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## Research Report

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**Organization** (at the time of the grant): Hokkaido University

**Title of Research:** Repatriation from Sakhalin after August 1945

### **Purpose of Research:**

The purpose of this research was to examine in what ways people were moved across Asia at the end of the Asia-Pacific War in August 1945. When the Japanese Empire collapsed after the nation's surrender, approximately 6.7 million Japanese were living outside of the four main islands (Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku). In addition, almost 1.5 million Koreans, Chinese and Taiwanese were residing within the Japan. After August 1945 most of these people moved to their country of origin.

To date, there has been little research conducted on Japanese who moved from Sakhalin (then known as Karafuto) to Japan. This is in direct contrast to the large amount of research that has been completed on other areas of the former Japanese empire including Korea and northeast China. By investigating repatriation from Sakhalin, this research sought to uncover the variety of ways that people were 'repatriated'. Furthermore, by considering not only the immediate post-war period, but also the late-1940s and into the 1950s and 1960s, the author aimed to establish what contribution 'repatriates' made to Japanese society.

A second task of this research was to examine Japanese modern history as seen from an area outside of either the Kanto or Kansai regions. Hokkaido was an area that was deeply involved in the resettlement of repatriates and ex-soldiers after 1945. This research aimed to show whereabouts within Hokkaido repatriates moved, the types of employment they found, the political movements they started and the memorials they built. It was also hoped to make a comparison with Okinawa, another region that has been neglected by historians. Indeed, Okinawa also has a strong connection with repatriation due to the many Okinawans who moved to the Pacific Islands during the pre-war years. Like the Japanese in Sakhalin, after August 1945 Okinawans in Taiwan and the Japan's Pacific Island colonies were repatriated. This research attempted to uncover some of the experiences of those involved and to make a comparison with population movements in the north of the country.

Finally, this research tried to put Japanese repatriation into an international context. This meant comparing the case of Japan with that of other countries' experiences of decolonization. In order to make such a comparison it was proposed to consider decolonization in France and Holland. Both of these countries experienced the loss of an empire in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Content/Methodology of Research:**

The first stage of research was to carry out a thorough review of the existing literature in English. It was found that little research had been completed to date on the subject of decolonization in the case of Japan. The existing research focused largely on repatriation from one area of the former empire (northeast China) and did not examine Sakhalin. Other research on the return of Japanese from the colonies had been conducted from an anthropological background.

As a further stage of the literature review process, the author examined Japanese language research. Unsurprisingly, there was already a sizeable amount of research on the collapse of empire available in Japanese. In order to manage the secondary sources available, the research in this phase was divided by geographical area. The author found that most of the existing research was again concentrated on a specific area of the former empire and that only a small amount existed about Sakhalin. This is possibly because of the low level of importance that has traditionally been given to historical studies of this area.

After conducting the above review of the existing literature, the author had a clearer idea of where to concentrate his efforts. It was decided that repatriation from Sakhalin after the end of the empire was an under-researched area. Furthermore, there appeared to be many primary sources available that had not yet been utilised by other researchers. Due to the importance of the topic, the author realised that a historical study of not only the immediate post-war years, but up to and including the high-growth period of the 1960s and 1970s would be desirable.

The early part of the author's fieldwork was taken up with finding possible interviewees. After the Soviet Union took control of Sakhalin, most of the Japanese population were repatriated to Japan. Approximately 67% of the 300,000 Japanese from Sakhalin settled in Hokkaido. As a result, today there are many people living in Hokkaido who were directly involved in the population movement. The author hoped to contact some of these people to arrange interviews. This was done through word-of-mouth and by looking out for occasional newspaper reports on the subject of repatriation.

In January 2011, the author visited the Hokkaido branch office of the organisation Zenkoku Karafuto Renmei. He interviewed three members of the organisation who had been repatriated from Sakhalin between August 1945 and July 1949. One important finding from these interviews was the variety of ways that people moved from Sakhalin to Hokkaido. Two of the interviewees did not feel that the term 'repatriate' applied to them because they had left as part of the Japanese government's evacuation scheme (13 – 23 August 1945). The third interviewee had stayed in Sakhalin until 1947 when he left as part of the official evacuation organised between the governments of the United States and Soviet Union. As a result, he did consider himself to be a repatriate.

A second set of interviews was arranged for February 2011. The author travelled to Kushiro in the far northeast of Hokkaido. He interviewed two men who had had completely different experiences at the end of the Asia-Pacific War. The first had actually left Sakhalin (then called Karafuto) before the end of the war. After Japan's surrender he had a difficult time being reunited with his family who were

detained in Sakhalin. The second interviewee was in the Imperial Army and arrested by the USSR. He had to work for 3 years in labour camps around the island of Sakhalin before being repatriated in 1948. This oral history was of great value because it showed the different treatment for Japanese detained in Sakhalin as compared with those who were sent to Siberia.

In April, July and August 2011, the author conducted three research visits to Tokyo where many valuable archives are located. He made extensive use of the Japanese National Diet Library Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room. This archive contains most of the documents made during the Occupation period when Japan was under the control of the US-dominated Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). The archives held many important sources showing how the Occupation officials sought to handle the repatriation issue. Other archives of great interest included the National Archives of Japan, the National Institute for Defense Studies Military Archives and Hosei University's Ohara Institute for Social Research.

In November 2011, a further research trip was made to take advantage of the materials located in the Kansai region. This required a two-week stay in Kyoto in order to use the Japanese National Diet Library Kansai Building and Kyoto University's Institute for Research in Humanities. The former contained valuable magazine articles from US publications. The latter held many newspapers published by left-wing political organisations operating in Japanese society in the early post-war period.

## **Conclusion/Observation**

In conclusion, it is evident that repatriation is an issue that had a significant impact on post-war society in Hokkaido. By 1950, approximately 10% of the island's population were repatriates or former soldiers from the Imperial Army. This was one of the largest concentrations in any part of Japan. Many of these repatriates came from one part of the former empire – Sakhalin – which is another unusual feature. The type of employment that repatriates found was similar to what they had done in Sakhalin and included farming, coal mining, fishing and teaching.

Within Hokkaido, American officials from SCAP had a vital role in repatriation and resettlement. The repatriation reception centre at Hakodate in the south of Hokkaido was an important facility for information gathering. As the Cold War hostility became more intense between the US and USSR, information became highly prized. Those repatriated from Sakhalin had experience of living under the Soviet Union and, therefore, repatriates' experiences were of great interest to US intelligence officials. As a result, many of the repatriates from Sakhalin were questioned on their arrival and some were taken to Tokyo for more intensive investigation.

Repatriation from Sakhalin to Japan and the return of Okinawans had important differences. The most significant is that after August 1945, the island of Okinawa was occupied by the US Navy and it was not possible for Okinawans to return to their homes. Some people had to live in camps in southern Kyushu for up to two years whilst they awaited permission to move. In the case of Sakhalin,

Japanese were detained by the Soviet Union because they were needed for their labour power. Furthermore, the emerging Cold War hostilities made it difficult for the US and USSR to come to an agreement.

In comparison with other countries, the main difference between Japan and Europe is the amount of time taken for decolonization. In the case of Japan, defeat in the war meant that the empire vanished almost overnight. People moved back to Japan relatively quickly although in many cases, especially in north-eastern China, repatriation was particularly difficult. France and Holland both took much longer to dismantle their empires. However, in Japan, France and Holland, nearly all of those who returned from the former colonies experienced discrimination.