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Session V

## **Design and Identity**

# Visualization of an Imagined Landscape through Posters: Figurative Elements of Mindan Posters

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## Abstract

Globalization has made the world more unified, and the exchange of people and information is becoming more active; regionalization and subdivision have attracted attention as contrasting trends. In other words, individuals can express themselves in detail and interact with the world easily in the current settings. Mindan, which comprises a group of Korean immigrants living in Japan—who have not assimilated into the Japanese society for more than 100 years but have chosen and maintained their own identity, can be considered leaders of this trend of regionalization and subdivision.

This study focuses on the figurative elements of posters produced by Mindan to understand the process of visualizing and designing the identity of a group. Further, it analyzes the Agreement on the Legal Status in 1965, which greatly influenced the formation of Mindan's identity. We will examine each element—ethnicity, nationality and awareness toward Japanese society—that affects Mindan identity.

Prior to the Agreement on the Legal Status, the elements of ethnicity and nationality stood out; people belonging to Mindan portrayed themselves as being different from the Japanese and South Koreans from North Korea. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, Mindan has upheld a message of nationality and peace as a neighboring country, and a motif of reconciliation with Japanese society is reflected in the poster. Furthermore, from the settlement era in the 1970s, life in ordinary Japanese society has been portrayed and awareness toward Japanese society and citizenship has been strongly recognized in Mindan poster.

**Keywords:** *Identity; Poster; Mindan; Zainichi; immigrant culture*

## Introduction

This study examines the design and visualization of culture and identity by analyzing the figurative elements of Mindan's posters.

Poster is a type of advertising medium that is pasted on walls and post to convey messages to the public (1). The poster is widely used for propagating and advertising. By that particular purpose, the poster tells us what people wanted at the time when it was used (2). Poster is a record of visual communication that can infer both present and future at the same time. Therefore, posters can be said that reflection of society (3) and imagine landscape of society (4).

Mindan is an immigrant organization of Koreans, especially South Koreans in Japan; this group is also called Zainichi. Mindan was founded in Japan in 1946 after World War II by Koreans in Japan whose ideological foundation consisted of nationalism and anticommunism. In 1948, they were recognized by the Korean government as the only Korean organization in Japan. Mindan then represented the Korean government in interactions with Japan, which had no official diplomatic relations at that time. After such relations were established in 1965, which have continued to this day, members of Mindan were granted permanent residence in Japan (5).

Their identities, which have complex historical backgrounds, have already been analyzed from a variety of perspectives. Taeyoung Kim (6), Sung Kang (7), and Somei Kobayashi (8) have analyzed the identity of Koreans in Japan through magazines and newspapers from the perspective of media history. Pek Rum (9) analyzed the identity of Koreans in Japan by researching various Korean painters in Japan from the perspective of art history. Pek discussed the activities, organizations, identities, and exhibitions of Korean artists in Japan after the war. Yasunori Fukuoka (10) conducted individual interviews mainly with the second generation of Koreans in Japan. Based on interview data, Fukuoka presented the identity categorization model of Koreans living in Japan. However, these studies focused on limited subjects who can express themselves or who participated in such activities. Such a sample is not sufficient to analyze the collective identity of Koreans in Japan, which is the main topic of this study. Keizo Yamawaki (11) revised the categories of Fukuoka's model into something more strictly modified and supplemented. Six types are proposed on three axes: ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship as awareness toward Japanese society. This model provides a comprehensive understanding of the collective identity of Koreans in Japan, regardless of the former model that relies on individual autobiographical descriptions. Further, not only a specific generation but also a period from the postwar to the 1990s was included in the study, indicating the change in the identity of Koreans living in Japan. This study will review the identity of Koreans in Japan from the viewpoint of visual communication based on Yamawaki's model; specifically, it focuses on the design and visualization of culture and identity by analyzing the figurative elements of Mindan posters.

## Research method

Yamawaki divided the identity of Koreans living in Japan into six categories by three axes: ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. Each type is as follows.

Type	Ethnicity	Nationality	Citizenship
1: Multinational society orientation	+	+	+
2: Compatriot society orientation	+	+	-
3: Multiethnic society orientation	-	+	+
4: Diaspora orientation	-	+	-
5: Monoethnic society orientation	-	-	+
6: Cosmopolitan orientation	-	-	-

Table 1: Categorization of Koreans in Japanese identities

Yamawaki established that the identity of Koreans in Japan has changed from a compatriot society orientation to a multinational society orientation (12). He also argued that the change was triggered by the 1965 Agreement on the Legal Status and Treatment of Korean Residents in Japan (hereinafter "the Legal Status Agreement") (13). In this paper, the period of research was set around 1965 to clarify the process of visualization and designing of the identity of Koreans in Japan. The study also focuses on Mindan, which led the opinions of Koreans in Japan during this period. The posters are analyzed based on three perspectives: linguistic information such as content, letters, and slogans; motifs such as subjects and symbols; and expressions such as techniques and methods. Through the interpretation of each figurative element, this study verifies the identity of Koreans living in Japan from the viewpoint of visual communication.

## Identity before the Legal Status Agreement in the early 1960s

Yamawaki argues that Mindan encouraged a compatriot society during this period (14). The identity

of Joseon ethnicity and Korean nationality was strong and that of Japanese citizenship was weak. Mindan was formed mainly by nationalists and anti-communists who opposed the leftist policy of the Federation of Korean residents in Japan, the largest group of Koreans in Japan after World War II (15). Thus, Mindan was born as a result of a strong sense of ethnic and national identity. Yamawaki stated that Mindan dreamed to return to a home that was united, and settlement orientation and citizenship sentiments toward Japanese society were weak (16). Table 2 contains the posters issued by Mindan during this period.



			
	Figure 1: 43rd Anniversary of the March 1st Independence Movement Day Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of Mindan, c.1962.	Figure 2: 44th Anniversary of the March 1st Independence Movement Day Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of Mindan, c.1963.	Figure 3: Normalization of the Diplomatic Relations between Korea and Japan Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of the Mindan; the exact date is unknown.
Linguistic Information	March 1st Independence Movement, Korea Independence, Revolution Task, Korea–Japan Talk, Communist Invasion.		
Motifs	Scenery of March 1st Independence Movement, Handshaking in Traditional Costume, Black Figures Running Away and Crushed, A Middle-Aged Man with a Stiff Face, Korean National Flag.		
Expressions	Illustration: imagification, exaggeration.		

Table 2: Mindan posters before legal status agreement in early 1960s.

In linguistic information, the nationality of Koreans stands out. Keywords such as revolutionary task, Japan–Korea talk, and the crushing of communist aggression were closely related to the politics of Korea at that time. The military coup forces who seized Korean government power insisted that their coup was revolution and their goals a revolutionary task (17). The keywords of the Korea–Japan talk and communist aggression also represent the diplomatic goals of the Korean government (18). Ethnic identity and citizenship sentiments toward Japanese society and the axis of the Yamawaki model do not appear. Because Mindan served as a representative of the Korean government in Japan before 1965, they showed a pro-Korean government tendency (19).

From the motif, the identity of the Joseon ethnicity stands out. While linguistic information mainly shows Korean nationality, the motifs reveal Joseon ethnicity. Taegeukgi, the Korean national flag, appearing in all posters is the only thing that reflects Korean nationality. Most of the crowds drawn in figures 1 and 2 are wearing the traditional Korean costume, hanbok. In Figure 3, a plain, wide-sleeved hanbok contrasts the kimono with a Japanese pattern. Also, masculine motifs stand out. The central characters in figures 1 and 2 are middle-aged men with stiff faces, and in Figure 3, communists are crushed by shaking hands. These motifs expose the influence of the military regime of Korea, which had a strong influence on Mindan at that time (20).

These linguistic details and motifs were illustrated. Compared with other methods, such as photography, illustration is more effective for propaganda (21). Illustrations can spread certain intentions to people through created or exaggerated images. Figure 3 shows the detail of the shadow of clothes and hands and wrinkles on the flag. However, the communists on the same poster show a completely different expression. Their proportions do not correspond to other elements; they are

painted black and do not harmonize with other elements. This incongruity is the result of deliberate exaggeration in illustrations (22). Posters display that communists are sinister, unlike Japanese and Koreans. Tiny crushed feet and enormous hands are exaggerated. Japan and South Korea shaking hands with each other communicates that the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea can destroy the sinister but insignificant communist invasion.

The identity revealed on posters before the Legal Status Agreement is consistent with Yamawaki's analysis. Ethnicity and nationality stand out, and there is no citizenship sentiment toward Japanese society. The linguistic information shows their feelings of nationalism toward Korea. They follow the Korean government's policies faithfully. In terms of motifs, they drew themselves as Joseon ethnics wearing hanbok. Furthermore, masculine motifs show that Mindan was strongly influenced by the Korean homeland, especially the military regime.

### Identity after the Legal Status Agreement in the late 1960s

After the 1965 Legal Status Agreement, Koreans in Japan were allowed to settle in Japan permanently. Yamawaki argued that the agreement led Koreans in Japan to recognize their settling down in Japanese society (23). Also, he pointed out that Mindan did not agree with this new awareness and still aimed for a compatriot society (24). For that reason, Yamawaki cited the influence of the leaders born in the Joseon Peninsula (25). Not only the internal factors of Mindan but also the Japanese government's policies oriented Mindan toward a compatriot society. The Japanese government came up with a policy to control Koreans living in Japan (26). Mindan's awareness of Japanese society had not yet been established because of these influences. Table 3 presents three Mindan posters from this period.




			
	<p>Figure 4: 47th Anniversary of The March 1st Independence Movement Day Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of Mindan, c.1966.</p> <p>Figure 5: 20th Anniversary of National Liberation Day of Korea Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of Mindan, c.1965.</p> <p>Figure 6: 21st Anniversary of National Liberation Day of Korea Poster, Poster from the 20-year history of Mindan, c.1966.</p>		
Linguistic Information	March 1st Independence Movement, slogan for recruiting Mindan members, Patriot Lee visiting Japan, Celebration, National Liberation Day of Korea, promotion of permanent residency application, encouraging the modernization of Korea.		
Motifs	A girl holding a torch and crowds, Korean national flag, flying flock of birds, a crowd with smiles, mostly women and children.		
Expressions	Illustration: Flat and geometric description, contrast, composition.		

Table 3: Mindan posters before legal status agreement in later 1960s.

Even after the agreement was established, the linguistic information on Mindan posters did not change dramatically. The keywords March 1st spirit and patriot (27) in Figure 4 represents ethnicity, and the contribution to the modernization of the motherland in Figure 6 represents nationality. However, some new trends appeared that were not seen in the previous period. The Mindan

community began to be aware of Japanese citizens in their living spaces. For Mindan, Japan had been only a temporary place to stay until they returned to their unified homeland (28), but at this juncture, Mindan began to make efforts to apply for permanent residency and began to insist on the stability of life in Japan.




In terms of motifs, the tendencies of the previous period were generally inherited. Most of the characters are dressed in hanbok, and all posters have the taegukgi. No other motifs that show Japanese citizenship have been found yet. However, the motifs also show some changes. Images of women were used a lot. Middle-aged men with stiff faces, which was popular in the previous era, disappeared. Two men are depicted in the corner of Figure 6, but they look young and bright. It is presumed that the motifs were chosen to give a soft impression in line with the atmosphere of reconciliation (29). Figure 5, which has no specific human motif, shows a flock of flying pigeons, symbolic of reconciliation or peace.

Of course, there is a change in the expression of the posters. The basic method is illustration as in the previous period, but the motifs are flat and solid. The motifs depicted in Figure 4 show clearly in light and shade and have a strong contrast, contradicting previous expressions that emphasize details. Unlike in the elaborate expressions of the past, the flag wrinkles in Figure 5 have a strong brightness, contrast, and linear geometric shape. The pigeons give a sense of composition by adjusting their transparency. Expressions of this period focus on composition rather than drawing and design rather than painting. These expressions, unlike that of the former period, utilize various effects of illustration, are suppressed, and focus more on linguistic information and motifs to emphasize the message.

The identity expressed in Mindan posters after the Legal Status Agreement generally matches Yamawaki's research. It can be confirmed that although ethnicity and nationality are strongly present, citizenship as Japanese society or a permanent resident orientation has begun to emerge. There are more changes in motifs and expressions than in direct linguistic information. Masculine motifs disappear, and expressions become simple while focusing on the message. Through these symbolic motifs and techniques of expression, conversion of consciousness was indirectly revealed. Visual communication precedes linguistic information in the change of Mindan identity.

### Identity of the Permanent Resident Era after the 1970s

Since the Legal Status Agreement, Koreans in Japan felt no need to worry about when they will be kicked out. However, even after being allowed permanent residency, they faced many problems. The first is the problem of discrimination against foreigners that they experienced in their daily lives. To solve this problem, many Koreans in Japan, especially 2nd generation, cooperated with Japanese civil society and participated in social movement (30). This movement was another major problem that Mindan faced. Most Koreans in Japan in the 1970s belonged to the second generation of Koreans born in Japan (31), and Mindan feared that they would assimilate into Japanese culture (32). Therefore, Mindan insisted on self-reflection of Koreans in Japanese society rather than cooperation with the Japanese (33). Yamawaki reports that Mindan was still oriented toward a compatriot society at that time (34). Table 4 presents posters issued by Mindan during this period.

	 <p>Figure 7: Chongryon Compatriots Visiting</p>	 <p>Figure 8: Semaeum Youth 100-Day</p>	 <p>Figure 9: 120-Day Movement Poster from</p>
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	Family Grave Campaign Poster from <i>Mindan Sinmun</i> [Mindan News], c.1975.	Movement Poster from <i>Mindan Sinmun</i> [Mindan News], c.1978.	<i>Mindan Sinmun</i> [Mindan News], c.1980.
Linguistic Information	Slogan for campaign, name of campaign, code of conduct.		
Motifs	North Koreans in Japan couple, scenery of Korean traditional rituals, scenery of home visiting by youth club, smiling girls in hanbok.		
Expressions	Illustration, photography		

Table 4: Mindan posters of permanent resident era after 1970s.

First, diversification of linguistic information is noted. In Figure 7, the members of Chongryeon, a communist group of North Korean in Japan, are called compatriots and brothers. This is a rare case in which ethnicity, not nationality, has been revealed through linguistic information. Moreover, as seen in figures 8 and 9, most of the linguistic information referred by Mindan and its campaigns focused on Koreans in Japan. This is quite different from the early 1960s, when Mindan only followed the Korean government's lead. Another notable feature is the use of Japanese characters. Although they were issued in Japan, posters consisted of mostly Korean and Chinese characters. After the 1970s, however, Korean characters disappeared, and Japanese characters replaced them. Although few Korean characters are seen in Figure 7, they form just a simple keyword for code of organization conduct. Because most Koreans in Japan were born in Japan and used Japanese as their mother tongue for life, Korean characters disappeared from Mindan posters (35).

It can also be seen in the motifs that the sense of Korean nationality had weakened. The *taegeukgi*, which appears in all previous posters—figures 1 to 6—appears only on a small badge in Figure 7 in this period. Also, the number of hanboks that show self-awareness as a Joseon ethnic seem to have decreased. In Figure 7, the hanbok, which was previously used to represent their identity, has been used as a symbol for the other. A new difference emerges between Koreans in hanbok and Koreans in Japan in Western-style casual attire. They portray themselves in Western-style casuals, focusing more on Japan than Korea and conveying a message that they are no different from Japanese people living in Japanese society. In the word “Koreans in Japan,” the focus is on “in Japan” than on “Koreans,” showing that they are also living in Japan and are no different from the Japanese. In addition to these change of costumes, the pose of characters has become more natural than the previous contrived poses of hooraying or handshakes. Meanwhile, the tendency of using feminine motifs continued.

The use of photographs stands out most in terms of expression. Compared to earlier posters, where only illustrations were used, photography is a noticeable change. Photographs had been used frequently in posters in other areas, but Mindan posters, especially propaganda posters, were mainly composed of illustrations (36). The use of photography can be understood in the same context as the use of motifs that appeal to casualness. Illustrations were certainly specialized in creating intentional images using various techniques such as imagification and exaggeration. However, there is no need for illustrations to depict a natural appearance using casual motifs. Of course, illustrations can still be used as shown in Figure 7, but there is no effect of previous illustrations at all. From Figure 3—which paints communists in black throughout—to Figure 7—which depicts North Koreans in Japan with a casual appearance—changes in expression can be clearly observed.

Mindan posters of the permanent resident era are quite different from Yamawaki's analysis. Mindan's citizenship as Japanese citizen, which Yamawaki said would become apparent in the 1980s, had already been revealed. Before the 1960s, citizenship of Japanese society could be read mainly in terms of motifs and expressions, but in the 1970s, this trend was evident not only in motifs and expressions but also in linguistic information. Rather than Mindan, it is more like the second



generation of Koreans born in Japan who are in solidarity with the civic groups of the Japanese civil movement mentioned by Yamawaki. The linguistic information of the poster is mainly related to life in Japan of Koreans in Japan, and the pro-Korea government trend has disappeared. In terms of motifs, Joseon ethnicity motifs are replaced by the ordinary appearance of Koreans in Japan. Since there is no need for imagification and exaggeration for linguistic information and motifs, the form of expression has also undergone changes from illustration to photography.

## Discussion

This study aimed to introduce a new perspective on visual communication in the existing theory on the identity of Koreans in Japan by analyzing Mindan posters. To this end, the posters of Mindan around 1965 were analyzed and the changes of each period were summarized. Based on this analysis, we were able to reconsider the visual cultural identity of Koreans in Japan, breaking away from the existing classification of identity based on autobiographical descriptions with language. It is significant to find that visual communication elements are more revealing than linguistic elements in terms of changes in identity. The imagine landscape that cannot be translated into linguistic media is first revealed through non-linguistic media.

Through this study, it was confirmed that non-linguistic elements are more sensitive to showing changes in identity than linguistic elements. However, there is one question that remained as to whether the change in identity is triggered by the poster or whether the change that has occurred is represented in the poster. To verify the above question, the next study should focus on a wider range of posters beyond propaganda posters and organizations beyond Mindan. The results of the study are shown in Table 4.

	Analysis of Yamawaki	Linguistic information	Motifs	Expressions
Before Legal Status Agreement	Compatriot society orientation	Korean nationality, Pro-Korean government	Joseon ethnicity, Masculine motif	Illustration: personification, exaggeration
After Legal Status Agreement	Compatriot society orientation, Citizenship toward Japanese society.	Korean nationality, Citizenship toward Japanese society	Joseon ethnicity, Feminine motif. Conciliation, Peace	Illustration: Flat and geometric description, Contrast, Composition
Permanent resident era	Compatriot society orientation, Beware of assimilation	Citizenship toward Japanese	Ordinary life of Japanese society	Illustration, Photography

Table 4: Result of analysis.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper reviewed three period of Mindan poster. Prior to the Legal Status Agreement, Mindan posters were strongly influenced by the Korean government, and their Korean nationality stood out in all areas of linguistic information, motifs, and expression. Posters of Mindan

after the agreement continued to show trends of the previous period while using softer motifs and expressions; further, they showed awareness toward Japanese society. Mindan's posters since the permanent resident era showed a strong awareness toward Japanese society. Figurative elements, from Japanese characteristics to casual costume, insist that the Mindan community is a part of Japanese society. It was found that the change in identity, especially the non-linguistic element, reveals more than mere linguistic elements. This study is expected to help analyze the identity of minority groups, especially from the perspective of visual communication.

## Notes

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11. Keizo Yamawaki, "Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron [On the Typology of Identity of Koreans in Japan]," *Meiji Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūsho Kiyō* [Bulletin of the Institute of Social Sciences, Meiji University] 38, no. 2 (2000): 131-135.
12. Yamawaki, "Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron," 132.
13. Yamawaki, "Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron," 136.

14. Mindan, *Mindan 70 nenshi*, 42-43.
15. Yamawaki, “Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron,” 131-136.
16. *Military revolution pledge*, National Film Production Center, 1:09, May 20, 1961, <https://www.ehistory.go.kr/page/view/movie.jsp?srcgbn=KV&mediaid=394&mediadtl=2369&gbn=DH&quality=M>.
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18. Mindan issued a statement of support on the day the military coup emerged and followed on its policy; Mindan, *Mindan 70 nenshi*, 72.
19. Military regime had a strong influence; for instance, an executive training team was dispatched to Mindan; “Jae-il Gyo-po e sigeuphan jido bohochaek [Urgent guidance and protection for Koreans in Japan],” *The Chosun Ilbo* (October 15, 1961).
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27. Even the name of the group was " Zai-Nihon Chōsen Kyoryū Mindan". The word Kyoryū indicates a temporary stay. This name was maintained until 1994; Mindan, “The 7th declaration,” in *Mindan 70nenshi*.
28. Mindan had advocated international friendship consistently, but in 1966, 4th declaration was the first direct mention that they are member of Japanese society; Mindan, *Mindan 70nenshi*, 314.
29. Yamawaki, “Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron,” 140.
30. Ministry of Justice, *Zairyū Gaikokujuin Tōkei (Kyu Tōroku Gaikokujuin Tōkei)* [Statistics of Foreign Residents (Former Statistics of Registered Foreigners)] (1974).

31. President of Mindan directly suggested to the president of Korea that the Japanese government's assimilation policy should be suspended in 1968; "Bak Daetongryoung Yebang Yi Jae-il Mindan-jang [Mindan President Lee visit President Park]," *Dong-A Ilbo* (March 13, 1968).
32. Mindan, *Mindan 70 nenshi*, 80.
33. Yamawaki, "Zainichi Korian no aidentiti bunrui kōzo ni kansuru shiron," 136.
34. Only 21.33 percent of Koreans in Japan households use Korean as their daily conversation in 1977. Seung-jik Hong and Han Bae-ho, "Jae-il Dongpo ui Siltae Josa [Investigation of the Actual Status of Koreans in Japan]," *Asea Yeongu* [The Journal of Asiatic Studies] 57, no. 1 (Seoul: Asiatic Research Institute, 1977): 1-52.
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## Author Biography

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