
'Hell Joseon' and 'Happy Youth': The different ways of Overcoming Poverty

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Abstract (in French and/or English)

In recent days, young South Koreans call their country 'Hell Joseon'. As Joseon references the feudal Joseon era, they think Korea is rather a hierarchical society in which only a few people have almost all of the wealth and this economic inequality can't be fixed. Therefore, as the title of the bestseller novel Cause I Don't Like Korea shows, they look for way out from Korea. On the internet there are many how-tos and some success stories of 'escape from Joseon' and surveys show that growing number of people want to leave Korea since April 16, 2014 when the sinking Sewol ferry revealed Koreans were living in a precarity not only in terms of economic condition but also of public system in general. On the contrary, in Japan which also wrestling with poverty and income inequality especially across generations, there are no such tendencies. After 3.11 Earthquake, there seems to be increasing local patriotism in Japan and young Japanese are said to have 'jimotoshikou' meaning they don't want to leave their hometown. As the bestseller book The Happy youth of a Desperate Country shows, they rather try to be and are satisfied with what they have although they live in a precarity because they think there is no possibility to escape from current situation. This paper will discuss how differently Japanese and Korean express their precarious life and imagine the way to overcome it comparing some important discourses and show that both of them can end up in new jingoism.

Keywords: hell joseon, poverty, japan, 3.11, precarity

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