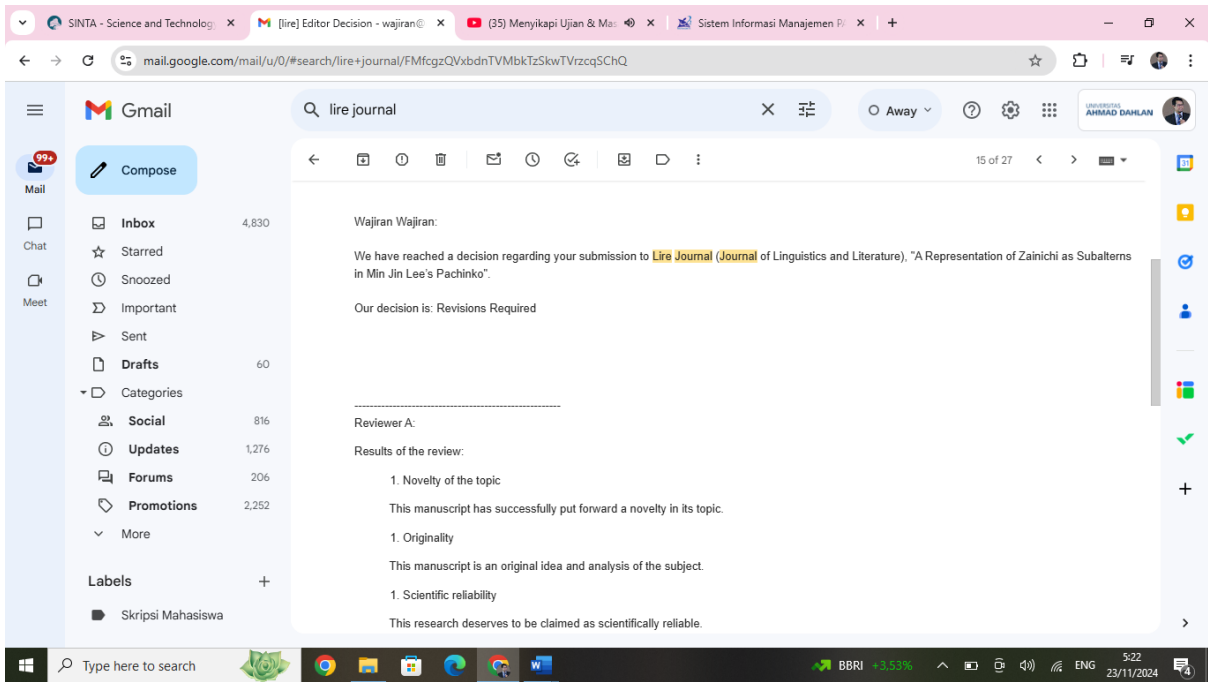
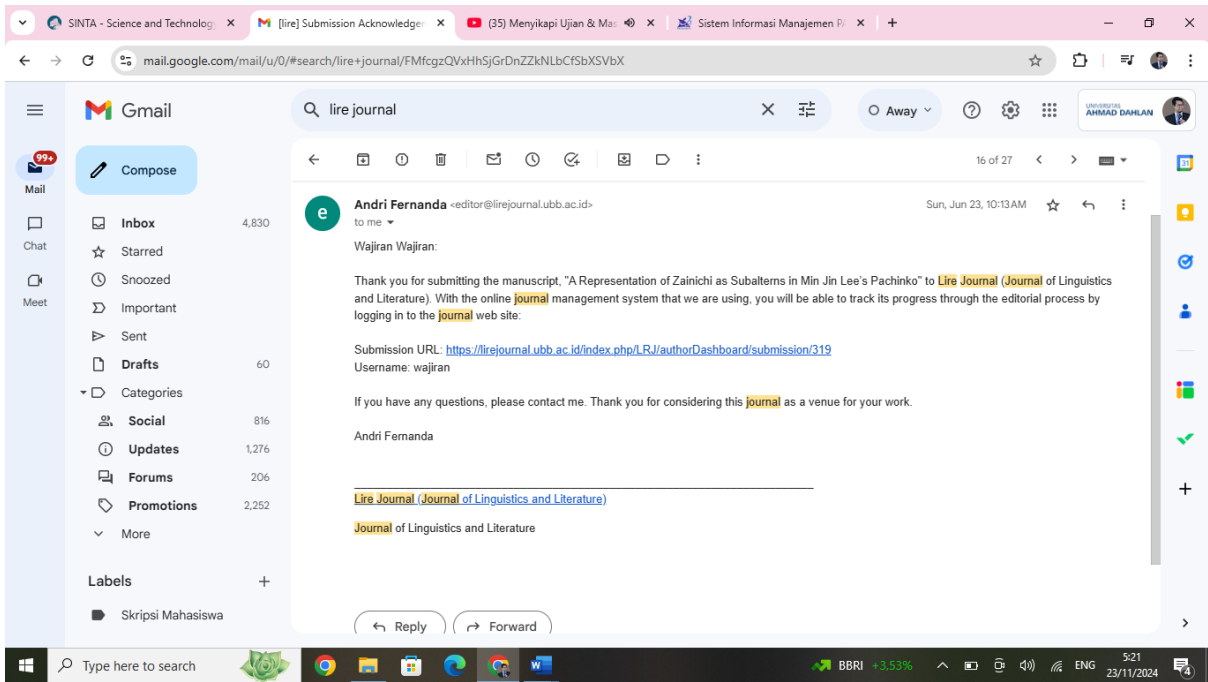


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## A Representation of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*: Postcolonial Studies

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the representation of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*. The subject of the subalterns is the Korean diaspora, who are struggling against oppression, marginalization, and discrimination in Japanese society. The researcher uses descriptive and qualitative research methods, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern theory has been applied to the selected text. The data will be taken from many aspects such as dialogues, depiction of the situation or event, characters, etc. This study analysed two problems: (1) How is the representation of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*? (2) How is the subaltern resisting the impact of subalternity in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*? First, the results of this study reveal that the form of discrimination and marginalization experienced by *Zainichi* are indicative of the existence of subalternity in Japan, which was represented in the *Pachinko* written by Min Jin Lee. Secondly, this research reveals that hybridity and ethical politics became *Zainichi*'s way of speaking out as a form of resistance to subalternity. Moreover, the Korean diaspora and their descendants represented the subalterns in *Pachinko*. At the same time, women are considered inferior to men and people who have ideologies and beliefs that are different from Japanese ideology. This study is fascinating because subaltern issues exist long after the postcolonial period.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Japan is known for being a homogeneous country, but the reality is more complex. Besides the indigenous ethnic groups, there are ethnic minorities in Japan, commonly called *Zainichi*. The term *Zainichi* directly translates to "foreign resident" in Japanese. The emergence of this community can be traced back to Japan's colonialist and imperialist history, which subsequently became entangled with the complex relationship between Japan and Korea following Korea's independence from Japan (Tablizo, 2022). Japanese colonization and cultural assimilation policies negatively impacted Korean society. A practice of oppression carried out by the Japanese forced many Koreans to work in Japan as *Zainichi*. This resulted in the massive migration of Koreans to Japan. Based on the journal *The Yale Review of International Studies* (YRIS) with the title "The Evolving *Zainichi* Identity and Multicultural Society in Japan," Chae explained that during the China-Japan War in 1937, Japan exploited about 700,000 Koreans by bringing them to Japan as



factory workers, miners, and military servants (Zaheer, 2023). Later in 1945, the population of *Zainichi* in Japan increased to 2 million people. However, when World War II ended with the defeat of Japan, many of the *Zainichi* chose to return to the Korean peninsula. Then leaving about 600,000 *Zainichi* remained in Japan (Chae, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Japan, ethnic Koreans constitute a significant minority group, with approximately 850,000 individuals identifying themselves as ethnically Korean as of 2014 (Tetsuo, 2018). It is certainly not easy for a *Zainichi* to survive in Japanese hegemony. Besides, the long history between Korea and Japan has led to negative stereotypes in Japanese society towards *Zainichi* (Jackie, 2023). Moreover, today, in the 20th-century era, *Zainichi* still faces various marginalization, social discrimination, and oppression. Quoting from 'Public Book' a digital essay "Between Coldness and Adoration: *Zainichi* Korean's Experience in Japan" written by Natsu Shirotori and published by NEUT in 2022, illustrates how *Zainichi* lives in the modern era. Natsu interviews a *Zainichi* young lady named Shin. Shin explains how painful it is to be a *Zainichi* in Japan (Christopher, 2022). She must hide her *Zainichi* identity by changing her Korean name, "Shin," to her Japanese name, "Aoyama." In addition, Shin also experiences racism and verbal humiliation when using the Korean language in public places. Although Shin was born and raised in Japan, due to her *Zainichi* blood, she still has no right to vote in Japan's political agenda. This shows the restriction of *Zainichi's* access to the Japanese government (Shirotori, 2023).

All of the forms of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination that *Zainichi* experiences are indicative of the existence of subalternity in Japan. Therefore, the concept of "Subaltern" was initially used by Gramsci. The Italian Marxist and political activist Antonio Gramsci is well-known for coining the term "subaltern," meaning 'of inferior rank' (Jones, 1957; Timothy, D., 2017; Wajiran, 2013). Subaltern classes refer to groups in a society subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. They may include peasants, workers, and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic power'. Since the history of the ruling classes is realized in the state, history is the history of states and dominant groups.... (Bill et al., 2000; Gane, 2005).

Through Gramsci's ideas, Gayatri Spivak developed this idea of the Subaltern through her great essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She "reconsidered the problems of subalternity within new historical developments as brought by capitalistic politics of undermining revolutionary voices and divisions of labour in a globalized world" (Louai, 2012; Spivak, 1988). The theory developed by Spivak reveals that in a society, there are classes. There is an upper class called the Elite and a lower class called the *Subaltern*. Subaltern societies are the people who do not get the attention of the colonialists and also cannot enter the elite class. They are who are isolated and marginalized (Čerče, 2023; Wajiran, 2013). They might match the ranks of their efforts to earn respect and recognition accorded by the Elite. These are the postcolonial objects (Winda et al., 2018).

As Stephen Morton said in his book, Spivak's exploration of 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern' highlights the transformative potential of literature in amplifying the voices and histories of subaltern women. By offering an alternative rhetorical site, literary texts are a powerful tool for challenging hegemonic narratives and fostering a more inclusive understanding of the



subaltern experience (Morton, 2004; Wajiran, 2019). This is related to the current research, which will examine the representation of *Zainichi* as a subaltern depicted in *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee.

The selection of *Pachinko* as the research object is based on several factors: It portrays the *Zainichi* community as a subaltern, a marginalized group amidst the dominance of Japanese hegemonic power. As known as a Korean-American writer, Lee conveys her anxiety about the historical relationship between Japan and Korea and *Zainichi* in Japan, who still experiences a lot of legal and social discrimination. Lee conducted extensive research and direct interviews with third-, fourth---, and fifth-generation *individuals* living in Japan. The completion of this remarkable novel took Lee 30 years (Xidong, 2023). So *Pachinko* becomes a historical fiction novel that captures the essence of an era. The choice of the novel's title is intriguing, as it derives from the name of a widely popular Japanese gambling game notorious for its association with a bad industry. The business of *Pachinko* flourishes in impoverished areas of Japan and is often run by immigrants, including the *Zainichi* community. *Pachinko* has a historical background of the Second World War, where Japan colonized several Asian countries, including the Korean peninsula. *Pachinko* tells the story of the struggles of a female protagonist named Sunja and her family, who are forced to migrate to Japan. Due to the Korean economic crisis, Japan has become a dream country for many Koreans to survive. Unfortunately, Japan is not as beautiful as they imagined. Sunja and her family had to live in a marginalized slum area, which is an area of immigrants and low-class people in Japan. This novel tells the story of a Korean family living in Japan for the fourth generation. In *Pachinko*, Lee presents the characters through the *Zainichi* family facing discrimination and marginalization in economic, social, and political barriers that limit their opportunities for prosperity and equality. Furthermore, Sunja, as a *Zainichi* woman, experiences subordination in Japanese hegemonic society and her Korean ethnic group. Spivak's statement regarding the position of subaltern women "If, in the context of colonial production", Spivak asserts, "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow" (Spivak, 1988: 287).

In addition, several researchers have conducted relevant research before this research, as well as related researchers whom researchers take as references. First, the journal of EUFONI of Universitas Kristen Indonesia, "Diskriminasi Jepang Terhadap *Zainichi* Korea Dalam Novel *Pachinko* Karya Min Jin Lee," elaborates on the forms of racial discrimination experienced by *Zainichi* Korea as a diaspora community in Japan. The results of this study found that there were three forms of discrimination experienced by *Zainichi*: verbal discrimination, avoidance by Japanese people against *Zainichi*, and exile or separation of *Zainichi's* life from Japanese people. All these acts of discrimination have an impact on the problem of the loss of Korean *Zainichi* cultural identity (Felia, Aditya S. Meliala & Mike, 2021).

Second, Ilham Khechab's dissertation, "Korean Women's Status under patriarchy in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*," discusses the status of women in a patriarchal society in Japan. Using feminist concepts and theories, it tries to examine how a *Zainichi* diaspora woman struggles in the face of colonialism and the Japanese practice of prostitution. This thesis is almost the same as Yangji, who analyzes



the novel dealing with the practice of prostitution or what is called comfort women (Khechab, 2021; Yangji & Yang, 2024).

Third, referring to one of the UGM journals entitled "*Antara Zainichi dan Pachinko: Represents Zainichi Korea dalam Novel Pachinko Karya Min Jin Lee*" describes the Korean *Zainichi* group in Japan who experience racial discrimination, which causes them to experience an identity crisis, as well as the relation of *Pachinko* business that developed at the time. The conclusion from this study is that the first generation in this *Pachinko* novel chose to uphold their nationalist identity by maintaining Korean cultural values even though they had to be discriminated against in Japan. The second generation depicts one of the *Zainichi* who chooses to naturalize and hide his true identity to mingle with other Japanese society. At the same time, the third generation in the novel depicts an individualist *Zainichi* who is more open about their identity (Febriani et al., 2019).

The related studies above discuss the diaspora, feminism, and discrimination based on the *Panchiko*, but there are still gaps. This novel has yet to be researched with subaltern studies or the Spivak theory, whereas the postcolonial theory is closely related to the study of subalternity. Hence, the researcher sees the gap as an opportunity to cover what was lacking from previous research and become a reference for future use.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research method

This study employs a unique qualitative descriptive method approach to delve into the representation of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*. Unlike quantitative research, which produces numerical data, qualitative research generates descriptive data in written or spoken words. In this case, the method used is qualitative descriptive, as the data is in the form of quotations, dialogues, and descriptions from the novel, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the subaltern representation.

### 2.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data source in this study is mainly the novel *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee in the form of words, sentences, narration, and so forth. The supporting data is from secondary sources such as books, undergraduate theses, journals, and articles on the internet that talk about subalternity, postcolonialism, and all the information related to the topic. Furthermore, in analysing the research data, the researcher applies the postcolonial theory of the subaltern concept that Gayatri Spivak develops. This theory will analyse the experience of oppression and subalternity represented by the characters of the Korean diaspora.

The steps used in analysing the data are as follows: (1) The researcher reads the novel several times. (2) taking notes as data from the novel for all the critical statements, words, or sentences related to the research. (3) Identifying and analysing the data so that the researcher could make an exemplary arrangement of literary work. (4) The researcher describes how subaltern representation



in the novel is depicted as discrimination, marginalization, or oppression, limiting subaltern access to voice amid elite domination based on analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To make this point understandable, this study depicts the representation of the subaltern subject that will be represented by some of the *Zainichi* characters in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* based on the postcolonialism theory of Subaltern. The novel highlights the core of the Korean diaspora in Japan called *Zainichi* who, despite experiencing a form of discrimination, oppression, and marginalization that indicated the practice of subalternity, demonstrate remarkable resilience. *Pachinko* takes the background of the Japanese colonial period in Korea which resulted in political tensions and an economic crisis. The Japanese took a lot of Korean property and brought young Koreans to work as forced labourers. As a result, poverty and hunger are inevitable in the Korean peninsula. Due to the crisis, many Koreans migrate to Japan to get a better life. Including Sunja and her Family, the main character of the novel. In a foreign land, they live on the margins because of their ethnic identities. The stigma and bad stereotypes of Japanese society towards *Zainichi* have impacted the limited access for *Zainichi* to find a good place to live, work, and get an education. There is no place for the *Zainichi* in Japan, the option for them is always the worst. *Zainichi* can only live in the slums as inferior, work as peasants and poor labourers, or do other illegal jobs such as Pachinko (gambling Parlors). There is no better option for them.

The phenomenon of subalternity continues into the next generation of *Zainichi*. Although they were born and raised in Japan, they still experience discrimination and marginalization and are considered inferior. They can speak but their voice cannot be heard. The character of Solomon, a third generation of *Zainichi*, tries to relinquish his status as a subaltern by practicing ethical politics. As an academic with an American degree, he represents his ethnic group to get out of the stigma and bad stereotypes in Japan. Unfortunately, his efforts are useless, his voice fades again under the power of Elites. Moreover, women as Subalterns get the double label of marginalization. It is represented by Sunja and Kyunghee as woman characters in the novel. They live in oppression and are considered weak because of their ethnic and gender status (Wajiran, 2020). Here, the researcher will describe how represented of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in *Pachinko*.

#### 3.1. Discrimination

Japan colonized Korea for a long period of time. The occupation began in 1910 and lasted until 1945. During those 35 years, Japan ruled Korea with harsh colonial rule, destroying the Korean political system and culture and imposing policies that were detrimental to the Korean people. The existence of Japan's colonization shows that Japan is superior to Korea. That is the reason why Koreans experience discrimination, marginalization, and oppression, which makes them become a subaltern group. This historical context is crucial to understanding the discrimination the *Zainichi* characters face in *Pachinko*.

##### 1. Verbal Abuse





Min Jin Lee illustrated *Zainichi* Koreans experiencing social discrimination by the Japanese due to ethnic and cultural differences. Japan thought every Korean is weak, stupid, poor, and dirty. It is portrayed through Sunja, who experiences verbal abuse by Japanese teenagers because she cannot speak Japanese.

Japanese boys said:

"What? I don't understand you, you stupid Korean. Why can't you speak Japanese? All of the Emperor's loyal subjects are supposed to know how to speak Japanese! Aren't you a loyal subject?" (Lee, 2017)

The quote portrays the verbal abuse that Sunja receives due to her inability to speak Japanese. Japanese society regards this as ignorance, and it perceives itself as superior. In the case above, it is explained that Sunja is a subaltern due to cultural and ideological differences. Japan did impose its ideology on the Korean people.

## 2. Stereotype

Negative stereotypes resulted in *Zainichi* experiencing discrimination and marginalization in education and employment. Almost all of *Zainichi* have experienced bullying at school, including Noa, whose classmates shunned him. Even his teacher told him to sit at the back of the class. The discrimination led to an identity crisis in Noa's figure. He felt ashamed of his ethnic identity. So, he changed his name and chose to assimilate into Japanese. This is seen in the dialog with Sunja when Noa finds out that his biological father was Hansu (Korean-Yakuza) instead of pastor Baek Isak.

"..... I will never be able to wash this dirt from my name. You can't be very bright," he said. "How can you make something clean from something dirty? And now, you have made me dirty," Noa said quietly as if he was learning this as he was saying it to her. "All my life, I have had Japanese telling me that my blood is Korean—that Koreans are angry, violent, cunning, and deceitful criminals. All my life, I had to endure this. I tried to be as honest and humble as Baek Isak was; I never raised my voice. But this blood- my blood is Korean- and now I have learned that my blood is yakuza blood. I can never change this, no matter what I do. It would have been better if I had never been born. How could you have ruined my life? How could you be so imprudent? A foolish mother and a criminal father. I am cursed." (Lee, 2017: 275)

Based on that, Noa's mindset is shaped by the surrounding environment. He perceives himself in the same way that stereotypical Japanese people view Koreans. When compared to Gayatri's theory, Noa, as a subaltern, has lost because he is unable to uphold his identity and conforms to the discourse of hegemony.

On the other hand, this negative stereotype makes it difficult for *Zainichi* to find work because Japanese people are unwilling to hire them. As a result, they can only work at illegal and dirty businesses such as Yakuza groups, gambling, Pachinko, and other low-paying jobs. This is depicted through Noa and Mozasu, who works at Pachinko, which is then continued by Solomon (Sunja's grandson) as a family business as well as Yoseb, who is Sunja's brother-in-law, who works



as a factory foreman but is paid less than a Japanese foreman. As the author explains in the following quote:

Although his head was full of arguments, Yoseb could not speak. He was working two full-time jobs—managing two factories for Shimamura-san, who paid him half the salary of one Japanese foreman. (Lee, 2017: 156)

From the quote above, we can conclude that negative stereotypes of *Zainichi* limit them from getting a better job. As a result, Korean *Zainichi* can only work in jobs that Japan considers despicable. Such as in gambling and Pachinko. Lee as the author uses the word *Pachinko* as a symbol that represents the life of *Zainichi*. While Pachinko is a combined game of pinball and gambling machines. The game only depends on the luck of the player. As well as *Zainichi*, whose life can only rely on luck, no matter how much effort they put into it. Another similarity between *Zainichi* and Pachinko is the dilemma position. If *Zainichi* is between two identities (Japanese / Korean), then the *Pachinko* dilemma position leads to the status in law. Japan prohibits gambling but allows Pachinko. Many *Pachinko* owners are Korean *Zainichi* because the only business and job they can rely on to survive is Pachinko. However, Japanese people consider the Pachinko business closely related to the Yakuza (gangsters). Those are the reasons why working in *Pachinko* is shameful and dirty.

### 3. Cultural Clash

Furthermore, cultural clashes are one of the causes of discrimination against *Zainichi* in Japan. Their presence does not exist in Japanese society. As the colonizer, Japan forced Koreans to obey the emperor, instilling Japanese cultural values and ideologies. The Japanese government made a policy that was detrimental to *Zainichi*. One of the Japanese rules prohibits the use of the Korean language in Japan, so *Zainichi* must use Japanese to remain accepted in society. Those who cannot speak Japanese have their voices limited and not heard by Japanese society and elites. This is what Gayatri Spivak highlighted about the existence of Subalterns. Can the subalterns speak? While their identity is banned? Reflecting on the case of the position of women in India, Spivak argues that "the subaltern cannot speak". The statement is interpreted to mean that oppressed and politically marginalized groups can voice resistance that can only be heard if they use the language of the dominant. However, this practice cannot be wholly separated from the dominant discourse because the use of language itself does not represent the Subaltern separately. In addition to prohibiting the Korean language, the Japanese government also forced *Zainichi* to use a Japanese name and banned the practice of religions other than *Shinto* (Japanese beliefs). The author depicts this through Pastor Baek Isak (Sunja's husband), who was imprisoned for defending his different faith.

"The police arrested them this morning—when everyone went to the Shinto shrine to bow, one of the village leaders noticed Hu mouthing the words of the Lord's Prayer when they were supposed to be pledging allegiance to the emperor. The police officer who was supervising questioned Hu, and Hu told him that this ceremony was idol worshipping and he wouldn't do it anymore. Pastor Yoo tried to tell the police that the boy was misinformed



and didn't mean anything by it, but Hu refused to agree with Pastor Yoo. Pastor Baek tried to explain, too, but Hu said he was willing to walk into the furnace. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Do you know that story?" (Lee, 2017: 138)

The quotation above shows that the Japanese government structurally oppressed *Zainichi* due to cultural clashes. Indeed, based on the Spivak concept, these policies are part of the Japanese discourse aimed at eliminating the existence of Korean identity within the Japanese hegemony.

### 3.1. Marginalization

Marginalization is a topic that is closely related to the existence of subalternity in society. Although the two are closely related, marginalization and subalternity are different concepts. Looked at Spivak's subaltern theory emphasizes the power relations in postcolonial nations. She observes that subalterns are denied access to "power, prestige, or property" (Spivak, 1988). From her statement, subalterns are marginalized from the discourse of hegemonic power, whether in government, politics, or social affairs. Not all marginalized people are Subalterns, because they may still be able to have a voice and gain access to hegemonic power areas. However, all those who are subalterns are marginalized in society. For example, in the novel *Pachinko*, low-class Japanese people such as Burakumin, who live in the slums, fall into the marginalization model, not subalternity.

Meanwhile, the *Zainichi*, with their Korean identity, marginalized in the slums, are considered inferior to the Burakumin or other lower-class groups in Japan; they belong to subalterns. But why are *Zainichi* included in the subalterns while Burakumin is not? Burakumin is marginalized economically and socially because of harmful stereotypes in Japanese society. However, legally, the Burakumin are still Japanese citizens who still get access to terms of politics, employment, and education from the government. Whereas *Zainichi* does not have the same social or political access, this is why *Zainichi*, marginalized in Japanese society, became a subaltern. There is no option for the *Zainichi* to choose a place to live because no Japanese people like their presence. This is illustrated in Isak and Pastor Yoo's conversation about finding a place to live in Japan.

Yoo laughed. "No one will rent to the Koreans. As a pastor, you'll get a chance to see how the Koreans live here. You can't imagine a dozen in a room that should be for two men and families sleeping in shifts. Pigs and chickens inside homes. No running water. No heat. The Japanese think Koreans are filthy, but they have no choice but to live in squalor. I've seen aristocrats from Seoul reduced to nothing, with no money for bathhouses, wearing rags for clothing, shoeless, and unable to get work as porters in the markets. There's nowhere for them to go. Even the ones with work and money can't find a place to live. Some are squatting illegally (Lee, 2017: 111).

It represents how subaltern representation is seen through the existence of social marginalization, which causes Japanese people to be reluctant to sell property to Koreans. As a result, they do not have decent places to live.



Furthermore, the government has implemented numerous policies that disadvantage Koreans to erase their ethnic identity. Some of these policies include the requirement for *Zainichi* to use Japanese names and the rule that requires them to apply for residency permits every three years under the threat of deportation. This can be seen in the following conversation between Etsuko and Hana:

Etsuko: "Today, he had to go to the ward office to request permission to stay in Japan for another three years. If he was denied, he could have been deported. He has to carry around an alien registration card and-"

Hana: "Oh, really? But he wasn't deported, right? Now he gets a fancy party that's nicer than most weddings."

Etsuko: "He was born in this country, and he had to be fingerprinted today on his birthday like a criminal. He's just a child. He didn't do anything wrong." (Lee, 2017: 352).

This conversation depicts *Zainichi*, who was born in Japan, still being considered as a foreigner (others) and being treated differently in the eyes of the law. However, it doesn't stop there; *Zainichi* also faces legal neglect, as exemplified by the case of a Korean student who committed suicide due to bullying at school. Despite the parents reporting the incident and seeking justice, the Japanese authorities could not act.

"Why can't the children who wrote this be punished? Why?" the mother asked.

"There were several people who witnessed him jump with no one else on the roof. Your son was not pushed. We cannot arrest everyone who says or writes something mean-spirited—"

"Why can't the police make the principal—" The father looked directly at him, then, seeing Haruki's defeated expression, the father stared at the door instead. "You people work together to make sure nothing ever changes. Sho ga nai. Sho ga nai. That's all I ever hear."

"I'm sorry. I am sorry," he said before leaving. (Lee, 2017: 331)

Based on the conversation between the victim's parents and Haruki (a Japanese police officer), it can be concluded that no law or regulation protects *Zainichi* despite the occurrence of numerous bullying cases. The Japanese government condones such behavior and considers it a common phenomenon. This is further emphasized by the police officer's question about his identity as a *Chosenjin*, which refers to Japanese Koreans. If there were specific laws to protect *Zainichi*, history could change. Discrimination and marginalization against *Zainichi* could be minimized, allowing them to break free from the subaltern sphere.

### 3.2. *Zainichi's* Woman as Subaltern

Besides the ethnic marginalization, the author also describes the gender marginalization experienced by female characters *Zainichi*: Sunja and Kyunghee. They face discrimination and social boundaries determined by the traditional role bound to gender. The author explains how social and economic limitations and patriarchal gender expectations affect the lives of *Zainichi* women. They are trapped in a narrow scope, with limited access to education, job opportunities, and freedom to make life decisions.



"Of course she is! Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering. There is suffering and then more suffering. It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. A good man has a decent life, and a bad man has a cursed life—but no matter what, always expect suffering and just keep working hard. No one will take care of a poor woman—just ourselves." (Lee, 2017: 32)

Women are portrayed as if their lives are dependent on men, which indicates that women are weaker than men. This situation makes women subalterns represented by men's voices. Women are portrayed as if their lives are designed for men and cannot live without his help. This makes women live in the shadow of men. Sunja is depicted in the novel as a woman who always gets help from her ex-lover, Hansu. By getting a job and saving herself from the Nagasaki bomb, she can send her child to school. The author portrays Sunja as an independent and hardworking Korean woman, but her fate always depends on Hansu. Because she, as a Korean woman, has no power in Japan and cannot also control her life. But Hansu, as a Korean who has assimilated into Japan, has the power to do anything in his life. Besides that, *Zainichi* women get double marginalization. They are weak as women in the eyes of their subaltern groups and also weak because of their ethnicity as *Zainichi* in front of the superior Japanese society. This is Spivak's opinion about the status of subaltern women who are always in the shadows, which means that women have no existence and no one considers their presence. (Subaltern, 1998: 287).

### 3.3. Resistance of Subaltern

Can the Subaltern speak? Sure. The subalterns can speak but only sometimes in voice form. The Subaltern's voice can be seen in how the *Zainichi* struggle to maintain their Korean identity amidst Japanese discrimination and oppression. One such resistance is hybridity, in which the *Zainichi* use Japanese culture as a shield to interact with society without exclusion and discrimination, such as what Yoseb and Kyunghee did as Korean husbands and wives who lived in Japan for a long time.

Most Japanese claimed they could distinguish between a Japanese and a Korean, but every Korean knew that was rubbish. You could ape anyone. Yoseb wore the street clothes of a modest workingman in Osaka—plain trousers, a Western-style dress shirt, and a heavy woolen coat that didn't show its wear. (Lee, 2017: 90)

They dress and talk as if they are Japanese. Likewise, the figure of Noa who changed his Korean name to Japanese to be accepted amid Japanese hegemonic society. Noa kept secrets like all children, but his were not ordinary. At school, he went by his Japanese name, Nobuo Boku, rather than Noa Baek, and though everyone in his class knew he was Korean from his Japanese surname if he met anyone who didn't realize this fact, Noa wasn't forthcoming about this detail. He spoke and wrote better Japanese than most native children. In class, he dreaded the mention of the peninsula where his parents were born and would look down at his papers if the teacher mentioned anything about the colony of Korea (Lee, 2017)

The illustration above explains that Noa has to fight against ethnic discrimination in school so that he can blend in with the hegemonic society. However, this turns out to cause a personal conflict and identity crisis. The fact that Noa hides his Korean identity is an attitude of self-confidence and



shame toward his ethnic identity. Another form of resistance is illustrated through ethical politics by Solomon (Sunja's grandson/son of Mozasu). He tries to change the stereotype of the ignorant and poor Korean by attending college in America. Nevertheless, more than the title is needed; it does not change the situation or the family.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study explores the representation of *Zainichi* Koreans as subaltern subjects in Min Jin Lee's novel, *Pachinko*, through the lens of postcolonialism, especially Subaltern's theory of Gayatri Spivak. The novel portrays the experiences of *Zainichi* Koreans, who faced discrimination, oppression, and marginalization in Japanese society, reflecting the practice of subalternity. The historical background of the Japanese colonization of Korea and the subsequent political tensions and economic crisis shape the Korean diaspora's struggles in Japan.

The novel highlights various forms of discrimination faced by *Zainichi* Koreans, such as verbal abuse, stereotypes, and cultural clashes. Verbal abuse is depicted through instances where characters like Sunja are insulted and humiliated due to their inability to speak Japanese fluently, reflecting the superiority complex of Japanese society. Negative stereotypes further contribute to their marginalization, affecting their education, employment, and social opportunities. The novel showcases how *Zainichi* Koreans are often confined to low-paying jobs, such as working in gambling parlors like Pachinko, due to limited access to better employment options.

The cultural clash between Korean and Japanese identities also plays a significant role in the discrimination faced by *Zainichi* Koreans. The Japanese government enforces assimilation policies, such as the prohibition of the Korean language and the use of Japanese names, limiting their cultural expression and forcing them to conform to Japanese norms. *Zainichi* Koreans are marginalized in society, leading to difficulties in finding decent housing, facing social neglect, and experiencing legal discrimination, as exemplified by the requirement for residency permits and the lack of protection against bullying.

Additionally, the novel portrays the double marginalization experienced by *Zainichi* women. They face both gender-based discrimination and the challenges of their ethnic identity, further restricting their access to education, employment, and decision-making autonomy. *Zainichi* women are depicted as dependent on men, reinforcing patriarchal norms and perpetuating their subaltern status within society.

Despite their marginalized position, the text also showcases various forms of resistance employed by *Zainichi* Koreans. Hybridity emerges as a strategy that involves adopting Japanese culture to navigate society and mitigate exclusion. Some characters, like Yoseb and Kyunghee, dress and speak Japanese, blending in to avoid discrimination. Another form of resistance is illustrated through characters like Noa, who change their Korean names to Japanese names to be accepted in Japanese society, albeit at the cost of their identity and internal conflicts. Moreover, Solomon, as an academic representing his ethnic group, practices ethical politics to challenge stereotypes and change perceptions of *Zainichi* Koreans. However, these efforts often need to be revised to overcome the power dynamics and the dominance of the elites in Japanese society, highlighting the limitations subaltern voices face.



Last but not least, in general, all forms of struggle and resistance undertaken by *Zainichi* have never served as a means for them to have a voice. Ultimately, their voices are always mediated and never escape the discourse of the Japanese dominants and elites. *Zainichi* will remain subaltern as long as issues and practices of discrimination and marginalization persist in Japanese society.

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## A REPRESENTATION OF ZAINICHI AS SUBALTERNERS IN MIN JIN LEE'S *PACHINKO*: POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the representation of Zainichi as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*. The subject of the subalterns is the Korean diaspora, who are struggling against oppression, marginalization, and discrimination in Japanese society. The researcher uses descriptive and qualitative research methods, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern theory has been applied to the selected text. The data will be taken from many aspects such as dialogues, depiction of the situation or event, characters, etc. This study analysed two problems: (1) How is the representation of Zainichi as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*? (2) How is the subaltern resisting the impact of subalternity in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*? First, the results of this study reveal that the form of discrimination and marginalization experienced by Zainichi are indicative of the existence of subalternity in Japan, which was represented in the *Pachinko* written by Min Jin Lee. Secondly, this research reveals that hybridity and ethical politics became Zainichi's way of speaking out as a form of resistance to subalternity. Moreover, the Korean diaspora and their descendants represented the subalterns in *Pachinko*. At the same time, women are considered inferior to men and people who have ideologies and beliefs that are different from Japanese ideology. This study is fascinating because subaltern issues exist long after the postcolonial period.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Japan is known for being a homogeneous country, but the reality is more complex. Besides the indigenous ethnic groups, there are ethnic minorities in Japan, commonly called *Zainichi*. The term *Zainichi* directly translates to "foreign resident" in Japanese. The emergence of this community can be traced back to Japan's colonialist and imperialist history, which subsequently became entangled with the complex relationship between Japan and Korea following Korea's independence from Japan (Tablizo, 2022). Japanese colonization and cultural assimilation policies negatively impacted Korean society. A practice of oppression carried out by the Japanese forced many Koreans to work in Japan as *Zainichi*. This resulted in the massive migration of Koreans to Japan. Based on the journal *The Yale Review of International Studies* (YRIS) with the title "The Evolving *Zainichi* Identity and Multicultural Society in Japan," Chae explained that during the China-Japan War in 1937, Japan exploited about 700,000 Koreans by bringing them to Japan as factory workers, miners, and military servants (Zaheer, 2023). Later in 1945, the population of



*Zainichi* in Japan increased to 2 million people. However, when World War II ended with the defeat of Japan, many of the *Zainichi* chose to return to the Korean peninsula. Then leaving about 600,000 *Zainichi* remained in Japan (Chae, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Japan, ethnic Koreans constitute a significant minority group, with approximately 850,000 individuals identifying themselves as ethnically Korean as of 2014 (Tetsuo, 2018). It is certainly not easy for a *Zainichi* to survive in Japanese hegemony. Besides, the long history between Korea and Japan has led to negative stereotypes in Japanese society towards *Zainichi* (Jackie, 2023). Moreover, today, in the 20th-century era, *Zainichi* still faces various marginalization, social discrimination, and oppression. Quoting from 'Public Book' a digital essay "Between Coldness and Adoration: *Zainichi* Korean's Experience in Japan" written by Natsu Shirotori and published by NEUT in 2022, illustrates how *Zainichi* lives in the modern era. Natsu interviews a *Zainichi* young lady named Shin. Shin explains how painful it is to be a *Zainichi* in Japan (Christopher, 2022). She must hide her *Zainichi* identity by changing her Korean name, "Shin," to her Japanese name, "Aoyama." In addition, Shin also experiences racism and verbal humiliation when using the Korean language in public places. Although Shin was born and raised in Japan, due to her *Zainichi* blood, she still has no right to vote in Japan's political agenda. This shows the restriction of *Zainichi's* access to the Japanese government (Shirotori, 2023).

All of the forms of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination that *Zainichi* experiences are indicative of the existence of subalternity in Japan. Therefore, the concept of "Subaltern" was initially used by Gramsci. The Italian Marxist and political activist Antonio Gramsci is well-known for coining the term "subaltern," meaning 'of inferior rank' (Jones, 1957; Timothy, D., 2017; Wajiran, 2013). Subaltern classes refer to groups in a society subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. They may include peasants, workers, and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic power'. Since the history of the ruling classes is realized in the state, history is the history of states and dominant groups.... (Bill et al., 2000; Gane, 2005).

Through Gramsci's ideas, Gayatri Spivak developed this idea of the Subaltern through her great essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She "reconsidered the problems of subalternity within new historical developments as brought by capitalistic politics of undermining revolutionary voices and divisions of labour in a globalized world" (Louai, 2012; Spivak, 1988). The theory developed by Spivak reveals that in a society, there are classes. There is an upper class called the Elite and a lower class called the *Subaltern*. Subaltern societies are the people who do not get the attention of the colonialists and also cannot enter the elite class. They are who are isolated and marginalized (Čerče, 2023; Wajiran, 2013). They might match the ranks of their efforts to earn respect and recognition accorded by the Elite. These are the postcolonial objects (Winda et al., 2018).

As Stephen Morton said in his book, Spivak's exploration of 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern' highlights the transformative potential of literature in amplifying the voices and histories of subaltern women. By offering an alternative rhetorical site, literary texts are a powerful tool for challenging hegemonic narratives and fostering a more inclusive understanding of the subaltern experience (Morton, 2004; Wajiran, 2019). This is related to the current research, which will examine the representation of *Zainichi* as a subaltern depicted in *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee.

The selection of *Pachinko* as the research object is based on several factors: It portrays the *Zainichi* community as a subaltern, a marginalized group amidst the dominance of Japanese



hegemonic power. As known as a Korean-American writer, Lee conveys her anxiety about the historical relationship between Japan and Korea and *Zainichi* in Japan, who still experiences a lot of legal and social discrimination. Lee conducted extensive research and direct interviews with third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation *individuals* living in Japan. The completion of this remarkable novel took Lee 30 years (Xidong, 2023). So *Pachinko* becomes a historical fiction novel that captures the essence of an era. The choice of the novel's title is intriguing, as it derives from the name of a widely popular Japanese gambling game notorious for its association with a bad industry. The business of *Pachinko* flourishes in impoverished areas of Japan and is often run by immigrants, including the *Zainichi* community. *Pachinko* has a historical background of the Second World War, where Japan colonized several Asian countries, including the Korean peninsula. *Pachinko* tells the story of the struggles of a female protagonist named Sunja and her family, who are forced to migrate to Japan. Due to the Korean economic crisis, Japan has become a dream country for many Koreans to survive. Unfortunately, Japan is not as beautiful as they imagined. Sunja and her family had to live in a marginalized slum area, which is an area of immigrants and low-class people in Japan. This novel tells the story of a Korean family living in Japan for the fourth generation. In *Pachinko*, Lee presents the characters through the *Zainichi* family facing discrimination and marginalization in economic, social, and political barriers that limit their opportunities for prosperity and equality. Furthermore, Sunja, as a *Zainichi* woman, experiences subordination in Japanese hegemonic society and her Korean ethnic group. Spivak's statement regarding the position of subaltern women "If, in the context of colonial production", Spivak asserts, "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow" (Spivak, 1988: 287).

In addition, several researchers have conducted relevant research before this research, as well as related researchers whom researchers take as references. First, the journal of EUFONI of Universitas Kristen Indonesia, "Diskriminasi Jepang Terhadap *Zainichi* Korea Dalam Novel *Pachinko* Karya Min Jin Lee," elaborates on the forms of racial discrimination experienced by *Zainichi* Korea as a diaspora community in Japan. The results of this study found that there were three forms of discrimination experienced by *Zainichi*: verbal discrimination, avoidance by Japanese people against *Zainichi*, and exile or separation of *Zainichi's* life from Japanese people. All these acts of discrimination have an impact on the problem of the loss of Korean *Zainichi* cultural identity (Felia, Aditya S. Meliala & Mike, 2021).

Second, Ilham Khechab's dissertation, "Korean Women's Status under patriarchy in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*," discusses the status of women in a patriarchal society in Japan. Using feminist concepts and theories, it tries to examine how a *Zainichi* diaspora woman struggles in the face of colonialism and the Japanese practice of prostitution. This thesis is almost the same as Yangji, who analyzes the novel dealing with the practice of prostitution or what is called comfort women (Khechab, 2021; Yangji & Yang, 2024).

Third, referring to one of the UGM journals entitled "*Antara Zainichi dan Pachinko: Represents Zainichi Korea dalam Novel Pachinko Karya Min Jin Lee*" describes the Korean *Zainichi* group in Japan who experience racial discrimination, which causes them to experience an identity crisis, as well as the relation of *Pachinko* business that developed at the time. The conclusion from this study is that the first generation in this *Pachinko* novel chose to uphold their nationalist identity by maintaining Korean cultural values even though they had to be discriminated against in Japan. The second generation depicts one of the *Zainichi* who chooses to naturalize and



hide his true identity to mingle with other Japanese society. At the same time, the third generation in the novel depicts an individualist *Zainichi* who is more open about their identity (Febriani et al., 2019).

The related studies above discuss the diaspora, feminism, and discrimination based on the *Panchiko*, but there are still gaps. This novel has yet to be researched with subaltern studies or the Spivak theory, whereas the postcolonial theory is closely related to the study of subalternity. Hence, the researcher sees the gap as an opportunity to cover what was lacking from previous research and become a reference for future use.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research method

This study employs a unique qualitative descriptive method approach to delve into the representation of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*. Unlike quantitative research, which produces numerical data, qualitative research generates descriptive data in written or spoken words. In this case, the method used is qualitative descriptive, as the data is in the form of quotations, dialogues, and descriptions from the novel, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the subaltern representation.

### 2.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data source in this study is mainly the novel *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee in the form of words, sentences, narration, and so forth. The supporting data is from secondary sources such as books, undergraduate theses, journals, and articles on the internet that talk about subalternity, postcolonialism, and all the information related to the topic. Furthermore, in analysing the research data, the researcher applies the postcolonial theory of the subaltern concept that Gayatri Spivak develops. This theory will analyse the experience of oppression and subalternity represented by the characters of the Korean diaspora. The steps used in analysing the data are as follows: (1) The researcher reads the novel several times. (2) taking notes as data from the novel for all the critical statements, words, or sentences related to the research. (3) Identifying and analysing the data so that the researcher could make an exemplary arrangement of literary work. (4) The researcher describes how subaltern representation in the novel is depicted as discrimination, marginalization, or oppression, limiting subaltern access to voice amid elite domination based on analysis.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To make this point understandable, this study depicts the representation of the subaltern subject that will be represented by some of the *Zainichi* characters in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* based on the postcolonialism theory of Subaltern. The novel highlights the core of the Korean diaspora in Japan called *Zainichi* who, despite experiencing a form of discrimination, oppression, and marginalization that indicated the practice of subalternity, demonstrate remarkable resilience. *Pachinko* takes the background of the Japanese colonial period in Korea which resulted in political tensions and an economic crisis. The Japanese took a lot of Korean property and brought young Koreans to work as forced labourers. As a result, poverty and hunger are inevitable in the Korean



peninsula. Due to the crisis, many Koreans migrate to Japan to get a better life. Including Sunja and her Family, the main character of the novel. In a foreign land, they live on the margins because of their ethnic identities. The stigma and bad stereotypes of Japanese society towards *Zainichi* have impacted the limited access for *Zainichi* to find a good place to live, work, and get an education. There is no place for the *Zainichi* in Japan, the option for them is always the worst. *Zainichi* can only live in the slums as inferior, work as peasants and poor labourers, or do other illegal jobs such as Pachinko (gambling Parlors). There is no better option for them.

The phenomenon of subalternity continues into the next generation of *Zainichi*. Although they were born and raised in Japan, they still experience discrimination and marginalization and are considered inferior. They can speak but their voice cannot be heard. The character of Solomon, a third generation of *Zainichi*, tries to relinquish his status as a subaltern by practicing ethical politics. As an academic with an American degree, he represents his ethnic group to get out of the stigma and bad stereotypes in Japan. Unfortunately, his efforts are useless, his voice fades again under the power of Elites. Moreover, women as Subalterns get the double label of marginalization. It is represented by Sunja and Kyunghee as woman characters in the novel. They live in oppression and are considered weak because of their ethnic and gender status (Wajiran, 2020). Here, the researcher will describe how represented of *Zainichi* as Subalterns in *Pachinko*.

### 3.1. Discrimination

Japan colonized Korea for a long period of time. The occupation began in 1910 and lasted until 1945. During those 35 years, Japan ruled Korea with harsh colonial rule, destroying the Korean political system and culture and imposing policies that were detrimental to the Korean people. The existence of Japan's colonization shows that Japan is superior to Korea. That is the reason why Koreans experience discrimination, marginalization, and oppression, which makes them become a subaltern group. This historical context is crucial to understanding the discrimination the *Zainichi* characters face in *Pachinko*.

#### 1. Verbal Abuse

Min Jin Lee illustrated *Zainichi* Koreans experiencing social discrimination by the Japanese due to ethnic and cultural differences. Japan thought every Korean is weak, stupid, poor, and dirty. It is portrayed through Sunja, who experiences verbal abuse by Japanese teenagers because she cannot speak Japanese.

Japanese boys said:

"What? I don't understand you, you stupid Korean. Why can't you speak Japanese? All of the Emperor's loyal subjects are supposed to know how to speak Japanese! Aren't you a loyal subject?" (Lee, 2017)

The quote portrays the verbal abuse that Sunja receives due to her inability to speak Japanese. Japanese society regards this as ignorance, and it perceives itself as superior. In the case above, it is explained that Sunja is a subaltern due to cultural and ideological differences. Japan did impose its ideology on the Korean people.

#### 2. Stereotype

Negative stereotypes resulted in *Zainichi* experiencing discrimination and marginalization in education and employment. Almost all of *Zainichi* have experienced bullying at school, including Noa, whose classmates shunned him. Even his teacher told him to sit at the back of the class. The discrimination led to an identity crisis in Noa's figure. He felt ashamed of his ethnic identity. So,



he changed his name and chose to assimilate into Japanese. This is seen in the dialog with Sunja when Noa finds out that his biological father was Hansu (Korean-Yakuza) instead of pastor Baek Isak.

"..... I will never be able to wash this dirt from my name. You can't be very bright," he said. "How can you make something clean from something dirty? And now, you have made me dirty," Noa said quietly as if he was learning this as he was saying it to her. "All my life, I have had Japanese telling me that my blood is Korean—that Koreans are angry, violent, cunning, and deceitful criminals. All my life, I had to endure this. I tried to be as honest and humble as Baek Isak was; I never raised my voice. But this blood- my blood is Korean- and now I have learned that my blood is yakuza blood. I can never change this, no matter what I do. It would have been better if I had never been born. How could you have ruined my life? How could you be so imprudent? A foolish mother and a criminal father. I am cursed." (Lee, 2017: 275)

Based on that, Noa's mindset is shaped by the surrounding environment. He perceives himself in the same way that stereotypical Japanese people view Koreans. When compared to Gayatri's theory, Noa, as a subaltern, has lost because he is unable to uphold his identity and conforms to the discourse of hegemony.

On the other hand, this negative stereotype makes it difficult for *Zainichi* to find work because Japanese people are unwilling to hire them. As a result, they can only work at illegal and dirty businesses such as Yakuza groups, gambling, Pachinko, and other low-paying jobs. This is depicted through Noa and Mozasu, who works at Pachinko, which is then continued by Solomon (Sunja's grandson) as a family business as well as Yoseb, who is Sunja's brother-in-law, who works as a factory foreman but is paid less than a Japanese foreman. As the author explains in the following quote:

Although his head was full of arguments, Yoseb could not speak. He was working two full-time jobs—managing two factories for Shimamura-san, who paid him half the salary of one Japanese foreman. (Lee, 2017: 156)

From the quote above, we can conclude that negative stereotypes of *Zainichi* limit them from getting a better job. As a result, Korean *Zainichi* can only work in jobs that Japan considers despicable. Such as in gambling and Pachinko. Lee as the author uses the word *Pachinko* as a symbol that represents the life of *Zainichi*. While Pachinko is a combined game of pinball and gambling machines. The game only depends on the luck of the player. As well as *Zainichi*, whose life can only rely on luck, no matter how much effort they put into it. Another similarity between *Zainichi* and Pachinko is the dilemma position. If *Zainichi* is between two identities (Japanese / Korean), then the *Pachinko* dilemma position leads to the status in law. Japan prohibits gambling but allows Pachinko. Many *Pachinko* owners are Korean *Zainichi* because the only business and job they can rely on to survive is Pachinko. However, Japanese people consider the Pachinko business closely related to the Yakuza (gangsters). Those are the reasons why working in *Pachinko* is shameful and dirty.



### 3. Cultural Clash

Furthermore, cultural clashes are one of the causes of discrimination against *Zainichi* in Japan. Their presence does not exist in Japanese society. As the colonizer, Japan forced Koreans to obey the emperor, instilling Japanese cultural values and ideologies. The Japanese government made a policy that was detrimental to *Zainichi*. One of the Japanese rules prohibits the use of the Korean language in Japan, so *Zainichi* must use Japanese to remain accepted in society. Those who cannot speak Japanese have their voices limited and not heard by Japanese society and elites. This is what Gayatri Spivak highlighted about the existence of Subalterns. Can the subalterns speak? While their identity is banned? Reflecting on the case of the position of women in India, Spivak argues that "the subaltern cannot speak". The statement is interpreted to mean that oppressed and politically marginalized groups can voice resistance that can only be heard if they use the language of the dominant. However, this practice cannot be wholly separated from the dominant discourse because the use of language itself does not represent the Subaltern separately. In addition to prohibiting the Korean language, the Japanese government also forced *Zainichi* to use a Japanese name and banned the practice of religions other than *Shinto* (Japanese beliefs). The author depicts this through Pastor Baek Isak (Sunja's husband), who was imprisoned for defending his different faith.

"The police arrested them this morning—when everyone went to the Shinto shrine to bow, one of the village leaders noticed Hu mouthing the words of the Lord's Prayer when they were supposed to be pledging allegiance to the emperor. The police officer who was supervising questioned Hu, and Hu told him that this ceremony was idol worshipping and he wouldn't do it anymore. Pastor Yoo tried to tell the police that the boy was misinformed and didn't mean anything by it, but Hu refused to agree with Pastor Yoo. Pastor Baek tried to explain, too, but Hu said he was willing to walk into the furnace. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Do you know that story?" (Lee, 2017: 138)

The quotation above shows that the Japanese government structurally oppressed *Zainichi* due to cultural clashes. Indeed, based on the Spivak concept, these policies are part of the Japanese discourse aimed at eliminating the existence of Korean identity within the Japanese hegemony.

#### 3.1. Marginalization

Marginalization is a topic that is closely related to the existence of subalternity in society. Although the two are closely related, marginalization and subalternity are different concepts. Looking at Spivak's subaltern theory emphasizes the power relations in postcolonial nations. She observes that subalterns are denied access to "power, prestige, or property" (Spivak, 1988). From her statement, subalterns are marginalized from the discourse of hegemonic power, whether in government, politics, or social affairs. Not all marginalized people are Subalterns, because they may still be able to have a voice and gain access to hegemonic power areas. However, all those who are subalterns are marginalized in society. For example, in the novel *Pachinko*, low-class Japanese people such as Burakumin, who live in the slums, fall into the marginalization model, not subalternity.





Meanwhile, the *Zainichi*, with their Korean identity, marginalized in the slums, are considered inferior to the Burakumin or other lower-class groups in Japan; they belong to subalterns. But why are *Zainichi* included in the subalterns while Burakumin is not? Burakumin is marginalized economically and socially because of harmful stereotypes in Japanese society. However, legally, the Burakumin are still Japanese citizens who still get access to terms of politics, employment, and education from the government. Whereas *Zainichi* does not have the same social or political access, this is why *Zainichi*, marginalized in Japanese society, became a subaltern. There is no option for the *Zainichi* to choose a place to live because no Japanese people like their presence. This is illustrated in Isak and Pastor Yoo's conversation about finding a place to live in Japan.

Yoo laughed. "No one will rent to the Koreans. As a pastor, you'll get a chance to see how the Koreans live here. You can't imagine a dozen in a room that should be for two men and families sleeping in shifts. Pigs and chickens inside homes. No running water. No heat. The Japanese think Koreans are filthy, but they have no choice but to live in squalor. I've seen aristocrats from Seoul reduced to nothing, with no money for bathhouses, wearing rags for clothing, shoeless, and unable to get work as porters in the markets. There's nowhere for them to go. Even the ones with work and money can't find a place to live. Some are squatting illegally (Lee, 2017: 111).

It represents how subaltern representation is seen through the existence of social marginalization, which causes Japanese people to be reluctant to sell property to Koreans. As a result, they do not have decent places to live.

Furthermore, the government has implemented numerous policies that disadvantage Koreans to erase their ethnic identity. Some of these policies include the requirement for *Zainichi* to use Japanese names and the rule that requires them to apply for residency permits every three years under the threat of deportation. This can be seen in the following conversation between Etsuko and Hana:

Etsuko: "Today, he had to go to the ward office to request permission to stay in Japan for another three years. If he was denied, he could have been deported. He has to carry around an alien registration card and-"

Hana: "Oh, really? But he wasn't deported, right? Now he gets a fancy party that's nicer than most weddings."

Etsuko: "He was born in this country, and he had to be fingerprinted today on his birthday like a criminal. He's just a child. He didn't do anything wrong." (Lee, 2017: 352).

This conversation depicts *Zainichi*, who was born in Japan, still being considered as a foreigner (others) and being treated differently in the eyes of the law. However, it doesn't stop there; *Zainichi* also faces legal neglect, as exemplified by the case of a Korean student



who committed suicide due to bullying at school. Despite the parents reporting the incident and seeking justice, the Japanese authorities could not act.

"Why can't the children who wrote this be punished? Why?" the mother asked.

"There were several people who witnessed him jump with no one else on the roof. Your son was not pushed. We cannot arrest everyone who says or writes something mean-spirited—"

"Why can't the police make the principal—" The father looked directly at him, then, seeing Haruki's defeated expression, the father stared at the door instead. "You people work together to make sure nothing ever changes. Sho ga nai. Sho ga nai. That's all I ever hear." "I'm sorry. I am sorry," he said before leaving. (Lee, 2017: 331).

Based on the conversation between the victim's parents and Haruki (a Japanese police officer), it can be concluded that no law or regulation protects *Zainichi* despite the occurrence of numerous bullying cases. The Japanese government condones such behavior and considers it a common phenomenon. This is further emphasized by the police officer's question about his identity as a *Chosenjin*, which refers to Japanese Koreans. If there were specific laws to protect *Zainichi*, history could change. Discrimination and marginalization against *Zainichi* could be minimized, allowing them to break free from the subaltern sphere.

### 3.2. *Zainichi's* Woman as Subaltern

Besides the ethnic marginalization, the author also describes the gender marginalization experienced by female characters *Zainichi*: Sunja and Kyunghee. They face discrimination and social boundaries determined by the traditional role bound to gender. The author explains how social and economic limitations and patriarchal gender expectations affect the lives of *Zainichi* women. They are trapped in a narrow scope, with limited access to education, job opportunities, and freedom to make life decisions.

"Of course she is! Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering. There is suffering and then more suffering. It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. A good man has a decent life, and a bad man has a cursed life— but no matter what, always expect suffering and just keep working hard. No one will take care of a poor woman—just ourselves." (Lee, 2017: 32)

Women are portrayed as if their lives are dependent on men, which indicates that women are weaker than men. This situation makes women subalterns represented by men's voices. Women are portrayed as if their lives are designed for men and cannot live without his help. This makes women live in the shadow of men. Sunja is depicted in the novel as a woman who always gets help from her ex-lover, Hansu. By getting a job and saving herself from the Nagasaki bomb, she can send her child to school. The author portrays Sunja as an independent and hardworking Korean woman, but her fate always depends on Hansu.



Because she, as a Korean woman, has no power in Japan and cannot also control her life. But Hansu, as a Korean who has assimilated into Japan, has the power to do anything in his life. Besides that, *Zainichi* women get double marginalization. They are weak as women in the eyes of their subaltern groups and also weak because of their ethnicity as *Zainichi* in front of the superior Japanese society. This is Spivak's opinion about the status of subaltern women who are always in the shadows, which means that women have no existence and no one considers their presence. (Subaltern, 1998: 287).

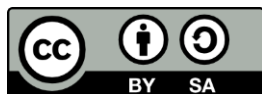
### 3.3. *Resistance of Subaltern*

Can the Subaltern speak? Sure. The subalterns can speak but only sometimes in voice form. The Subaltern's voice can be seen in how the *Zainichi* struggle to maintain their Korean identity amidst Japanese discrimination and oppression. One such resistance is hybridity, in which the *Zainichi* use Japanese culture as a shield to interact with society without exclusion and discrimination, such as what Yoseb and Kyunghee did as Korean husbands and wives who lived in Japan for a long time.

Most Japanese claimed they could distinguish between a Japanese and a Korean, but every Korean knew that was rubbish. You could ape anyone. Yoseb wore the street clothes of a modest workingman in Osaka—plain trousers, a Western-style dress shirt, and a heavy woolen coat that didn't show its wear. (Lee, 2017: 90). They dress and talk as if they are Japanese. Likewise, the figure of Noa who changed his Korean name to Japanese to be accepted amid Japanese hegemonic society.

Noa kept secrets like all children, but his were not ordinary. At school, he went by his Japanese name, Nobuo Boku, rather than Noa Baek, and though everyone in his class knew he was Korean from his Japanese surname if he met anyone who didn't realize this fact, Noa wasn't forthcoming about this detail. He spoke and wrote better Japanese than most native children. In class, he dreaded the mention of the peninsula where his parents were born and would look down at his papers if the teacher mentioned anything about the colony of Korea (Lee, 2017).

The illustration above explains that Noa has to fight against ethnic discrimination in school so that he can blend in with the hegemonic society. However, this turns out to cause a personal conflict and identity crisis. The fact that Noa hides his Korean identity is an attitude of self-confidence and shame toward his ethnic identity. Another form of resistance is illustrated through ethical politics by Solomon (Sunja's grandson/son of Mozasu). He tries to change the stereotype of the ignorant and poor Korean by attending college in America. Nevertheless, more than the title is needed; it does not change the situation or the family.



## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study explores the representation of *Zainichi* Koreans as subaltern subjects in Min Jin Lee's novel, *Pachinko*, through the lens of postcolonialism, especially Subaltern's theory of Gayatri Spivak. The novel portrays the experiences of *Zainichi* Koreans, who faced discrimination, oppression, and marginalization in Japanese society, reflecting the practice of subalternity. The historical background of the Japanese colonization of Korea and the subsequent political tensions and economic crisis shape the Korean diaspora's struggles in Japan.

The novel highlights various forms of discrimination faced by *Zainichi* Koreans, such as verbal abuse, stereotypes, and cultural clashes. Verbal abuse is depicted through instances where characters like Sunja are insulted and humiliated due to their inability to speak Japanese fluently, reflecting the superiority complex of Japanese society. Negative stereotypes further contribute to their marginalization, affecting their education, employment, and social opportunities. The novel showcases how *Zainichi* Koreans are often confined to low-paying jobs, such as working in gambling parlors like Pachinko, due to limited access to better employment options.

The cultural clash between Korean and Japanese identities also plays a significant role in the discrimination faced by *Zainichi* Koreans. The Japanese government enforces assimilation policies, such as the prohibition of the Korean language and the use of Japanese names, limiting their cultural expression and forcing them to conform to Japanese norms. *Zainichi* Koreans are marginalized in society, leading to difficulties in finding decent housing, facing social neglect, and experiencing legal discrimination, as exemplified by the requirement for residency permits and the lack of protection against bullying.

Additionally, the novel portrays the double marginalization experienced by *Zainichi* women. They face both gender-based discrimination and the challenges of their ethnic identity, further restricting their access to education, employment, and decision-making autonomy. *Zainichi* women are depicted as dependent on men, reinforcing patriarchal norms and perpetuating their subaltern status within society.

Despite their marginalized position, the text also showcases various forms of resistance employed by *Zainichi* Koreans. Hybridity emerges as a strategy that involves adopting Japanese culture to navigate society and mitigate exclusion. Some characters, like Yoseb and Kyunghee, dress and speak Japanese, blending in to avoid discrimination. Another form of resistance is illustrated through characters like Noa, who change their Korean names to Japanese names to be accepted in Japanese society, albeit at the cost of their identity and internal conflicts. Moreover, Solomon, as an academic representing his ethnic group, practices ethical politics to challenge stereotypes and change perceptions of *Zainichi* Koreans. However, these efforts often need to be revised to overcome the power dynamics and the dominance of the elites in Japanese society, highlighting the limitations subaltern voices face.

Last but not least, in general, all forms of struggle and resistance undertaken by *Zainichi* have never served as a means for them to have a voice. Ultimately, their voices are always mediated and never escape the discourse of the Japanese dominants and elites. *Zainichi* will remain subaltern as long as issues and practices of discrimination and marginalization persist in Japanese society.



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