

# A perception about Black migrants in Korean and Japanese media

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## Introduction

The perception of Black people has been researched extensively in Black studies, postcolonial studies and in Western sociology (Lee, 1998) (Jackson, 2014). In this context, Blackness stands in relationship with the transatlantic slave trade, the African diaspora and the postcolonial relations between Blacks and the West (Bater, 2013) (Bonam et al, 2018). In the studies of the perception of Black people (which includes the formation of Blackness as an identity), historical analysis are also made concerning how Black people dealt with nationalism, feminism, post-modernism and multiculturalism (Moten, 2009) (Emejulu & Sobande, 2019) (Newman, 2017). One example of this is a research into colour-blind racism in Dutch secondary school textbooks conducted by Dr. Sijpenhof (Sijpenhof, 2019). Another example concerns racialisation of Blacks in Dutch Primary textbooks (Weiner, 2016).

Much of the literature is focussed on perceptions and activities of Black people in the West and the literature often deals with the aftermath of Black people dealing with racial discrimination in the post-colonial era (Newman, 2017) (Branche, 2018). This also includes the influence of Black resistance against being defined through racial frameworks (Ogbar, 2019). For a while, negative stereotypes of Black people indeed contributed as a deterrence for Blacks to venture outside of their comfort zones (Alabi, 2020) (Rogers et al, 2016).

However, despite negative stereotypes Black people have been migrating and even settling in Asia too after the colonial era. Two of those countries are Japan and South-Korea. It is therefore relevant to gain knowledge on how those two receiving societies (of Japan and South-Korea) deal with Black migrants. Therefore, this thesis will discuss the perception of Black migrants in Korean and Japanese society from a sociological perspective.

This research will contribute to Black Studies, Japanology, Korean Studies as well as post-colonial studies by granting insight into the perception of Black people by two post-industrial Asian societies that do not have a colonial relationship to Black people.

This research also aims to contribute to the *new urban sociology* that emerged in Japan due to the demographic (Hogetsu, 2000) as well as the societal challenges (Hashimoto, 2000) that the Japanese nation faces (Matsumoto, 2000). Korea faces similar concerns (Chong, 2018). These societal challenges, that have not changed much past two decades (Wirth et al, 2016), also implies the challenge for a sociologist that conduct investigations in those nations. In addition, there has been a negative image of blacks in Japan in the past (Hughes, 2003).

Since the decolonisation of the 1960s and 1970s, the migration and involvement of Blacks – from the now independent Caribbean and African states (mainly inhabited by Black people) as well as Latin America – in Japan and Korea increased. Black culture also expanding into

Japan and South Korea. There have also been marriages between East Asians and Afro people. Both countries do have a history with Blacks and this is also shown in media, literature and collective imagery (Kato, 2013).

Nevertheless, there is also evidence for further ‘alliance’ between blacks (Afro-Americans) and East Asia (Horne, 2018), despite the fact that whiteness still influences the perception of migrants (Kowner, 2018). In addition, both Korea (Abel & Heo, 2018) and Japan (Douglass & Roberts, 2015) experienced a shift in migration patterns since the 2000s (Kim & Kim, 2016). The migration patterns in the post-colonial era is the historical background of this research and in that context Blacks are chosen as the subject of this research.

What is needed now, is more sociological research on Blacks outside of an Eurocentric context – in this case, East Asia. For this reason, I decide to focus on Black people and my research question will be:

*What are the perceptions of Black migrants in Korean and Japanese media?*

My hypothesis is that Black migrants are perceived as both negative and exotic due to the influence of mainstream media in Japan and South Korea. This negative and exotic projection of Black people causes Koreans and Japanese people to have an ambivalent attitude towards Black migrants: a liking for their culture and entertainment, but resistance to mass migration of Blacks into their homelands.

## Theoretical framework

There has been research conducted to the effect of media representation on minorities in Asia (Erni, 2016). Here the focus lied on self-representation of migrants in South-Korea and Japan (Erni, 2016). Here it became evident that racism did exist in South-Korea and Japan, but that the racism was sugar-coated in the media (Erni, 2016). Migrants, however, were a broad term in this research (Erni, 2016). Another research highlighted that racism in the media is used a political tool worldwide (Tittley, 2019). However, this research focusses more on modern day political trends and how populists use racial suggestions and racial stereotypes to gain a following (Tittley, 2019). Other research has revealed how media representations, based on popular cultural figures, creates sets of stereotypes concerning black men (Goodwill, 2019). Similar is going on with media representations of Black women (Cox, 2020). In both cases, the stereotypes that are created due to media representations contribute to stigmatisation of Black people (Cox, 2020) (Goodwill, 2019). The literature about stereotypes and stigmatisation of blacks is there, as well as literature that reveals that racism in Korean and Japanese media does exist. However, the gap in the literature lies concerning how racism in Korea and Japan affect Blacks in particular. This thesis will contribute to the closing of this gap.

As mentioned in the introduction, Korea and Japan do have a history with Black people and in the collective consciousness of both nations this is revealed. For example: In 1977, the movie *Black Samurai* was produced by Al Adamson, in which a Black man was associated with the East Asian samurai tradition. Between 1998 and 2002 there was a Japanese comic/animation series called *Afro Samurai*, in which a post-apocalyptic timeline occurred with sentiments of Afro-American culture. There is also a new movie in production, named *Samurai blood*, based on Yasuke, a historical Black man who became a samurai in the Sengoku period of Japan (late 16<sup>th</sup> century) (Lockley & Girard, 2019). What all of this reveals is that there is an imagery going on in Japan concerning Black people. Japan opened its border to foreigners and migrants in 1867, when the 15-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito initiated a national reform that would make Japan the number one industrialised and modernised nation in Asia by 1899 (Yang, 2017).

Korea was also ‘closed off’ from foreigners similar to Japan for almost two centuries. In 1876, Korea opened its border for trade with Japan, which enabled migration of foreigners. Korea, under the lead of Japan, also developed international connections with the West. The annexation of the Korean Empire, by Japan, in 1910, transformed the Korean peninsula into an industrialised and modernised region. After the Japanese occupation ended, in 1945, Korea became one of the main economies of Asia and an attractive place of investment and leisure for

migrations. The sociological transformation of Japan and Korea happened, therefore, simultaneously and with a similar pattern (under the lead of Japan).

With this background, I wish to investigate how Black migrants are perceived in modern day Japan and South Korea. Black migrants arrived in Japan (and possibly Korea) ever since the colonial era (mainly due to the Dutch VOC and the Spanish empire). Since the Meiji restoration, Blacks from the United States, Latin America, as well as the then colonial powers became involved in commercial activities in East Asia. It is obvious therefore that this research will have an historical framework to deal with. For this research, the meaning of cultural racism is taken into consideration. In this theory, racism is an institutionalised form of exclusion in which on formal grounds someone is 'included', but the 'inclusion' is a farce: the formalities only serve to cover-up the social distancing between groups (Brondolo et al., 2012).

In the research of Brondolo et al. the impact of racism in the culture has been examined to see how it affects peer relationships (Brondolo et al., 2012). One of the main outcomes of this study is that racism is often not seen for what it is and therefore it cannot properly be addressed (Brondolo et al., 2012). Similar to a study conducted by Mastro et al. it has become clear that blatant racism is in decline, but in its place subtle racist depictions of minorities (in their case Latinos) still perpetrate social stigmas that hinder the full participation of minorities in a society (Mastro et al., 2008). Both studies revealed the sociological function of racism: to engender national cohesion at the expense of the minority. Both studies also revealed the reluctance to openly admit that this social marginalisation is going on (Brondolo et al., 2012; Mastro et al., 2008). Both studies are examples of how social and cultural diversity can lead to conflict and ostracism of those that deviate from societal expectation. This is in line with the sociological conflict theory that explains that human beings prefer to be part of groups that are homogenous and that too much contact with different groups causes the effect of withdrawing in one's own group (Jonas, 2009).

The conflict theory does not relate only to racism, but to all types of social aversion to groups that are not similar to one's own (Jonas, 2009). In sociology, race has been perceived as a means – by society – to organise social relations and foster social cohesion (Meer & Nayak, 2015). The debate in sociology is not whether racism exists or not, but how racism serves as a social function in modernity (Meer & Nayak, 2015). 'Race' is not a concept that stands on its own: social class, social capital as well as cultural capital all play a role in how racial conflict plays out (Meer & Nayak, 2015). However, in all of these mentioned studies there is a norm of 'whiteness' that is considered as a standard (Kowner, 2018) (Russell, 2017). In this thesis, whiteness is of relevance on an historical level – due to the industrialisation and modernisation

of Korea and Japan. However, this thesis focusses on racial perceptions in Korea and Japan based on the societal expectations that matter in both nations. Japan, for example, has its own (domestic) minorities that are structurally discriminated against (Arudou, 2015). However, due to the reputation of Japan as a racist-free society, not much literature is devoted to map out racial tensions in Japanese society (Arudou, 2015) (Tajima & Thornton, 2012). Similarly, in Korea there is social marginalisation of minorities too, but often in the context of class nationalism (Han, 2016). In Korea, multiculturalism and nationalism are afront with one another when it comes to the subject of race (Han, 2016). Similar to Japan, Korea's societal institutions are less than 'welcome' for newcomers to integrate (Han, 2016). One thing must be clear: social marginalisation of ethnic groups occurred in East Asia prior to Japan's industrial reform in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kowner & Demel, 2015). However, the Industrial reform of Japan, which led to similar reforms throughout East Asia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, implied that 'race' was imported as a western marker to apply to the existing social marginalisation (Kowner & Demel, 2015) as race was also a matter of national policies during the Japanese colonial era (Fujitani, 2011).

## Methods and data

For this research I will use quantitative data to answer the research question. To make this easier, I make several sub-questions and divided the methods for those sub-questions.

### Quantitative

*How does Korean society perceive black migrants?*

*How does Japanese society perceive black migrants?*

In this thesis, a content analysis will be made based on imagery of black people in Korea and Japan. The method chosen will be visual social semiotics in which concepts are used as resources to describe what images portray to the public (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). In such a content analysis it is the representational meaning of imagery that is decoded (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004). In this type of content analysis the focus is on the psychological impact that pictures have on those that perceive them (Van Leeuwen, 2004). The visual analysis is partly based on cultural iconography in which the images emerged (Van Leeuwen, 2004).

In this thesis, however, the psychological impact of the selected pictures will not be examined because this will require more resource and time which are not available at the time.

This thesis remains focussed on sociological context of those imagery and with historical knowledge to give a better explanation of the phenomenon.

The images are randomly selected and from the random selection ten will be used in this thesis actively. Based on those ten images, and a display of additional similar images, who are randomly selected in association with secondary literature, an interpretation will be given aided by secondary literature. The secondary literature is cited in the text or in the additional footnotes.

The source of the images are referred in footnotes (in an APA format), while the scholarly literature is referred in brackets within the text according to APA style. This is to keep the distinction between the images and the (secondary) literature clear for the reader. Images are collected by random Google Searches under the queries:

- *Black people Japan*
- *Black people Korea*
- *Blacks in Japan*
- *Blacks in Korea*
- *Black migrants in Japan*
- *Black migrants in Korea*

To secure a good analysis the pictures are divided in three eras: Colonial era until 1950s, 1950-2000 and 2000-2020. At the end of the chapter a short conclusion is given. The first assigned

period, the ‘Colonial era until 1950s’ can be described as the era of isolation, modernisation and global integration in both Korean and Japanese history.<sup>1</sup> The second era, 1950-2000, fell into the post-World War II era and this can be seen as the era of decolonisation and globalisation in which both South Korea and Japan became part of the global economy as separate nation-states with parliamentary democracies. The era of 2000-2020 can be categorised as an era of revival of nationalism or the falling apart of liberal democratic inspired globalisation. In this chapter only images retrieved from the random Google searches are used, because the method of using the Korean and Japanese online newspaper sources turned out unsuccessful.

In this thesis the culturalist theory is used which perceives the audience as having an active role in the influence media has on society, unlike the class-dominant theory which focusses only on elite corporate control of mass media (Grandstaff et al, 2019). From a sociological perspective, the culturalist theory fits the social and political changes that are discussed later in this thesis, which reveals the agency (and therefore influence) of the masses.

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<sup>1</sup> The labels Isolation, modernisation and global integration are explained as follows: Korea and Japan were both feudal societies during the middle ages as well as the colonial era. The Sakoku (鎖国) policy of Japan caused the nation to close for 214 years (1639-1853) for both migration as well as foreign trade, except for the Chinese empire, Joseon Dynasty and the Dutch empire (Lockley & Girard, 2019). The reason for the lock down was the secure national homogeneity by excluding the invasive influences of the Roman Catholic Church through the Portuguese empire (Lockley & Girard, 2019). The Joseon Dynasty was considered a tributary state to the Ming and later Qing Dynasties that governed the Chinese empire (Chan, 2018). In this context, the Joseon Dynasty was not ‘permitted’ to pursue its sovereign interests without the symbolic approval of the Chinese emperor which granted Korea economic access to the Chinese economy in return (upon which Korea was dependent)(Chan, 2018). So *both Korea and Japan were isolated*, but both for two completely different reasons.

After Japan opened up and modernised through industrialisation, Japan placed pressure on Korea to forfeit its Sino centric worldview in which China was the centre of their national policies(Chan, 2018). After the Incident at Ganghwa Island in which the Korean military attacked a Japanese military vessel that was surveying the Korean shores, in 1875, the Empire of Japan pressured Korea into a treaty as a separate sovereign nation apart from the tributary system of China – this occurred with the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1876 (Křištofová, 2015). From that point on Japan became dominant in Korean affairs and *this was the opening of Korea to foreign relations apart from the Chinese court* – Eventually, Japan’s policy led to Korea (which transformed itself from a kingdom into an empire in 1897) becoming a Japanese protectorate in 1907 followed by the Japanese annexation of the Korean Empire in 1910 (Křištofová, 2015). This was the continuation of the transformation of Korean society from the feudal, isolated, Sino centric nation into a modern industrialised nation-state (Křištofová, 2015).

After the capitulation of the Empire of Japan, in 1945, Korea separated from Japanese rule and it became a republic. Due to the Korean civil war, Korea became divided between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, led by Kim il-Sung from Pyongyang, and the Republic of Korea which was under the guard of the United States from the nation’s capital Hangseong (during Japanese occupation called Keijo) which was renamed Seoul (Stueck, 2009). The aftermath of the Korean War turned the focus of the United States on South-Korea to secure it as an ally during the Cold War, which meant that both post-WWII Japan and South-Korea became integrated in the globalised economy led by the West (Stueck, 2009) (Křištofová, 2015).



## Media perception

This chapter discussed the media perception based on the random ten selected images. The division in three time-periods is to keep the analysis organised for the reader to understand this better. This chapter also reveals that mainstream media in Korea and Japan developed over time and the historical context of that development is mentioned to give a proper context of the sociology behind racial imagery's over time concerning blacks in Korea and Japan.

### Colonial era until 1950s

As mentioned in the introduction, Japan has been somewhat familiar with Black people ever since the colonial era when Blacks (some slaves, some not) arrived in Japan through colonial powers. One of those black men even integrated in Shogunate Japan as a samurai. However, contact with the outside world was limited due to the policy of Isolation enforced by the Shogunate in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Lockley & Girard, 2019). The Joseon dynasty, which governed the Kingdom of Korea, held a similar policy after the failed invasion of Korea by Japan in 1592 (Hitoshi, 2013; Cumings, 1997). The isolation policy of Japan was ended with the Convention of Kanagawa, agreed on the March 31, 1854, under military pressure of Commodore Matthew C. Perry (which succeeded only after his second expedition with increased military might). Prior to Commodore Matthew C. Perry's arrival, several attempts have been conducted by the West to urge Japan to open its borders to Western trade but without success e.g. A diplomatic letter by Dutch King William III in 1844 (Fuyuko & Clulow, 2011) and a visit by American Commodore James Biddle in 1846 (Plutschow, 2007).

Prior to the Convention of Kanagawa, Japan had no mainstream press – however there were domestic newspapers called *yomiuri* (読売) (Groemer, 1994). Due to the isolationist policies much contact with foreigners, except Chinese, Korean and Dutch merchants (in Nagasaki) remained to the minimum and this was also reflected in the circulating media of the time. The arrival of Commodore exposed Japanese society to foreign ideas and cultures. The Image 1 reveals a group of Black entertainers that were brought to Japan briefly after the opening of Japan's ports to foreign trade.



<sup>2</sup> Image 1

The image is a group image, showing eleven Black entertainers,<sup>3</sup> in uniform, performing music. There is one entertainer that is shown separate from the group, which hints at a possible leading role for the group. The image is focussed only on the Black entertainers and no Japanese or white Americans are displayed. Therefore, the lack of comparison means that no indication can be made that his image suggest a specific stereotype about or prejudice towards Black people. However, the black entertainers are shown with bare feet which used to be associated with servitude or a low societal status (Nacht, 1915). This image is different from the other known Black depictions during the isolation period.

<sup>2</sup> Dower, J.W. & S. Niyagawa (2008) Assembled Pictures of Commodore Perry's Visit. Tokyo University Historiographical Institute. Link retrieved from: [https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/black\\_ships\\_and\\_samurai\\_02/vis\\_encounters\\_west.html](https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/black_ships_and_samurai_02/vis_encounters_west.html) (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

<sup>3</sup> During the 19th century, Black people underwent a transformation that began in the late 18th century with the Haitian Revolution (1795-1804), the Curacaoan Revolt by Tula (1795) as well as Haiti's successful independence from Napoleonic France who intended to reinstall slavery (Girard, 2011) (Fatah-Black, 2013). The independence movements in Spanish America (Klein, 1988) as well as the outcry to abolish slavery led to the abolishment of slavery by the British empire – in 1833 – who later enforced this worldwide on other empires and states throughout the 19th century (Alibrandi, 2015). During the 19th century, Blacks developed their own communities in the independent states in the Americas and also their musical culture developed during this time. However, the psychological costs of slavery caused division among Blacks what should be considered their music of 'coon'-music. However, Black entertainers were embraced in Europe where their reputation was better than in the Americas (Deaville, 2006). At the same time, the influence of Black music, Black composers and Black entertainers grew in the culture of the United States (Taylor, 2005). Note that the time Commodore Perry arrived in Japan, slavery was yet to be abolished in the United States over which a civil war was fought. So the Black entertainers portrayed in Image 1 might have been free Blacks but chances are that they were slaves. However, this shows that cultural influence through music and entertainment was one way that Black people were able to emancipate themselves as a people separate from white supremacist policies that sought to undermine them (Taylor, 2005).



#### <sup>4</sup> Image 2

This image displays animal traders. What is remarkable is that even though the black are portrayed as servants carrying the cargo, one of them can be perceived as a free Black that is a trader himself. The image does not have a central focus, it highlight an ongoing activity. The symbology of bare feet (hinting towards a lower social status) are shown in the image (Nacht, 1915). The image does not show dominance between Japanese and Blacks, but it does display power relations between the whites and blacks that are portrayed. This image suggest a role of servitude for Blacks. The following image, from the same time period is similar:

<sup>4</sup> Goinjapanesque (March 14, 2020) Yasuke, the First Western Samurai in the History of Japan. *One-stop guide to everything about Japan*. Link retrieved from: <http://goinjapanesque.com/34081/> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).





<sup>5</sup> Image 3

In this image, however, there is only one black man that is dressed relatively well and he takes a central role as a servant. This image does not reveal whose servant (or slave) he was, but it does reveal that Blacks were portrayed as people that served whites.

The following image displays a Black sumo wrestler in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia Commons (April 22nd 2006) Japanese painting depicting a group of Portuguese Nanban foreigners who arrived in Japan (17th century). Yasuke was a black man who came to Japan during the Sengoku period. *Unknown Author*. Link retrieved from: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NanbanGroup.JPG> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).





<sup>6</sup>Image 4

Image 4, which was created around 1605, reveals not much about the perception of Blacks, but it shows again that a Black man was in the position of an entertainer – and entertainers were often servants at that time. The sociological fact alone that a black man was allowed to compete with a native samurai wrestler shows that Blacks were perceived as separate people with their own identity apart from whites. If Blacks were only depicted together with a white superior this would have instituted the collective belief that blacks were nothing without a white supervision.

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<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia Commons (November 21st 2017) Sumō yūrakuzu byōbu, Detail: A black man wrestling with Japanese. *Author Unknown*. Circa 1605. Link retrieved from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasuke#/media/File:Black\\_sumo\\_wrestler\\_in\\_17th\\_century.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasuke#/media/File:Black_sumo_wrestler_in_17th_century.jpg) (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

Concerning this image of around 1605 should also be noted that this image was before Japan closed with borders for foreigners. The imagery of Black people in Japan at the time was therefore not influenced by xenophobic, and let alone, racial policies.<sup>7</sup> The imagery of Black people was based on how the Japanese encountered them in Japan in daily life. The images above reveal that Blacks had some degree of autonomy when they arrived in Japan. Some functioned only as slaves or servant to colonial officers that came for trade, others were part of Roman Catholic missions and some remained in Japan as free Blacks and they partook in Japanese society.

After the opening of Japan in 1853, followed by the ascension to the throne of Emperor Mutsuhito in 1867, an era of reform began in 1868. This era of reform that would later be called the Meiji Restoration, transformed Japan swiftly from a medieval feudal society to an imperialist industrialised nation. It was in this time period that the first modern mass-produced newspapers emerged in Japan called the Shimbun. With open communication with foreigners, the prejudices of the West also made their way into Japanese society.<sup>8</sup> One of those is the depiction of Blackface. One of those blackface depictions can be seen in the following image.

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of race based on a biological and intellectual hierarchy developed during the era of enlightenment that occurred in Europe and Europe's colonial empires in the 17th and 18th centuries (Wolff, 1994). This implies that during the 1600s, Japan was not influenced by such categorisations that were still developing in the West. This was also not possible because Japan closed itself in 1639 right at the time that the enlightenment was growing and the movement began taking root in European societies (Lavaert & Schroder, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> The emergence of mass media Japan transformed the rural feudal society into an urbanised industrialised nation that took over Western ideas of consumerism, enlightenment, freedom of speech and civil rights. On one hand, this was the inevitable result of opening up the country to foreigners and foreign influences. By giving into the demands of the West to open and industrialise their country, Japan also destroyed some of its own domestic institutions and cultural attitudes that were rooted in the isolationist policies that were abolished. On the other hand, Japanese mainstream media back then was strongly regulated by the state. During this time, the Japanese state also undertook actions to preserve their 'Japaneseness' as a modern nation (Justin-Jinich et al, 2016).



<sup>9</sup> **Image 5**

This image is based on a British novel called *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, written and illustrated by Helen Bannerman and published in 1899, that made its way in the Empire of Japan several years later (Mori, 2005) (Bader, 1996). The imagery of Black Sambo depicts him as a black man that is closer to nature and therefore better equipped to deal with nature in its raw form (think about wild animals, as in Image 5 he is depicted near a tiger). This story became iconic in Japanese discourse as will be shown later in this thesis. At the time that Black Sambo was introduced in Japanese society, the British empire was the dominant power in international affairs and therefore the cultural influence of the British empire also implied that the racial prejudices of that same British empire were also absorbed by the nation's affected by British rule. The reason this is important to know is because the idea that Black people were closer to nature was developed by evolutionists that claimed that Black people were closer related to the

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<sup>9</sup> Chozick, M. (April 13th 2020) 'Sambo' racism row reignites over kids' play: The 1899 book still making waves in 21st-century Japan. *The Japan Times*. Link retrieved from: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2010/04/13/issues/sambo-racism-row-reignites-over-kids-play/#.Xu2e6thxeUk> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

apes than white people. This was the development of scientist racism which was also accepted in anthropological circles in the 19<sup>th</sup> and also early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Barkan, 1992).<sup>10</sup>

The influence of scientific racism also reached Japan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and this also sparked debates on how Japan would relate to its own minorities and other Asian nations. The Japanese were perceived as the superior 'Asian race' in Asia, but inferior to whites from the Western world (mainly Germanic whites).

When Japan annexed the Korean Empire, the Japanese governor-general of Korea installed policies to regulate Korean media as well as to socialise Koreans into Japanese society.<sup>11</sup> Japanese mainstream media, and since the Japanese occupation of Korea, Korean mainstream media were both nationalistic and focussed on (Japanese) nation-building: The focus therefore was more on the important role of Japan in international relations. After the Second World War, Korean media became completely separate from Japanese media and the focus turned to Korean nation-building.

### 1950-2000

The period after the Second World War, another war emerged: The Cold War, which was an ideological war between the Soviet Union (which embraced state-ran socialism) and the United States (which embraced free market capitalism). During this time, there were political, military and diplomatic battles between the two superpowers concerning who would get a foothold on the former colonies as well as the new industrialised nations in Asia. This period was also highlighted as a turning point in which public claims of racial supremacy were condemned as well as meted with punitive measures to prevent another crisis as what happened during the Second World War. For the Empire of Japan this implied not only to forfeit their autocratic claims over Korea, Manchuria and the conquered colonies in Asia, this also meant forfeiting the whole claim that the Japanese emperor was a type of god figure that led the nation. This era also brought in democratisation and the adoption of liberal democratic values in both Japan and

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<sup>10</sup> The origins of scientific racism can be linked to the evolutionist ideas of Charles Darwin, who himself had racial tendencies that were expressed in his publications (Jeynes, 2011). Darwinism sparked the idea that some ethnicities, or 'races', were inferior to others and that therefore some groups deserved the right to govern others (Jeynes, 2011). These ideas were considered scientific and things went so far that Blacks were even perceived as sub-human – consider the human zoos in which Blacks were displayed in the United States and Europe (Putnam, 2012). The colonial empires exploited the excuse of Darwinism and evolutionism to justify the existence of their empires as well as the economic exploitation of indigenous people's (Putnam, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> The Governor-General of Korea, by law, was the head of the public institutions and the Japanese government took control of the cultural activities on the Korean peninsula. The newspapers that emerged were owned by Japanese companies and they followed Japanese interests. It was only after revolts in Korean streets that the Japanese government permitted, from 1919, Korean newspapers to exist separately from the Japanese media (Baldwin, 1969). The March 1 Movement, as the Korean resistance was also called, was also influenced by the Russian Revolution that just occurred in which Korean dissidents took advantage of the chaos of the revolution to revolt against Japanese occupation (Lebedev, 2017).



South Korea. However, the post WW II world with the United States as the capitalist superpower did not undo racial prejudices that have been promoted and even embraced for decades and some even for centuries. Post-colonial relations between the West and their former colonies still carried cultural, political as well as economic consequences of colonisation as well a stigmatisation caused by racism. In Post-WWII Japan, the imagery of Blacks did not change that much. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the tale of Black Sambo became iconic in Japanese culture. It became a franchise that was made into other productions. Below is an image that shows an image similar to Black Sambo in production.



<sup>12</sup> Image 6

Image 6 does not reveal any type of power relation nor any suggestion of power. This image shows that the image of Blacks were present in Japan and that it became an image that was used in the Japanese entertainment industry. This is a pattern that has continued since the colonial era, as well as the Meiji Restoration, in which Blacks were often portrait in a role of servitude or entertainers.

From the 1970s onwards, Blackface remained in Korean and Japanese culture. Blackface, however, was not a central theme in a context of racial prejudice or persecution of Black minorities as it was in the West. It is from this point on that Blackface also makes its more obvious appearance in South Korea.

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<sup>12</sup> Tonshima NPO Promotive Conference (2014)

発掘！雑司が谷生まれの人形アニメーション、人形劇の世界. Link retrieved from: [http://toshima-npo.org/toshima-npo/html/east\\_asia/jyoeikai.html](http://toshima-npo.org/toshima-npo/html/east_asia/jyoeikai.html) (date last visited: July 4th 2020).



<sup>13</sup> Image 7

This image reveals an actor in three frames using Blackface. The context is acting. At first sight, there appears to be no political message. However, one of the images shows the actor with Blackface with a chain around his neck. This can refer to the transatlantic slave trade where Blacks were shipped in chains (Fracchia, 2019) (Nixon, 2019). The second shows him in a begging position and the last displays him as a type of entertainer. These images suggest a connection between black people and lower ranks in society.

2000-2020



<sup>14</sup> Image 8

Image 8 displays an actor enacting the then presiding President Barack Obama. This image displays blackness in a position of power – however – it is reduced to comedy. This image is Japanese and not Korean. Japan's relationship with the United States improved a lot since the

<sup>13</sup> Gust Of Popular Feeling (March 5th 2012) Three decades of black face in Korea. Link retrieved from: <http://populargusts.blogspot.com/2012/03/three-decades-of-black-face-in-korea.html> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Delahaye, G. (February 11th 2009) Japanese Blackface Obama Magician Almost Makes It Not Worth It. Stereogum. Link retrieved from: [https://www.stereogum.com/1776640/japanese\\_blackface\\_obama\\_magic/vg-loc/videogum/](https://www.stereogum.com/1776640/japanese_blackface_obama_magic/vg-loc/videogum/) (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

Second World War and the United States was always led by white males who served as Presidents or other high offices. The arrival of Barack Obama was a deviation from the norm and this screenshot of a comedy reveals the Japanese reaction to this deviation. Again, Black people became associated with servitude and entertainment in Japanese culture over the centuries – this can explain why, from a sociological point of view, perceiving Barack Obama as the head of a superpower was challenging to the Japanese collective psyche.



<sup>15</sup> **Image 9**

Image 9 displays blackface of a Japanese pop group whose career ended in the 1990s but we made a brief ‘come back’ on television. The image shows all of its members, dressed in various

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, K. (March 17th 2015) Japan's blackface problem: the country's bizarre, troubled relationship with race. Vox.com. Link retrieved from: <https://www.vox.com/2015/3/17/8230783/japan-racism-blackface> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).



colours, with blackface (except one member, who is presented as the outlier). In this context, the pop group held a short-lived performance as entertainers. The use of Black face can be interpreted as them associating themselves with entertainers, as Blacks were known. In this sense, the performance of appearing in Blackface can be seen as tributary to the cultural and musical influence of Black people on Japanese culture. On the other hand, the choice of the group (or its managers) fell bad with the public. This reveals that there is heterogeneity of the images.



<sup>16</sup> Image

Image 10 is a collection of images that reveal Blackface on Korean media. Even though there has been backlash about this both inside South Korea and from foreigners, the fact that this was displayed so openly reveals something about the perception of Blackness in Korean society. One remarkable thing is that even though this can be categorised as comedy, in none of the above images is blackness associated with any type of ‘greatness’ or higher rank – it still related to entertainment and to some extent, exotic servitude.

<sup>16</sup> Jean, A. (February 25th 2020) To end the use of blackface on Korean television. *Charge.org*. Link retrieved from: <https://www.change.org/p/south-korean-broadcasting-companies-to-end-the-use-of-blackface-on-korean-television> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

The collection of images rank from impersonating Black pop groups as well as emphasising the stereotypes of the ‘negro’ as it was known in the West. However, the image also displays a woman with rings in her neck. This is a tradition that is still common in some communities in Myanmar and Thailand as well as in African tribes (Ismail, 2008) (Van Vuuren, 2012). In that regard, Black face here does not automatically have to relate only to Blacks. Black face could also relate to coloured people of South East Asia.



<sup>17</sup> Image 11

To emphasis the hidden cultural message, an extra is used in this chapter, Image 11, that shows a black boy within a Korean family. It is remarkable that no father figure is present and that the black boy is depicted as having no clue what is going on. This image does not have to suggest anything racial in itself. It simply displayed a guest or newcomer in a family that needs to learn the values of the family. The image is also shown that the Black boy cannot handle eating with sticks, as is common in Korea. The focus of the pet is also on the Black boy. This, however, also displays blacks in a relative socially awkward position that suggest a lower rank in society.

<sup>17</sup> Gust Of Popular Feeling (March 5th 2012) Three decades of black face in Korea. Link retrieved from: <http://populargusts.blogspot.com/2012/03/three-decades-of-black-face-in-korea.html> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).



The following images are not part of the official analysis, but they are displayed here to emphasis the point made: Black people do suffer from a covert lower reputation in Korean and Japanese society.




Image 12



Image 13

**\*Né·gro, né·gro**  
*Negro, negro* [ní:grou  
 니이그로우]  
 ㉮ (복수 Negroes, negroes [ní:grouz  
 니이그로우즈])  
 흑인 《인류학적인  
 뜻을 강조할 때는  
 대문자로 시작한  
 다》  
 He is a  
*Negro.* 그는 흑인입니다.





The following images reveal the iconic heritage The Black Sambo had on Japanese culture:

23





Image 18



Image 19 (left), Image 20 (right)





**Image 21 (left) Image 22 (right)**<sup>19</sup>

To conclude, imagery of Black people have circulated in Korea and Japan ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century when western colonists ventured to Asia for trade. The exposure of Japanese society to Blacks was in the context of servitude and entertainment. Japan's predecessor of mass media developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while Korea's predecessor of mass media developed after the influence of industrialised Japan increased on the Korean peninsula at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In both societies, which were merged for 35 years during the Japanese occupation of Korea, Blackness is portrait in relationship to lower ranks in society or it is associated with entertainment. This is the red line throughout history that has remained the same, despite later resistance by both locals and international actors against the imagery that today is considered denigrating to black people.

<sup>19</sup> **Images 18 till 22:** Moorehead, R. (August 21st 2011) Blackface is back (if it ever left). JAPANsociology. Link retrieved from: <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/> (date last visited: July 4th 2020).

## Societal challenges

In the previous chapter the depiction of blackness in Korean and Japanese society became associated with servitude and entertainment. In this chapter we will discuss the societal challenges of blackface for both Korea and Japan.

One thing to mention beforehand is that neither Korea or Japan has a history of colonisation of African people. Japan has an imperial history of colonising European colonies in Asia, China and the Korean peninsula, for a short period of time before capitulating in the Second World War. So the societal relationship between Koreans, Japanese and black people are of a different kind than that of the former colonisers of African people. Therefore, no remark of racial oppression can be assigned directly to the relationship, because there is no history of occupation, enslavement nor naturalisation or decolonisation as Blacks have underwent at the hand of the West. For the most part, apart from Blacks during the colonial era, Korea and Japan have been destination of free choice for Black people and not a historical necessity.

The second thing is that Korean and Japanese society have an ambivalent relationship with one another concerning the short-lived colonial era of Japan as well as the fact that much of Korea's development into an economic power derived from that same controversial short-lived colonial era.

The third thing is that both Japan and South-Korea have a tiny minority of Black people amongst them. The overwhelming majority of the population in both nations are still considered to be homogenous. Homogenous communities are not free from societal conflict nor crisis. Both countries also deter mass migration as well as having dual citizenship. One effect of globalisation is that the local can feel diminished or threatened. Japan and South Korea are both important actors in globalisation and the global economy – and on a regional level they are rivals of the People's Republic of China. So Japan and South Korea are not, in that sense, multicultural societies even though ethnic and cultural diversity is displayed in their urban areas which are often tourist hotspots. From this can be seen that both Japan and South Korea have a cultural boundary between the local and the international (foreign cultures) in how both societies are shaped: natives have an in-group preference that fosters social cohesion and nationalism.

Korea and Japan do not have a significant high number of Black migrants living within their borders to be perceived as any threat to the local cultures. Black culture, from the United States and the West Indies – such as hip hop, reggae and jazz – have even been embraced by minorities in Korea and Japan. So, Blackness is not oppressed per se by Korean and Japanese society. Blackface shows the position that Blacks have in Korea and Japanese society: the welcome, but

political non-relevant minority that contributes to sectors in the economy, such as entertainment and foreign labour.

Therefore, Black people cannot be perceived as any threat to Korean or Japanese society because Black migrants do not possess the wealth nor the quantity in numbers to be a potential risk to the social cohesion upon which Korean and Japanese society relies. There is also no post-colonial relationship that might cause resentment on both sides due to past collective wrongdoings and potential demands for collective reparations.

However, the lack of a post-colonial relationship between Black people on one hand and Korea and Japan on the other hand does not mean that there are no challenges in both societies when it comes to embracing Black influence. For example, half-Korean model Han Hyun-min faced racial discrimination when he received the spotlights, even though South Koreans are considered more willing to live side-by-side with foreigners than for example, Chinese people (Agence France-Presse, 2017). In Japan, Beauty Queen Ariana Miyamoto faced racial discrimination when she became the first biracial Miss Japan (Holley, 2015).

What can explain the dichotomy between modernist non-racial based societies and yet common instances of racial prejudice is the following: Societies centre themselves around a normal that becomes the central image upon which the group members built their relationships. This can be described as a ‘unity by exclusion’ principle upon which societies are built and are maintained: similarity between group members are rewarded, while deviation from group norms are punished informally (through social sanctions or shunning by group members) or formally through institutionalised violence by the state (think about crime or treason). In sociology, group behaviour is perceived as serving a function for the group or society, those are the manifest functions. When a function leads to disastrous or unpleasant social situations, that group behaviour is categorised as a dysfunction in society. When a dysfunction indirectly offer opportunities for other group members this dysfunction serves a latent function or a manifest function that also serves side-functions. Using this sociological approach when it comes to racial prejudice in South Korea and Japan, two nations with no colonial nor post-colonial history with Black people, it can be concluded that:

One on hand, racial prejudice exists are the result of Korean and Japanese society maintaining their cultures by excluding elements that are considered ‘foreign’. That is why natives with a biracial background can be discriminated against in public because they represent a deviation from the establish norms (as with the Korean model and the Japanese Beauty Queen).

On the other hand, racial prejudice is inevitable by the mere fact that public life consists out of social archetypes that have been established throughout the generations. As mentioned before, both Japan and South Korea have a Black minority that is barely visible politically, economically and demographically within their borders. This implies that both Korean and Japanese society are not 'used' to having Blacks as leading figures in their societies. This is why having a biracial Beauty Queen was so controversial in Japan.

One of the functions of established mass media as well as the mainstream entertainment industry in every country is to socialise the members of that society into society's narrative – besides their other functions to entertain and inform (as far as that is possible with biased media). Every society has a narrative of who 'we' are and who 'we are not'. Those are the pillar upon which that society is built. If a society has been established on migration and multi-ethnic groups working together, as with for example the United States, than having a Black individual in a leading position is not that controversial (depending on the context!). If a society that has been based on exclusivity and isolation from the outside world (as is the case with South Korea and Japan), then any deviation from any leading figure in any industry will be seen as a 'threat' to the collective identity of that society.

Add to this is that Blacks have been perceived as outsiders relating to servitude and entertainment for centuries in Japan and South Korea. Both societies have their own mainstream entertainment industry that centres around their native celebrities. In that context, Blacks can have a leading role in an entertainment industry as long as it is not the domestic entertainment industry which is consider their own. For example, a Black rapper from the United States can be welcomed as a foreign American successful artist. But a half-Black Korean rapper might face prejudice and even rejection for becoming successful in Korean society because the entertainment industry has its archetypes that relates to the homogenous course of Korean society of which he is a deviation.

Does this all mean that there are not Black influences taken over by Korean and Japanese society? There are! There are Japanese and South-Korean RnB, Hip-hop<sup>20</sup> and even Reggae<sup>21</sup> groups that become successful. However, those groups have internalised Black influences and therefore those artists are perceived as one of their own and not as much as 'outsiders'.

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<sup>20</sup> Dok2, Zico and Keith Ape are examples of Korean hip hop artists. Nomak, Nujabes, Teriyaki Boyz are examples of Japanese hip hop artists.

<sup>21</sup> Skull and Windy City are well-known Korean Reggae artists. Iecca, Ryo the Skywalker, Fireball and Pushim are well-known Japanese reggae artists/groups.

What it comes down to is that all societies have their bias that makes them to the society they are. There is no such thing as a society without its inherit bias!<sup>22</sup> The presence of societal bias is not a problem in itself; it is what enables group members to identity and integrate in the group. However, a societal bias can also be an opportunity for the use of violence against minorities.<sup>23</sup> Political violence often has a societal discontent at its base that group members are not able or do not want to admit publicly. Extremist parties or extremist movements provide an opportunity for group members to express outrageous prejudices that they normally would not dare to express. The societal biases of Korean and Japanese society serve the purpose of securing their nationhood as well as their social cohesion.

However, the biases in Korean and Japanese society does not mean that there is no room for anti-racism and movements against extremism.<sup>24</sup> While the Empire of Japan normalised ‘Japaneseness’ with ‘whiteness’, and ‘blackness’ was objectified as the ‘other’ (Arudou, 2015), opponents of this imperial imagery perceived and portrait Black people as allies (Onishi, 2013). In Japan, there has been a history, since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of Japanese people who distance themselves from racial thinking as well as racial violence (Onishi, 2013) (Shibuichi, 2016). Those movements, however, were not just Japanese: They were alliances of people with similar ideas from all over Asia (including Korea) and beyond (Onishi, 2013) (Shibuichi, 2016). In the context of Japan and South-Korea the anti-racism movements are rooted more in resistance against the colonial past of Japan – which afflicted Japan’s neighbours – than that is its rooted in a Black civil rights movement (Prieler, 2010). The colonial past of Japan still causes for political and societal conflicts between Japan and its neighbours (Prieler, 2010). Therefore, it

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<sup>22</sup> Sociological research has also revealed that bigger homogeneity in a society tends to empower social trust as well as social cohesion, while an increase in ethnic and racial diversity tends to weaken societies ties both within the ethnic groups as well as between them (Van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014) (Putnam, 2007). These researches were not conducted in Japan or South Korea. However, from a sociological perspective it can be significant to say that this might be the reason why some societies, as Japan and South-Korea, strife for a more homogeneous course instead of the super diverse multiculturalism that dominated the West for a long time. The West is undergoing resistance, often by majority groups, against multiculturalism due to the loss of social cohesion and the perceived threat on that social cohesion by the increasing influence of other groups and cultures (Wynn et al, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> When it comes to political violence, history shows that political violence – powered by societal discontent – is often aimed at indigenous or natives of their own societies when it comes to Korea (Hwang, 2016). When it comes to Japan there is an exception; namely the Second World War in which Japan used colonial violence on many in China, Korea as well as South East Asia (Schattschneider, 2005). Mass political violence against blacks have not been recorded in Korean and Japanese history.

<sup>24</sup> One remarkable thing about racism in the former Japanese empire was that the relationship between the ethnic groups was based on a symbolic family household with the emperor as the father and native Japanese (and later also, Korean) elites as the ‘older brothers’ and everyone else are ‘younger brothers’ (Arudou, 2015). This is different than the biological and scientific racism that emerged in the West that entitled whiteness with power and privilege (Arudou, 2015). This symbolic interpretation of race relations in the former Japanese empire implied inclusion for the ‘younger brothers’ (Arudou, 2015). Blacks, in this context, did not even exist in this symbolic family of ‘older’ and ‘younger’ brothers. Blacks were the outsiders to this whole system.

is this association with ‘whiteness’ with Japan as the ‘superior Asian race’ that is resisted and with this all other types of racism are opposed also (Prieler, 2010).

The anti-racism that emerged in Japan and South Korea therefore are rooted in historical conflicts that are fought out till this day. Blacks on one hand can benefit from this anti-racism because that implies that they also should not become the target of racism. On the other hand, Blacks are mainly seen as a universal ingredient in this anti-racism that exists in South-Korea and Japan due to the historical conflicts that portray Japan as the aggressor (Prieler, 2010) (Russel, 1991). Japan, the coloniser, adhered to whiteness as the norm and blackness as an objectification of the ‘other’ (Arudou, 2015). The colonised, Korea, adopted the idea of a common ‘Yellow Race’ from Japan (the coloniser) in which Blacks were the outsiders (Tikhonov, 2012). The idea of a yellow race granted Japan, as coloniser, an advantage over the conquered territories in Asia (Tikhonov, 2012) – this yellow race mythology, however, did not succeed in winning over the allegiance of the colonised territories (Tikhonov, 2012) (Arudou, 2015) (Kowner & Demel, 2015).

The anti-racism in Korea and Japan are therefore backlashes of the colonial past that haunts both nations till this day (Russel, 1991). So, Japan and South Korea cannot – from a sociological point of view – be classified as white supremacist nations with a strong prejudice against Black people. First of all, those nations are not considered white. Secondly, Blacks are not the target of the political violence that occurs, and has occurred, in both nations.

As the images in the previous chapter reveals, Blackness will always have some colonial undertone to it in Korean and Japanese society. This colonial undertone, however, has more to do with the national developments of both South-Korea and Japan under the pressure of the Western colonial empires than it has to do with any type of ‘supremacy’ at the expense of Black people. This does not mean that no prejudice nor discrimination exist. Both exists, but it is only when it comes to political and economic power that those prejudices might become problematic.

To conclude, Blacks in Korean and Japanese society enjoy a relatively safe existence in compared to other countries that has a stronger bias against Black people due to a controversial history. Blackface is the left-over of the first interactions with Black people in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that gave the basis for the perception of Blacks in Korean and Japanese society.

The sub-question *How does Korean society perceive black migrants?* led to the following: Black migrants are perceived as migrants and outsiders to Korean society who contribute to the present-day pop-culture as well as the entertainment industry.

The sub-question *How does Japanese society perceive black migrants?* led to the following: Black migrants are perceived as migrants and outsiders to Korean society who contribute to the present-day pop-culture as well as the entertainment industry.

A similarity in the perceptions of both Korean and Japanese society is that Black migrants belong to the 'other'. Another similarity, as mentioned earlier, is that Black migrants are a scant minority that are seldom noticed due to their lack of economic power and political significance. Black Koreans and Black Japanese people, who have a shared ancestry due to one of their parents, do occur and some of them do become successful in Korean and Japanese society. This means that Black migrants do not form any threat whatsoever to the established culture and its societal institutions.

The difference between the perception of Black migrants in Korean society is that Korean society is still traumatised by its own civil war that has not been resolved for decades – this collective trauma caused the society to develop a demand for 'others' who are not like 'us'. Blacks happen to be the easiest target of this need for dualistic identification. Japanese society, besides their defeat in the Second World War, have a stable history with enforced societal homogeneity in their borders. The historical-cultural bias of them as a strong and safe nation, with some sense of supremacy in Asia, makes them more confident in tolerating ethnic minorities. This does not mean that negative stereotypes of minorities do not exist. What this means is that they are less inclined to focus on who they are not, in this case Black.

The answer to the research question, *What are the perceptions of Black migrants in Korean and Japanese media?*, is as follows: Black migrants are represented as absent, foreign, exotic and strange by Korean and Japanese media. As the answer to the sub questions already explain; these communalities are based on the similar and common (colonial) history in which perceptions of Black people formed over time. These commonalities also reveal that the lack of a colonial and post-colonial conflict between Blacks on one side and Koreans and Japanese on the other side implies that Blacks are not projected as a potential danger nor threat. However, besides communalities there are also differences between how Korean and Japanese society perceive black migrants. Japan, as a former coloniser, perceives blacks as an exotic outsider in relationship to the yellow race myth that Japanese society embraced during the colonial era. Korean society, as a former colonised nation, perceives black as outsiders based on their need to validate their national and cultural boundaries. In Korean society there is an anti-imperialist sentiment due to Japanese colonisation, which also implies resistance against racism against anyone. However, Korea's perception of black migrants remains largely shaped by the media influence of Japan during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Based on the conclusions my hypothesis *Black migrants are perceived as both negative and exotic due to the influence of mainstream media in Japan and South Korea. This negative and exotic projection of Black people causes Koreans and Japanese people to have an ambivalent attitude towards Black migrants: a liking for their culture and entertainment, but resistance to mass migration of Blacks in their homelands* is rejected. There is nothing in this research that hints that Korean and Japanese society is hostile towards the migration of Blacks into their homelands. The anti-racism, which included resistance to the dominant imagery of Blacks, in Korea (and the other territories that Japan colonised) was motivated the demolish the claims of legitimacy of Japan that was based on whole concept of ‘race’ and ‘empire’ in general. What this research has revealed is that Blacks will be perceived as ‘other’ and that can lead to challenges for the integration of Black migrants in case their numbers would increase in both countries or if the economic power and political significance of Blacks would increase in Korean and Japanese society.



## Conclusions

Based on the conducted research the following seven conclusion can be made:

First conclusion: Cultures that have a perceived homogenic basis tend to be less hostile to foreigners due to the strong social cohesion that is preserved by the group members. In this case, South Korea and Japan have no history of open hostility nor racial oppression towards Blacks – mainly because Blacks are not perceived as a threat to the establish social order.

Second conclusion: Cultures that suffer from an identity crisis or who face an existential crisis – due to collective trauma – tend to become more hostile towards ‘the other’ due to the fear of losing social cohesion. This is explained in the thesis by comparing the attitude of Korean society towards Blackface with that of Japan. In Japan blackface happens, but there is also a strong anti-racism sentiment. In South-Korea the anti-racist sentiment is more aimed against Japanese aggression which relates to the colonial crimes committed by the Empire of Japan.

Third conclusion: Japanese culture has a relatively strong cultural foundation based on perceived ethnic homogeneity and a common history. For this reason Japan is more ‘able’ to cope with ethnic diversity than Korea who has a similar history, but one that is filled with foreign occupation and exploitation by others. The media representations used in this thesis reveal that even in textbooks Black people are portrait in socially less advanced position in Korea, while in the Japanese imagery blackness was more directly related to entertainment.

Fourth conclusion: Blackface seems to be more open in both Korean and Japanese society. As the first two conclusions already explained: Blacks are not perceived as a threat nor is there any colonial nor post-colonial conflict with Blacks. Furthermore, due to the low percentage of Black people in South Korea and Japan this can be an incentive to use blackface without having to fear potential retaliation from Black communities.

Fifth conclusion: Blackface serves a social function in both Korean and Japanese society: enforcing a stereotype about Black people to foster an image of an ‘other’ upon which the group identifies who they are not.

Sixth conclusion: Blackface does not occur in Japan and Korea based on ideas of a biological hierarchy as was the case in white supremacist groups in the West during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blackface has become a cultural icon in both countries since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it has survived as part of their heritage.

Seventh conclusion: Blackface can easily be displayed in Korean and Japanese society due to the absence of a high percentage of Black migrants that live within their borders. If the percentage of Black migrants was higher it might have led to violent confrontations. Consider also that Korea and Japan have a different history to blacks than former Western colonial

powers: Korea and Japan did not participate in the mass enslavement of Blacks during the colonial era – both due to geographical (the countries were far removed from Africa) as well as political reasons (Korean and Japanese societies were not based on the idea of expansion through conquest, but on seeking tribal harmony with their neighbours).

This thesis can be used as inspiration for future research in Blackness in Korean and Japanese society. This thesis only dealt with media representations and its cultural bias that underlies it. There is more to discover about Black migrants in Korea and Japan and as time passes by both Korean and Japanese society undergo changes and it is interesting for future sociologist and anthropologist to use this research as a stepping stone for further research.

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## Appendix

### Japanese blackface



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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2010/04/13/issues/sambo-racism-row-reignites-over-kids-play/#.Xu2e6thxeUk>

<sup>26</sup> [http://toshima-npo.org/toshima-npo/html/east\\_asia/jyoeikai.html](http://toshima-npo.org/toshima-npo/html/east_asia/jyoeikai.html)



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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42561815>



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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.vox.com/2015/3/17/8230783/japan-racism-blackface>





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<sup>29</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater\\_dance/kabuki-and-hip-hop-corcoran-presents-an-artists-blending-of-distinct-traditions/2013/04/05/4ffaefcc-9d3b-11e2-a2db-efc5298a95e1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater_dance/kabuki-and-hip-hop-corcoran-presents-an-artists-blending-of-distinct-traditions/2013/04/05/4ffaefcc-9d3b-11e2-a2db-efc5298a95e1_story.html)



<sup>30</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater\\_dance/kabuki-and-hip-hop-corcoran-presents-an-artists-blending-of-distinct-traditions/2013/04/05/4ffaefcc-9d3b-11e2-a2db-efc5298a95e1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater_dance/kabuki-and-hip-hop-corcoran-presents-an-artists-blending-of-distinct-traditions/2013/04/05/4ffaefcc-9d3b-11e2-a2db-efc5298a95e1_story.html)





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<sup>31</sup> [https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/black\\_ships\\_and\\_samurai\\_02/vis\\_encounters\\_west.html](https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/black_ships_and_samurai_02/vis_encounters_west.html)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2015/04/will-smith-focus-blackface>





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<sup>33</sup> <http://themicrogiant.com/for-huffpost-im-raising-a-biracial-daughter-in-japan-where-shes-surrounded-by-blackface/>



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<sup>34</sup> <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/>





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<sup>35</sup> <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/>





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<sup>36</sup> <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/>



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<sup>37</sup> <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/>





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<sup>38</sup> <https://japansociology.com/2011/08/21/blackface-is-back-if-it-ever-left/>



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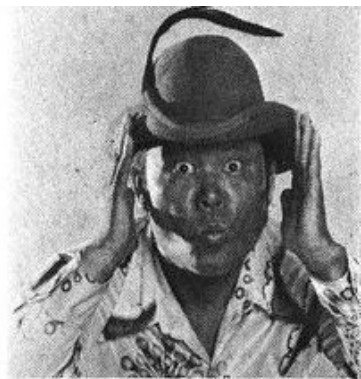
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<sup>39</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/pg/stopblackfacejapan/photos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/stopblackfacejapan/photos/?ref=page_internal)

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.stereogum.com/1776640/japanese\\_blackface\\_obama\\_magic/vg-loc/videogum/](https://www.stereogum.com/1776640/japanese_blackface_obama_magic/vg-loc/videogum/)



Korean black face:



























## \*Né·gro, né·gro

*Negro, negro*

[ní:grou

니이그로우]

명 (복수 **Negroes, negroes** [ní:grouz  
니이그로우즈])

흑인 (인류학적인  
뜻을 강조할 때는  
대문자로 시작하  
다))

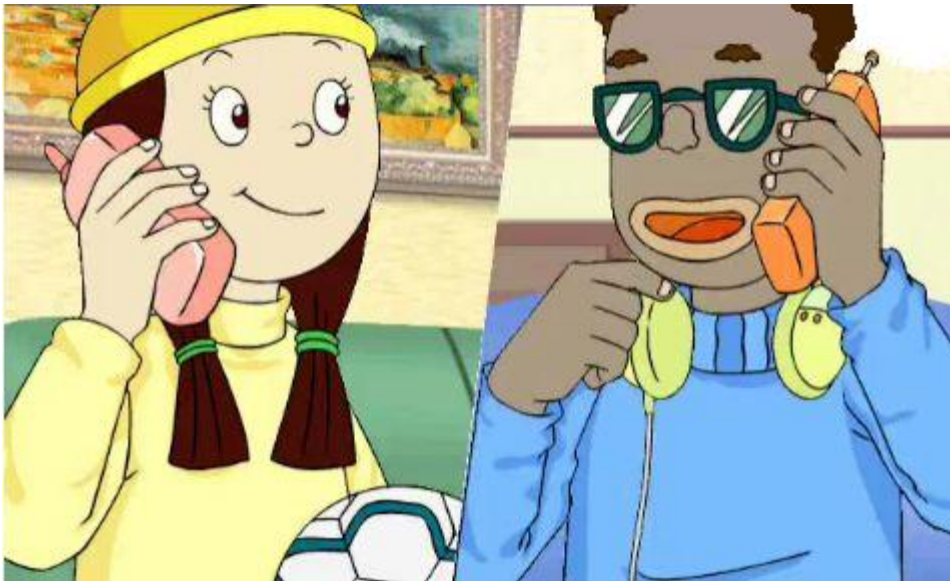


He is a  
*Negro.* 그는 흑인입니다.











- All the above picture I found on: <http://populargusts.blogspot.com/2012/03/three-decades-of-black-face-in-korea.html>



<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.whatthekpop.com/2017/05/14/racism-in-korea-why-blackface-continues-to-be-a-problem-today/>





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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/south-korean-broadcasting-companies-to-end-the-use-of-blackface-on-korean-television>

<sup>43</sup> <https://nextshark.com/controversial-kbs-korean-show-caught-trying-to-do-blackface-again/>