

# “The Arts of Making Life Work among Korean Radiation Sufferers”

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**Hall of Languages 207**



During the Japanese colonial period in Korea (1910-45) hundreds of thousands of Koreans were sent to Japan and elsewhere as laborers. Tens of thousands of Koreans, mostly from the Southeast, were sent to Hiroshima and to a lesser extent Nagasaki to work in munitions factories and elsewhere in the machinery of war. It is thought that 50,000 Koreans died in the two nuclear bombings. Most Korean residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki relocated to South Korea after the war, and eked out a precarious living without social recognition, health or welfare support tailored to their special needs for the better part of half a century. How did they make due without such things? This essay discusses three Korean victims and the host of expressive resources they have brought to bear on the work of survival, identity, and political activism. One knits coherent identities through translingual practices of Korean and Japanese speech, and through practices of quietude. One seeks contentment in Christian prayer and faith in the face of traumatic experience and loss. And yet another woman folds Korean pop songs preoccupied with illness and suffering into her complex spoken-and-sung narratives of radiation-related disability and struggle.

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