternative approach to capture the diversity of *Zainichi* Korean identities through specific case studies. My study is an attempt to contribute to the establishment of a “third research trend” in *Zainichi* Korean studies.

### 3. The Diaspora Approach: Redefining Their “Historicity”

Another interesting debate revolves around the diaspora approach. The diaspora approach has been used in *Zainichi* Korean studies to trace the real lives and experiences of *Zainichi* Koreans without dissociating their experiences from the broader historicity of the *Zainichi* Koreans.

As William Safran discussed,<sup>2</sup> the term diaspora was used until the 1990s in connection to the tendency of expatriate minority communities to mythicize their “homeland” and dream about their eventual return, and the subsequent tensions and confrontations between these minorities and majority populations in their society. However, this framework may seem inadequate in defining the identity of the *Zainichi* Koreans, as Safran’s definition of diaspora would align quite well to Fukuoka’s “pro-homeland”<sup>3</sup> category discussed above. In other words, ethnic fundamentalism also pervades Safran’s study, which is one reason that *Zainichi* Korean studies are seldom applying the discussions on diaspora.

Nonetheless, some important implications can be found from the diaspora approach to identify the intrinsic qualities of the “ethnicity” in *Zainichi* Korean

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2. Safran (1991, 83-84) identified the following as the six characteristics of diasporas: 1) the people have been dispersed from their original center to peripheral or foreign regions; 2) the people share “a collective memory, vision, or myth about their homeland”; 3) they believe that they cannot be “fully accepted by the host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from”; 4) they regard their “homeland” as “their true, ideal home,” where they would eventually return; 5) they believe they are “collectively committed to the maintenance or restoration” of their “homeland”; 6) “they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to their homeland in one way or another.”

3. The *Zainichi* Koreans sought to “contribute to ‘the development of their homeland’ and ‘unification of their homeland’”; “to not assimilate into Japanese society” by “maintaining their consciousness as ‘overseas Koreans’”; “to maintain the *Zainichi* Korean society” (Fukuoka and Kim Myung-soo 1997, 92).

society. For instance, Paul Gilroy (2006, 385-87), a renowned commentator in cultural studies and a prominent writer on diasporas, argued for the significance in interpreting the diaspora communities and their cultures as “non-traditional traditions”—“a tradition that is redefined ... as the living memory of the changing the same.” A cultural anthropologist, James Clifford (1998, 142), in concert with Gilroy’s view, argued that the traditions were “a network of partially connected histories, a persistently displaced and reinvented time/space of crossings.” In other words, although the “present” of diasporic communities is not separable from their history, the present is also no mere rehashing of the past. These communities’ present is continuously and gradually renewed through their constant interactions with their past.

Sonia Ryang’s study on *Zainichi* Koreans applies Gilroy and Clifford’s notion of diaspora. Ryang, for instance, introduces a personal account of a first-generation *Zainichi* Korean male in her publication, *Korean Diaspora*. He was part-time activist of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Zai-Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengokai*, *Chōsen Sōren* in Japanese; *Ch’ongryŏn* in Korean; hereafter *Ch’ongryŏn*) since the association’s founding in 1955. As he stated, through these experiences he “was able to have a vision of a glorious homeland that he had to restore in the midst of the heightening tensions during the Cold War, as a place where we [*Zainichi* Koreans] would eventually return.” However, when the Cold War was over “the clear image of the enemy disappeared” (Ryang 2005, 199). Also, looking back upon his past and his visit to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as part of the delegation of the *Ch’ongryŏn*, “Chosŏn” was, after all, nearly a foreign country to him. He came to realize that the “homeland and his eventual return to the homeland” were nothing but a “myth,” conjured up from his ideology and self-identity. Moreover, he realized that he was “stuck in the middle” where he could neither return to his homeland, nor create a new home, as “the means for the *Zainichi* Koreans to participate in Japanese civil society still remained lacking” (Ryang 2005, 202-3). To Ryang, this account was the real diaspora experience of the *Zainichi* Korean community.

As observed, Ryang applied the notion of diaspora to address the realities of *Zainichi* Koreans, in which they struggled to make sense of their traditional history through constant reflection of their past and their present lives. To borrow Clifford’s words again, the complexity of the lives of *Zainichi* Koreans could now be captured by looking at them as “routes,” and not “roots,” in their discrepant history; their historicity is observed in terms of diversity and constant changes depending on the individual experiences of the *Zainichi* Koreans, rather than conceptualizing a single and permanent historicity.

## Focusing on the *Daburu*

### 1. *Daburu*: Who Are They?

Before delving into the case studies on *daburu*, the following section seeks to explain my study's focus on this group.

To begin with the discussions on terminology, “half” (*hāfu*) refers to the people who are half-Japanese in Japan. However, considering what “half” literally means, the term contains a negative connotation. For this reason, the people born between the *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese prefer to identify themselves, and to be identified, as *daburu*, which has a more positive connotation, implying “the people with two cultural and historical backgrounds.” Yet, there are also some *daburu* who recently insist that the terms like “half” or “mixed race” should be used instead, in order to emphasize their experiences of discrimination and marginalization imposed by Japanese society. Nonetheless, I will use the term *daburu*, as the author cannot agree with the discriminative implications of the terms like “half” or “mixed race.”

Moving onto the statistical data on *daburu*, it is indeed difficult to find or estimate the total number of *daburu* in the existing statistics. However, what is clear from the relevant numerical data is that the *daburu* have already become the majority in the *Zainichi* Korean community. For instance, as observed in the “Population Trends of Japan,” conducted by Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, the records of the total number of children born between the *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese (hereafter, “total number of K-J births”) exist only after the year 1987.<sup>4</sup> The “total number of K-J births” during 1987-2013 was 153,129, which is almost twice the number of births between *Zainichi* Koreans (hereafter, “total number of K-K births”) during the same period, 79,292. Also, as the “total number of K-J births” had already reached 5,889 in 1987, almost equivalent to the “total number of K-K births” at the time, it seems reasonable to assume that the number of “K-J births” prior to 1987 would have also been considerable.

However, it should be noted that these statistics do not indicate the total aggregate population of the *daburu* born after 1987. The Japanese population, for example, includes “naturalized” *Zainichi* Koreans, and the people born between these naturalized *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese are excluded from the

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4. The number of births between *Zainichi* Korean males and Japanese females are recorded since 1985.



*daburu* population record. Also, the number of marriages between *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese is 296,484 (1955-2013), and 53.8 percent of *Zainichi* Koreans are reported to have married those with Japanese nationality, so a significant number of *daburu* should remain unrecorded in the “total number of K-J births.” The interesting phenomenon here is that while the *daburu* have already become the majority in *Zainichi* Korean society, they are also becoming the weakest minorities, the so-called “minorities within minorities.” This is mainly attributable to the fact that the existence of *daburu* themselves collides with and weaken the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans, which is based upon their perception of fixed history (“history as the roots”) and the “aggressor-victim dichotomy” narratives, discussed in the above. Put differently, the *daburu* are treated as the “troubles” in the ethnic composition of the Japanese society.

## 2. *Daburu*: Are They *Zainichi* Koreans?

The *daburu* have been a hot topic in both Japanese and *Zainichi* Korean communities. Previously, the *daburu* were clearly the targets for “double discrimination,” exclusion and marginalization by both societies. The *Zainichi* Korean community, for instance, whose identity depended on their emphasis on their Korean bloodline, treated the *daburu* as “impure.” In Japanese society, the *daburu* were discriminated against just like the “pure” *Zainichi* Koreans. However, there are some recent changes in *Zainichi* Korean society that are drawing attention to the *daburu*. As the *daburu* are becoming a majority within their society, how to assimilate them is emerging as a new subject of debate. Such changes stem from the weakening of the existing ethnic organizations, such as the *Chôngryŏn* and the Korean Resident Union in Japan (*Zai-Nihon Daikanminkoku Mindan*, hereafter *Mindan*).

Then, how could we place the *daburu* in the *Zainichi* Korean community? In order to do so, we have to find some similarities between them. However, it is needless to say that the previous criteria that distinguished *Zainichi* society, such as bloodline, nationality, and the use of their Korean names, are not applicable here. In this case, what has been proposed as an alternative is their history. Because one of the parents of a *daburu* is a *Zainichi* Korean who has been discriminated by Japanese society, a shared experience of victimhood between the *daburu* and *Zainichi* Korean society can be forged.<sup>5</sup> However, the problem is

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5. For instance, Kim Ch'ang-sŏn (2008, 62), an activist of an affiliated organization of the *Chôngryŏn*, argued that their movements should target “the greatest common ethnicity,” in order to nurture the ethnic solidarity among the third and fourth generation of *Zainichi* Koreans. And in order to do so, “the most important process is their self-reflection on their history and their

that the more the narrative victimizes one side (the *Zainichi* Koreans), the harder it is to deny the aggression caused by the other (the Japanese); torn between these two ethnic groups, the *daburu*'s position cannot but become more difficult. After all, the "aggressor-victim dichotomy" is a very nationalistic, ethnic, and bloodline/descent-oriented idea that is built upon a clear differentiation between the *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese. For this reason, the *daburu* cannot easily merge with the *Zainichi* Koreans. The *daburu* are forced to remain *daburu* even in the "shared history" narrative.

### 3. Yasuda Naoto's Historical View

My study does not aim to empirically describe the identity of the *daburu*, nor the universality or objectivity of the *daburu*'s identity. My goal is rather to question how the *daburu* express their identity against the majority's repressive and unilateral perspective and how they claim their discrepant and changing history (history as a "route") and resist the perception that their history is "rooted."

To do so, I discuss the insights incurred from a previous investigation. From 2006-08, I conducted research on the activities of Wind Society (*Paramu no Kai*), an organization established by the *daburu* to share their experiences. My research relies on interviews with relevant personnel and analysis of their regular publication materials.

Pastor Yasuda Naoto was one of the interviewees of the investigation, who conveyed his view on the "aggressor-victim dichotomy" narrative. To him, "everyone is both a aggressor and victim."<sup>6</sup> His statement suggests that regardless of the identity—whether "Japanese," "*Zainichi* Korean," or *daburu*—everyone has experiences as aggressors and victims. The context of his statement lies in his personal anecdote of when he remained a bystander when his *Zainichi* Korean friend was being bullied by others. Through this experience, his daily life as a *daburu* could never be fully explained by the "aggressor-victim dichotomy." His perspective on the dichotomy narrative, in this sense, is a manifestation of his efforts to make sense of and overcome such experiences. If we consider Yasuda's perspective only in terms of the dichotomy narrative, his conception of the *daburu* identity can be criticized as naive post-nationalist

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origin." Moreover, as many new ethnic and youth organizations affiliated with *Chôngryŏn*, such as the KorEan Youth (KEY), all focus on "history teaching" activities, historicity seems to be one of the fundamental values promoted by the organization.

6. All quotes from Yasuda's writing or interview cited in this article have been approved by Yasuda. These are Yasuda's opinions during the time of the interview.

thinking that weakens the ethnic solidarity of the *Zainichi* Koreans. It is indeed true that Yasuda's perception can blur the national boundaries that are embedded in the *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese dichotomy in the aggressor-victim narrative. However, the more important implications of Yasuda's account are in his discursive practices—his active efforts to narrate his personal experience as a *daburu* and bring up the issue of “history,” without binding his identity to either the aggressor (Japanese) or victim (*Zainichi* Korean) dichotomy. More detailed examples can be seen below:

The aggressor-victim dichotomy becomes even more problematic when it comes to the problem of liabilities. Upon my graduation from the theological school, I wrote a thesis on the Church of Christ in Japan, which was the precursor to the church I was part of, the Reformed Church in Japan. In 1939, the Korean Christian Church in Japan was forced to become part of the Church of Christ. It was like Japan's annexation of Korea. *The church members were forced to speak Japanese and give prayers in Japanese. By pointing this out, I wanted to reveal the activities of the Japanese church during the war, and how the liabilities of war still continue to this present day.*

In that sense, I cannot but admit that the organizations with which I am involved have some responsibility for the sufferings of Koreans during the colonial period. It seems complicated, but my grandmother was an ardent Christian and was part of the Korean Christian Church in Japan. In other words, both sides are in my blood. I share the responsibilities as a part of the aggressors. But, at the same time, I also have the blood from my grandmother, who was a victim of the annexation. [Laughs.] Well, this is hard to put into words really. I just think that the aggressors and victims are not easily separable in this case. (emphasis added)

This case signifies the complicated internal conflicts that an individual faces as a *daburu*—torn between the two identities. As a “pastor of the Church of Christ in Japan” on one hand, and as “the grandson of a *Zainichi* Korean Christian,” on the other, Yasuda could never take a unilateral position on the “aggressor-victim dichotomy.” Moreover, the most important aspect in his account is the word “liabilities.” As highlighted in italics above, Yasuda's account is especially insightful, as it reveals how Yasuda distinguishes the “aggressor-victim dichotomy” from the “liabilities narrative.” To elaborate, his main point on the “liabilities” is his belief in the Christian doctrine of “original sin”<sup>7</sup>—that an individual's responsibilities for war are not confined to the individual's own

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7. The original sin doctrine, as stated in Genesis of the Old Testament, refers to Adam and Eve's sin in breaking their promise to God and regards humanity in a continuous state of sin, as they are the descendants of Adam and Eve.

misdeeds, but rather extend to the war crimes and harms caused by their earlier generations. The individuals are also considered to be responsible “when they fail to inculcate any sense of guilt” (Watanabe 1997, 276-78) in Japanese society. In this regard, the harm incurred to his grandmother as “Korean Christian” inevitably became a source for guilt. During the interview, Yasuda further states that “confining the problem under Korea-Japan relations would only simplify the issue and make it difficult to solve.” What is implicit in his statement is his emphasis on the need for individuals to search for their own misdeeds and responsibilities, instead of identifying oneself with either the aggressors or victims of the dichotomy.

## The Practices of the Wind Society: The Significance of the “Descriptive Self-Expression”

### 1. Wind Society: Who Are They?

Yasuda’s account addressed in the above section “Yasuda Naoto’s Historical View” is frequently cited by other studies on *Zainichi* Koreans in Japanese academia (Kashiwazaki 2007; Kuraishi 2006). The reason that his story is widely-known is because Yasuda has been a member of a distinctive association, the Wind Society, in Higashi Kujō (the largest residence of *Zainichi* Koreans in Kyoto). As briefly mentioned above, the Wind Society was founded by Japanese and *daburu*. They were active for six years, from January 1995 to November 2001. In Korean academia, Yoon In-Jin once introduced the activities of the association by citing the research of Kashiwazaki Chikako (2007).

To elaborate, Yoon In-Jin presents the Wind Society as a model case, in which “the *daburu* began to search for ways to express their complicated and multifaceted identities, without drawing a dichotomous distinction between the Japanese and Koreans.”

[The Wind Society] promotes free discussions among the members to accommodate and nurture Koreans’ diverse identities. As a *daburu* himself, and the representative of this association, Yasuda Naoto put forth “descriptive self-expression” as a new way to express his identity, without having to choose from either a Korean or Japanese identity. ... Indeed the members of the Wind Society have sought diverse means to change their names and express their identities. *For instance, they tried to write their Korean names in Japanese characters and style, put a Japanese name after their Korean surname, or use both Korean and Japanese surnames together. ... As indicated, the Zainichi Korean society is going through a*

variety of debates on their nationalities, names, and identities. (Yoon In-Jin 2004, 186, emphasis added)

However, it should be noted that Yoon In-Jin's account of the Wind Society remains incomplete in grasping the essence of their activities. This is mainly due to his analytic focus on "ethnic identities" in observing the activities of the Wind Society. In this sense, Yoon In-Jin uses "descriptive self-expression"<sup>8</sup> here to designate the *daburu*'s efforts to explain their origin and personal relationships and to express who they are with prudent reflections, in other words, the means for a lengthy self-introduction. Such lengthy self-introductions were mainly devised to "avoid abstraction or simplification of [such complex phenomena as individual's diverse identities] into simple words" (Yasuda 1996, 9). In contrast to Yoon In-Jin's scope of analysis, however, the Wind Society did not only focus on the issues on "Korea" and ethnic identities. In practice, they actively dealt with the problems of discriminated villages and segregation of handicapped people. Therefore, the distinctiveness of the Wind Society should be observed in the broader context of their activities and their implementation process. In this larger context, a more relevant question seems to be why they adopted "descriptive self-expression" as the means for their activities. The following paragraph is from Yasuda's discussion, which provides some insights on this point:

Being unable to assimilate with either the "Zainichi Korean" or "Japanese" societies, the *daburu* could not help but feel out of place in both of these communities. And as they could not find ways to articulate this sense of incongruity, having this kind of sentiment itself became treated as something negative. ... One example is the account by Pak Ri-na (pseudonym), a member of the Wind Society. Born from a Zainichi Korean father and Japanese mother, she was a so-called "*daburu* with Japanese nationality." And I was born from a naturalized Zainichi Korean father and Japanese mother, also a "*daburu* with Japanese nationality." If we only think in the frame of *daburu*, there is little difference between us. We are both *daburu*. However, if we zoom in and trace back our origins in detail, there is a big difference. ... In this way, what we can see is that the names, such as "Zainichi Korean with Japanese nationality" or *daburu*, do not mean much in reality. The slogan, "restoring the real ethnic names," does not necessarily help in finding their "real names," nor does it mean restoring their ethnicity in reality.<sup>9</sup>

8. Yoon In-Jin used the term "depictive self-expression"; however, I use Yasuda's "descriptive self-expression."

9. "Pak Ri-na" is a pseudonym I used to replace her real name. Although the cited paragraph is found in Yasuda's account, the pseudonym is used to protect her personal information at her request.

This association was organized to support the *daburu* who were alienated from both “*Zainichi* Korean” and “Japanese” groups. However, both Yasuda and Pak Ri-na could never settle with the *daburu* category, as they strongly believed that the act of designation or categorization itself is an act of abuse or violence, which should not be repeated. Most importantly, they found that unlike the ethnic categories that tend to divide people into specific groups, the differences among people cannot be fully accounted for simply by their ethnicity or nationality. In other words, they perceived that the “boundaries” used to define people are always in flux and should remain flexible. In this respect, “descriptive self-expression” was a practice used by the Wind Society to prevent their debates from developing any definitive terms and/or categories. To clarify, “descriptive self-expression” can be observed in this broader context of the Wind Society’s overarching philosophy and goals, unlike Yoon In-Jin’s scope of analysis on the discursive practice of describing the identities of the *daburu*.

## 2. The Debate on the Practices/Principles of the Wind Society

In a narrow sense, the Wind Society pursued “descriptive self-expression” as their discursive practice in order to bring their previously isolated and fragmented members into active “dialogues” with others.

According to Kuraishi Ichirō (2006), the members were quite successful in building intimate relationships with each other, on which they could base diverse dialogues “that did not converge into a single description.” Unlike Kuraishi’s evaluation, however, it seemed that many people outside of the association questioned the Wind Society’s practice itself. How were these “dialogues” possible and implemented when there were so many different opinions among the members? What was the significance of their discursive practice? To address the question, the debate between Yamane Toshihiko and Yasuda Naoto, which appeared in the Wind Society’s publication, *The News of the Wind* (*Kaze no tayori*) (Numbers 1-3 in the reissued versions), will be examined here.

### (1) *The Debate on “Ethnic Names* (Minzokumei)”

Although the conflict surrounding the use of “ethnic names” was one of the principle pillars of the debate on the identities of *Zainichi* Koreans, it was also significant as the means of “identity politics” for the *Zainichi* Koreans. My study defines “identity politics” as the “political activities of a group that shares a specific identity, which aim to protect the lives of their members and make changes to any disadvantages inflicted on the group.” As mentioned before, the

practice of using their “ethnic names” was one of the traditional and defining features of *Zainichi* Korean society. Their ethnic names were significant, because it was one of the means by which they expressed their ethnic origin and to establish themselves as a heterogeneous group in Japanese society, which was a form of identity politics. Returning to Yasuda’s account, his perspective raised direct objections to such identity politics. To elaborate this point, we should observe how and why Yasuda began to use his Japanese style name, “Yasuda,” in the first place (“Yasuda” is the modified expression of the Korean surname “Ahn” in Japanese style and pronunciation):<sup>10</sup>

[N1: The Reasons for Using “Yasuda” as a Surname]

(Hereafter, N refers to Yasuda’s account; T to Yamane’s)

I have been using the name Yasuda with a specific meaning in mind. When my parents got divorced, my mother did not return to using her maiden name, and instead kept Yasuda as her surname. She did it because she wanted to remind me that my father’s surname was “Ahn.” In order to keep her thoughts alive, I use the name Yasuda. And I explain this all the time and everywhere. I tell people where my name comes from, and I emphasize that although the name is derived from the ethnic Korean name “Ahn,” the name also reflects my mother’s heart, who wanted her son to embrace his origins as part *Zainichi* Korean. So, when there are some Koreans who argue that not declaring the surname “Ahn” is not nationalistic or patriotic enough, I outwardly say “no” and refute this perspective. Instead, I ask back, “I am using the name Yasuda with much consideration. How much thought have you put into using your ethnic Korean names?” (Yasuda 2000a, 18)

To elaborate, Yasuda’s father was also a pastor in a Japanese church, but during his father’s time, one had to be naturalized as a Japanese citizen first, in order to become a pastor. After naturalization, his father tried to hide the fact that he was a *Zainichi* Korean until his marriage, and continued to feel ashamed of his ethnic origin even after the marriage. In this context, Yasuda treasured his mother’s efforts to keep his father’s surname (the Korean name in Japanese style) and encourage Yasuda to embrace the fact that his father was a *Zainichi* Korean. Moreover, by using “Yasuda,” he wants to refute the ways in which the *Zainichi* Korean community considers using Japanese names as equivalent to outright “acculturation” (abandoning or betraying one’s origin). Although Yamane empathizes with this perspective, he argues that Yasuda should still use the

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10. To clarify, this is different from using ethnic Korean surnames, as the name is pronounced and written in Japanese style. While ethnic Korean surnames, such as “Ahn,” easily reveal the difference in their ethnic origin, the ethnic names written and pronounced in Japanese style, like “Yasuda,” resemble other Japanese names, blurring the ethnic identity they express.

ethnic Korean name, “Ahn:”

[T1: The Names Should Reflect Their Ethnic Origin]

I understand that by using his father’s Japanese name, “Yasuda,” Yasuda intended to treasure and demonstrate how his mother never sidestepped from the issue. Nevertheless I still think that it would be better if he can restore his father’s Korean name, “Ahn,” which he had to give up due to the exclusionary policies of the Japanese church. ... Although Yasuda argues that he can express himself through the practice of long introductions, a.k.a. descriptive self-expression, the people who have no chance to come across Yasuda’s description are more likely to recognize him as “Japanese” or even “*Zainichi* Korean” who uses the Japanese name to hide his ethnic origin. I assume that Yasuda would refute this by pointing out that such dichotomous thinking itself is problematic. However, I still think that such dichotomous thinking can be overcome only when we use names that reflect our “ethnicity” (or anything else that represents our origin) in the first place. I think it is important that we use the family name, or at least the middle name, that can in some way reflect our ethnic origin. (Yamane 2000, 8)

In other words, Yamane finds that the right way for Yasuda to honor his mother’s thoughts would be to reveal his ethnic origin. However, it should be noted that Yamane’s perspective is not equivalent to those who treat the use of Japanese names as an act of acculturation to Japanese society. Instead, what Yamane is trying to convey is that in order for “descriptive self-expression” to be possible and widely used, the *Zainichi* Koreans must first be established as a minority, or “heterogeneous others,” in Japanese society. In other words, to Yamane, the essence of *Zainichi* Korean identity is not only embedded in their names, but also in a broader context of their “rooted” history. He wants Yasuda to first become self-aware of himself as “a part or agent of a collective movement.”

In response to Yamane’s statements, Yasuda was quite offended that Yamane was interfering in his life and the personal choices he made:

[N2: Why Should Ethnicity Prevail over Individual Lives?]

I have come across such critiques many times. But every time, I still get deeply distressed and angry. I do not understand why ethnicity should prevail over individual lives. Do I not have the right to self-determine what to inherit from my parents? ... It is outrageous that I may be recognized only as a “*Zainichi* Korean” using a Japanese name to hide my ethnic origin.

There is no one around me, no colleagues, no friends, no family members, who do not know that I have Korean lineage. Is it so important to disclose my ethnic origin to the people with which I have no relations? (Yasuda 2000b, 16)

Here, Yasuda is criticizing Yamane’s perspective that values “ethnicity” over



“individual lives” and treats “descriptive self-expression” as a mere ideology. In response, Yamane tries to clarify his point that, according to his experience as a teacher, it would be illogical to expect the Japanese public education system to establish “real name declaration (*minzokumei o yobi nanoru*)”<sup>11</sup> as part of their agenda, as the *Zainichi* Koreans used the practice. Instead, the decisions on what name to use should be a matter for the students to decide on their own. In this regard, Yamane also finds that “descriptive self-expression” can be useful for students in making their decisions. There is little difference between Yamane and Yasuda on this point.

Nonetheless, the main reason that Yasuda strongly opposes Yamane lies in the differences in their perceptions of the historicity of *Zainichi* Koreans. In other words, Yasuda emphasizes that their history is not a subject of rigid conformity among *Zainichi* Koreans, but changes and diversifies depending on the individuals’ experiences and relations with others (including their relations with other Japanese people).

Yasuda also criticizes Yamane’s “attitude” in discussing the use of names:

[N3: Should Not Yamane Also Share His Story?]

If Yamane is to intrude on my personal life and question my decision to use “Yasuda” as my name, he should also share his story. ... If he wants to talk about this issue on a personal level, he should speak about his life with his children who bear double identities as Japanese and Korean. In other words, how is he trying to convey that he is “Japanese” to his children? It would be nice if he can talk about his name Toshihiko or his relations with his children. (Yasuda 2000b, 16)

There seems to be a gap between Yamane and Yasuda’s point of discussion. Yamane evaluates Yasuda’s perspective and activities in a broader context of *Zainichi* Koreans and *daburu* in Japanese society, while Yasuda focuses on engaging Yamane in personal dialogue. Yasuda asks Yamane to engage in the practice of “descriptive self-expression” where Yamane can talk about his story as a parent of *daburu* children. According to Yasuda, the encounters between Japanese and *Zainichi* Koreans, and between *daburu* and non-*daburu*, tend to be entrapped in one-sided, asymmetric relations, where the weak side speaks of their opinions unilaterally, without engaging in conversation with their counterparts. In order to halt such practices, Yasuda finds “descriptive self-

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11. The National Association for Research in the Education of Korean Residents in Japan (*Zenkoku Zainichi Kankokujin Kyōiku Kenkyū Kyōgikai*, accessed September 9, 2015, [http://www.zengaikyō.org/?page\\_id=5](http://www.zengaikyō.org/?page_id=5)) put forth three goals: 1) “to overcome Japanese children’s distorted view of Korea; 2) “real name declaration”—to use their ethnic names; 3) “to abolish the discrimination against foreigners to secure their career paths” in Japanese society.

expression” to be an indispensable process. This is Yasuda’s critique of the attitude of those who resist such a process and his suggestion to bring them into open discussions.

(2) *The “Real Name Declaration” Movement and the “Right to Self-Determine Names”*

Yasuda also criticizes the use of “real name declaration” as the slogan and goal of *Zainichi* Koreans in the Japanese public education system:

[N4: The Right to Self-Determine Their Names]

As the slogan “real name declaration” implies, the movement symbolizes the efforts to protect and nurture *Zainichi* Korean’s right to self-determine their names, the ability to decide which names will be used in family, society, culture, and many other aspects. In this respect, I want to propose [to the National Association for Research in the Education of Korean Residents in Japan (*Zenkoku Zainichi Kankokujin Kyōiku Kenkyū Kyōgikai*)] to expand and change the scope of their slogan, from “real name declaration,” to something like “protecting and nurturing the right to self-determine names.” (Yasuda, 1999, 13)<sup>12</sup>

Of course, Yasuda is not denying the practice of using Korean names. Instead, he is criticizing the rigid and determinative aspect of the movement, which is based on a questionable conviction that the use of Korean names will help free the children from their identity crisis, and build their identity as *Zainichi* Korean. This idea became established as one of the essential components of the movement. Although Yamane agrees with Yasuda’s point, Yamane opposes Yasuda’s proposal to place “the right to self-determine their names” as a new slogan:

[T2: Difficulties Persist in Living with Their Ethnic Names]

In principle, the “real name declaration” movement should not be contradictory to “the right to self-determination.” However, I do not agree with changing the slogan at this time. It would be premature, for a social environment that allows us to make decisions freely is still lacking. If we argue for “the right to self-determine” at this time, our current efforts to set the right social conditions will be hindered. (Yamane 2000, 9)

As a teacher responsible for the education of *Zainichi* Koreans in Japanese public schools, Yamane has experienced “many instances where ethnicity

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12. Yasuda and Yamane use the phrase “real names” instead of “ethnic names.” What can be observed here is that the social movements and education system of *Zainichi* Korean society considered the use of their ethnic names as “common sense.”

becomes a negative factor in building the students' identities in the community." Therefore, a statement like the following has a great impact in the school community: "The students themselves want to hide their ethnicity; the parents of the students want to use Japanese names; therefore, it would be strange for the school to recommend that they use their Korean names; it would be infringing on their human rights" (Yamane 2000, 9). In this context, promoting "the right to self-determine" at that time would have contradicted the previous efforts to oppose discrimination and restore their ethnic identity. In other words, although Yamane does not find the claim for "self-determination" wrong, it is premature in his perspective.

Yasuda continues to rebut Yamane, as the following excerpt illustrates:

[N5: Another Rebut against the "Real Name Declaration" Movement]  
 [Yamane] finds the right to self-determination inadequate because using their "real names" may allow people to evade further efforts [to oppose discrimination and restore their ethnic identity]. [...Yet] it is frightening if Yamane assumes that people must have automatically and unconsciously been using their "real names" simply because there is a system in which an individual can evade any further efforts by doing such. ... Yamane's opinion is unjust in the sense that he underestimates the observations by the teachers who saw how children still self-determined their names under the "real name declaration" slogan, regardless of the possibility of evading the practice of using their "real names." What are we to make of the on-site observations by the teachers, who have stood against the practices of the school system, and continued to stay in contact with those children? On the question of their "real names," there must be some hesitation for the children as they are influenced by their relations with their family and loved ones. Couldn't they have already made their decisions under these circumstances? In this regard, the argument that the right to self-determine is correct but may lead children to evade the practice of using their "real names," is only pulling apart what the children have achieved so far. (Yasuda 2000b, 18)

These remarks by Yasuda are sarcastic and provocative. Yet, Yasuda is not arguing that the *Zainichi* Korean children are pursuing the "real name declaration" movement "automatically and unconsciously," without self-determination. Yasuda is well aware of how the children develop and determine their identities through their close relationships with the teachers, regardless of the slogan for "real name declaration." On the basis of this observation, Yasuda's point is that the education policy to foster the students' identities with the slogan "real name declaration" is merely an unrealistic ideology.

### 3. Observation on the Essence of “Identity Politics”

The back-and-forth discussion between Yasuda and Yamane may seem at first to be an active dialogue between the two. However, in an interview with me, Yasuda recollected the following: “Yamane was talking about the movement, while I was only sharing my thoughts. I feel that our discussions ended without ever becoming a real dialogue.”

Put differently, Yamane does not address Yasuda’s account as it is, a personal story using “descriptive self-expression.” Rather, Yamane’s main focus is directed to conceptualizing the practice of “descriptive self-expression” as a movement. As mentioned above, the initial purpose of “descriptive self-expression” was not to define distinctive ethnic categories. Instead, it began as a “style” or “writing practice” among the individuals accounting their stories. However, as the activities of the Wind Society became prominent, “descriptive self-expression” gradually evolved into a “campaign” among the members without their knowing. In other words, “descriptive self-expression” came to be considered a key “movement” pursued by the *daburu* in the Wind Society.

Moreover, as described above, Yasuda and Yamane’s views diverged on the “real name declaration” movement. On the one hand, Yamane points out the difficulties for *Zainichi* Koreans to declare their ethnicity in Japanese society. Therefore, in order to first provide an environment that can support such activities in the Japanese education system, Yamane opposes the slogan that emphasizes “the right to self-determination.” In other words, Yamane finds that the slogan, “real name declaration,” is directed not only to the individual *Zainichi* Korean students, but also to the *Zainichi* Korean people as a whole, conveying a collective message on the discrimination they face. On the other hand, Yasuda’s argument for “self-determination” can be interpreted as his way of criticizing Yamane’s ethnic, collective thinking that is prevalent in the schools. Instead, Yasuda emphasizes the need to curtail the discussion to the level of “education purposes for individual students.”

Yasuda does not make an outright rebuttal to Yamane’s point that “many difficulties persist for *Zainichi* Koreans who live with their ethnic names.” In this regard, Yasuda may seem to be underestimating the problems faced by *Zainichi* Koreans in Japanese society. However, Yasuda does not respond to this point because their approaches to “descriptive self-expression” and “right to self-determination” vary in the first place and therefore it is impossible for them to discuss with each other. Yasuda interprets “descriptive self-expression” and “the right to self-determination” as a matter of style or writing practice to facilitate

dialogues among individuals without becoming fixated on a specific ethnic identity. In contrast, Yamane discusses them in the context of a collective ethnic “movement.”

The original purpose of “descriptive self-expression” was to enable conversations and relationships that were free from any rigid categorization of identities. Accordingly, the main point of Yasuda’s account lies in his efforts to reignite dialogue among the individuals, which had come to a halt due to addressing of “descriptive self-expression” as a “movement” by a specific ethnic group. This can be easily seen in [N4] and [N5] above. Yasuda’s perspective, however, is not a criticism against the existing movements, but rather a critique of the tendency to underestimate the on-site observations of the real practices, as observed in Yamane’s case. In the process, Yasuda seeks to engage in active dialogue with Yamane to encourage him to look deep into himself to come across new findings that had remained hidden under his rigid conception and categorization of identity. Put differently, Yasuda is questioning whether Yamane’s own practice of “self-determination” of his identity occurred in the midst of his teaching activities. Yamane’s criticism of Yasuda’s argument for “self-determination” would then be cast back on Yamane himself, and self-introspection would be inevitable for Yamane. Yasuda is trying to urge Yamane to free himself from his role as a “representative” of a rigid identity, and to restore his personal relationships and communication with his students. In the process, Yasuda encourages Yamane to reflect on the meaning of the “real name declaration.”

These discussions highlight both the possibilities and obstacles in changing *Zainichi* Koreans’ fixed perception of their identity to one that is more open to interpretation. As Stuart Hall (2014, 91) states, our conception of identity should not be denied outright, but rather evaluated as having “played a critical role in all the post-colonial struggles which have so profoundly reshaped our world.” It is indeed a complicated process as both perceptions of the historicity of the *Zainichi* Koreans (the essentialist conception that their historicity is permanent and fixed and the opposing idea that history is discontinuous and variable) reflect the “reality” of the group. Hall also mentions that the identities are shaped by the interaction of two forces, the vector of similarity and continuity and the vector of difference and rupture that operate simultaneously in a dialogic relationship. Overall, “descriptive self-expression” is devised to facilitate such a process by becoming the site or “node” between these two vectors.

## Conclusion: The Role of *Zainichi* Korean Identity Studies

As a reflection on the discussions above, I would like to conclude by addressing the implications of Yasuda Naoto's account and the discursive practices of the Wind Society on the studies on *Zainichi* Koreans and their society.

First of all, my study finds that Yasuda's account of "liabilities" plays no positive role in the efforts to classify the identities of the *daburu*. Instead, the account reflects the attempts to reveal the pressures imposed on individuals (*daburu*) to become representative of people with "plural identities." In other words, such efforts stem from the desire to criticize the exclusionary aspects of ethnic fundamentalism. The risk of developing a discourse that emphasizes their experiences as victims is that the discourse cannot become influential in Japan as long as they are discriminated and excluded by Japanese society. In practice it would be ineffective, for conflicting views seek to invalidate such aggressor-victim relations. Yasuda's account, however, seeks to overcome the "aggressor-victim dichotomy" and propose a way for *Zainichi* Koreans, who cannot discuss their history, to engage in dialogue with others without discarding their history problems.

Second, the debate on the practices and activities of the Wind Society has implications for finding new similarities among the *daburu*. Simply put, Yasuda's argument can be interpreted as an effort to transform the "intrinsic value" of their identity by changing the perception of their history from invariable and "rooted" to a more subjective and relational approach to history—history as a "route." I do not deny the innumerable damages incurred from Japanese imperialism on the lives of Koreans. Also, I do not seek to refute the efforts by the historians who sought to empirically reveal the actual damages. However, I find it also indispensable for us to observe "history" by looking at how individuals undergo their experiences, how they share these experiences with others through communication, and how their practices in their daily lives all come to reveal important aspects of the history. The significance of studies on the identity of *Zainichi* Koreans lies here.

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