

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Title: Interpreting “Home” in the Works of Zainichi Poet Kim Si-jong: A Focus on His Works Since 2000

Doctoral Program: Major in Humanities

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The objective of this research is to explore how first-generation Zainichi poet Kim Si-jong (born 1929) conceptualizes and portrays his native place in his literary contributions post-2000. The research is segmented into three parts.

Firstly, this research examines the development of Kim Si-jong’s perspective on language. Around the year 2000, Kim Si-jong embarked on translating Korean poems into Japanese. Concurrently, he started underlining the importance of “viscerally-acquired language”. This marked a reconnection with his Korean roots, while simultaneously cultivating his unique interpretation of “Japanese as a Zainichi language”. Therefore, for Kim Si-jong, the Korean language and the “viscerally-acquired language” are instrumental in formulating his linguistic views.

Secondly, the research scrutinizes Kim Si-jong’s collection “Lost Season” (2010). This anthology was the first to be published after Kim Si-jong publicly recounted his experiences from Jeju 4.3. The main theme of the collection reflects these experiences. Thus, the focus is on the fact that Kim Si-jong was, for the first time in over 70 years, able to candidly articulate his experiences in his birthplace. This segment seeks to unveil how Kim Si-jong portrayed his hometown as part of his Jeju 4.3 experience in his literature.

Thirdly, the research probes into Kim Si-jong’s “Map on the Back” (2018), with the primary theme centered around the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11, 2011. This investigation centers on how the earthquake, intertwined with Kim Si-jong’s personal experiences, is depicted in his work. Specifically, it aims to elucidate how Kim Si-jong reimagines his hometown by connecting his experiences of displacement with those who were uprooted due to the March 11 earthquake in his book.

Through these lenses, the research strives to decipher Kim Si-jong’s notions of his homeland and his potential path to return after experiencing the loss of his home.