

# Remnants of Empire in the Cold War : How Post-War Repatriation to Japan Occasionally Kept Open the ' Bamboo Curtain '

著者	TREFALT Beatrice
会議概要 ( 会議名, 開催地, 会期, 主催者等 )	Globalization, Localization, and Japanese Studies in the Asia-Pacific Region : Past, Present, Future, シドニー大学, 2003年11月10日-13日
page range	155-170
year	2010-03-19
シリーズ	シドニー・シンポジウム 2003 International Symposium in Sidney 2003
図書名(英)	Globalization, Localization, and Japanese Studies in the Asia-Pacific Region volume 1
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15055/00001330">http://doi.org/10.15055/00001330</a>

# Remnants of Empire in the Cold War: How Post-War Repatriation to Japan Occasionally Kept Open the ‘Bamboo Curtain’

Beatrice TREFALT

*Monash University*

It is not clear whether the term ‘Bamboo curtain,’ used to designate the separation between Communist and non-Communist countries in East Asia, was chosen precisely because bamboo is so much more permeable than the iron of the curtain that separated east and west in Europe. This chapter argues that one of the important features of post-war repatriation to Japan was that it maintained links with the former Empire that belied the lack of official recognition and communication between the post-war Japanese state and its Communist neighbours, particularly the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Indeed, the history of the repatriation of Japanese citizens from the former Empire to post-war Japan is one on which curiously little has been written considering the size, the cost and the impact of what was, according to Wakatsuki Yasuo 若槻泰雄, one of the largest most concentrated population movements in the world’s history.<sup>1</sup> Over a period of two years after the defeat, more than five out of the six million Japanese overseas had been transported back home. From 1947 onwards, repatriations continued to take place, sometimes individually or in small groups, and sometimes in massive groups of thousands of people, such as the shipment of some twenty-six thousand Japanese from the PRC in the spring of 1953.<sup>2</sup>

Half of those who came home were demobilized soldiers. The other half consisted of civilians: men, women and children who had, through a variety of circumstances or opportunities, been resident in one of Japan’s formal or informal colonies by the time of the defeat.<sup>3</sup> Back home in Japan, the difference between those who had been soldiers and those who had not mattered little in practical terms initially: the repatriates were on the whole a bedraggled lot, often carrying little more than what could fit on backs and shoulders. One in ten was seriously ill. In the early years of the Occupation, the population at home was hardly better off and there were few striking differences between the repatriate population and the rest, not least because so many in Japan had been dislocated as well. Certainly, the mass population influx exacerbated the many shortages that blighted the daily life of Japanese in the early Occupation, and this was occasionally the source of resentment. As Japan slowly recovered from the war and regained sovereignty, the daily

---

1 Wakatsuki 1995, pp. 16–17.

2 Trefalt, forthcoming (a).

3 I recognize herewith that calling Manchuria a ‘colony’ of Japan is problematic for a number of reasons. The point here is that Japan’s control of Manchuria in the pre-war period had major implications for both wartime and post-war population movements.

life of the population gradually gained some semblance of normalcy—except for the constant reminder, with the arrival of shiploads of Japanese citizens from China and the Soviet Union, that the war was far from over for many Japanese.<sup>4</sup> It was clearly also far from over for many of Japan's wartime colonial labourers, Korean and Chinese, whose repatriation was now impeded by the Cold War.

This article outlines the importance of post-war repatriation to our understanding of Japan's continuing relations with East Asian neighbours during the 1950s. Since the historian's gaze tends to be trained towards elite politics and formal international relations, Japan's continuing informal relationships with its immediate neighbours have often overshadowed by its formal diplomatic, economic and security alliances with the United States. A focus on repatriation allows us to trace the many levels (from the personal to the institutional, from the physical to the intellectual) on which relationships with regional neighbours—and former formal or informal colonies—were still so clearly part of the daily consciousness and daily concerns of the Japanese population. Indeed, a focus on repatriation allows us to rethink international relations as a popular concern and a popular discourse, rather than a purely diplomatic one. A great variety of people were affected, either directly or indirectly, by the experience of repatriation, and they all had stakes in the transformation of Japan's international relations.

The experiences, expectations and fears that Japanese repatriates brought with them to Japan were matched by the experiences, expectations and fears of those who welcomed them—however ambivalently—at home. This was fertile ground for discussion about the nature and the future of Japan's various relationships with its close neighbours, and this, combined with continuing personal contacts across the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan, was the basis of an important albeit informal relationship. If this has been obscured by a focus on high-level diplomacy, it has also been obscured simply because repatriates—like all people 'on the move' (migrants, guest-workers, nomadic people like the Roma and so on)—have only recently emerged from an invisibility conferred on them by the tendency amongst scholars to write about the so-called 'centre' of the national entity, neatly circumscribed by apparently impermeable national borders. And if people on the move have for a long time remained on the periphery of scholarly interest, they have clearly also been marginal, if not downright marginalized, at the time of their return. This was true to a great degree of Japanese repatriates during the 1950s. As a result, the contribution made by the repatriation process to keeping open channels of communication between the two countries has only rarely been given the attention it deserves. Here, the main focus will be on the repatriation of Japanese citizens from the PRC.

Beyond the alternative version of post-war international relations provided by the repatriates, there are a number of reasons why post-war repatriation to Japan is such an important part of Japanese history. These reasons are briefly outlined here as background to the central focus of this article. Firstly, the process of physically transporting so many people in the aftermath of the destruction wrought by the Asia-Pacific War is mind-

4 There are many other ways in which the war's legacies continued to intrude in daily life—radio programs designed to put dislocated families in touch with each other, entire pages in newspapers devoted to photos of displaced children looking for parents and relatives, disabled veterans, war widows and orphans fighting for better pensions, Associations of War-Bereaved Families fighting for publicly funded war memorials etc.

boggling in itself. Ships had to be procured: since Japan's shipping capabilities were almost non-existent at the end of the war, they were lent by the United States, which had perfected the mass-production of transport ships during the war, and was also interested in removing these potentially disruptive elements from newly liberated areas. Then, institutions had to be set up to provide support for the daily influx of thousands of dislocated people: repatriation camps had to be created; personnel trained and deployed; routines established for quarantine, identity checks and initial orientation. Indeed, the huge influx of repatriates into suitable ports around Japan (Maizuru, Hakata, Sasebo and others) demanded the creation of services in such a hurry that local authorities and community groups had been forced by circumstances to set them up long before a central repatriation bureaucracy could be organised.<sup>5</sup> The influx of repatriates also demanded that housing and medical facilities be available both in the camps and on the way home (wherever that may be).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, since both the Occupation Forces and the sheer number of arrivals demanded it, this process of unloading, checking and sending on the repatriates had to be done in minimum time (about three days on average).<sup>7</sup> All kinds of resources, including the domestic railway network, had to be stretched to accommodate the enormous impact of the repatriation process.

Once the first five million had made it home (within the first two years of the Occupation, amazingly enough) and the urgency of the early days abated, it gradually became clear that many hundreds of thousands of Japanese citizens were still missing. What records had been kept of the Japanese population overseas (either as soldiers or as civilians) had been either patchy to start off with, or destroyed during the war by bombs and fire. Therefore, it was only by conducting surveys of the population at home and counting those listed as absent by their families that the Japanese government was able to get a sense of how many of its citizens were outside of Japan's now dramatically diminished borders, although this was still highly imprecise.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, after Japan's defeat, the civil war in China had resumed, post-colonial independence movements in places like Indochina (Vietnam) and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) had intensified, and the rift between the US and the USSR was gradually widening. By the time the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, it was clear that many Japanese citizens were stuck behind the so-called 'bamboo curtain,' and furthermore, that still unknown thousands had been transported to and were detained in labour camps in Siberia by the USSR. The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 added a new level of difficulty to the repatriation process and delayed matters further. The negotiations of the San Francisco Peace Treaty both drew more clearly the battlelines of this new, cold war, and added a level of urgency for those concerned with the repatriation of Japanese citizens at home.<sup>9</sup>

The many ways in which the majority of delayed repatriations were associated with the Cold War and affected by its ideological discourses are worth reviewing here

---

5 Kimura 2005.

6 Extensive domestic dislocation due to bombing and food shortages, as well as the fact that many of the repatriates had been long-term migrants, made 'finding home' more difficult than it might initially appear.

7 Kōseishō engo kyoku 1997, p. 55. See also Trefalt 2003, pp. 25–29.

8 Kōseishō engo kyoku 1997, p. 69.

9 Trefalt 2007.

briefly. At the end of the war, what was left of the Japanese Empire outside of the four main islands themselves was parcelled out for management and peacekeeping to each of the victorious Allies. It was those who happened to be in the areas controlled by the Soviet Union (in Manchuria and northern Korea), or contested in the Chinese Civil War whose return would be delayed: those in American, British Commonwealth or Nationalist Chinese-controlled areas were home within a few months. And since Soviet-controlled areas and northern China happened to be where most of the Japanese overseas population resided, this had a corresponding impact. The matter of delayed repatriation from those areas did not affect a mere handful of soldiers (as it did in Vietnam or Indonesia), but hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

In that sense, the difference between those Japanese who returned 'home' in the first two years after the war and those who came home up to ten years later was partly a question of geography. It was partly also a question of good or bad luck. In the north of Manchuria, some managed to catch the last trains south ahead of the advancing Soviet Armies, but the unlucky others had to start walking. Whether or not one survived these long marches was one thing: as is well known, a great many became the victims of hunger, cold, illness and exhaustion, or they were killed by Soviet or Chinese soldiers or civilians. The other thing was whether one got to a port in time to be able to be processed as a repatriate and catch a ship home: in Northern China, the civil war and the Communist victory cut off the route to seaports or put an end to international transport. An example that generated some interest in Japan in 1952, seven years after the end of the war, concerned a young man, Shirayama Ken'ichi, who, during his escape south through Manchuria, had found two terrified little sisters, Ōba Reiko and Yasuko. The girls, who must have been less than five years old in 1945, had become separated from their family during its escape from Manchuria. Instead of leaving the girls to their fate (as many other must have done), the young man took them in charge, even though they slowed him down so much that he missed the chance to get home. By the time one of his many letters finally found their father in Japan in 1952, he had spend several years raising the girls by himself on the meagre salary he earned as a miner at the coal mine known in Japanese as Tsuruoka, in what is now Heilongjiang province in northern Manchuria.<sup>10</sup> If Shirayama's path hadn't happened to cross that of the sisters, all three may well have led a very different life.

If geography and luck affected the speed of repatriation, so did of course the specific policies of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. It is well known that the Soviet Union transported hundreds of thousands of Japanese men (mainly soldiers but also civilians) into labour camps in Siberia. This was initially to counter the massive shortfall in manpower created by the war, and later to use as bargaining chips in its beleaguered international position. During their detention attempts were also made to brainwash the Japanese prisoners into Communism, with the aim of sending them home to bolster the ranks and the power of the Japanese Communist party. It is not clear that the fledgling People's Republic of China had a similarly deliberate and well-organised program of making use of Japanese labour, or whether repatriations from the PRC were delayed simply because the repatriation of Japanese was low on the long list of

---

<sup>10</sup> *Asahi shimbun* 1952.

priorities for the newly formed Chinese government. Having said that, it is clear that the labour and the technical know-how of the Japanese who remained in China was valued: many had been drafted into the Communist Army to fight the Nationalists, and more were drafted into the service of the Communist state on the basis of their scientific or technical expertise: this was the case for doctors, nurses, and railway construction workers and engineers for example. Many were also simple labourers, but unlike prisoners in Siberia, those who worked in China were paid for their work.

The cold war further impinged on the repatriation process because under the Occupation, Japan's foreign relations were managed on its behalf by the Occupation Forces, that is, by the United States. The growing hostility between the US and the Soviet Union had a clear impact on the negotiations surrounding repatriations. William Sebald, the American diplomat who chaired the Allied Council after George Atcheson's death in 1947, has shown how tense the relationship between Soviet and American representatives on that body was, especially when the question of repatriation was raised. It is clear from Sebald's memoirs that for both the American and the Soviet side, the issue of Japanese delayed repatriations became a matter of political and ideological point-scoring, which did little to speed up the process.<sup>11</sup> US dominance of Japanese foreign policy continued after Japan gained sovereignty in 1952. This sovereignty was conditional on the recognition of the Nationalist Chinese regime in Taiwan as the legitimate government of China rather than the Communist People's Republic of China, and further consolidated the Japanese alignment with the 'Free World' in the Cold-War. It is true that the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the accompanying US-Japan Security Treaty was a monumental strategic, political and economic success as far as the political elites were concerned. But for those lobbying on behalf of those Japanese still overseas, it was a monumental disaster. Japan's alignment with the United States, they argued, prevented effective communication and negotiation with the PRC and the USSR for the repatriation of Japanese citizens and so marked a gross breach in Japan's responsibilities towards its own citizens.<sup>12</sup>

As it impact on the speed of repatriation, the Cold War also complicated the reception of those who had managed to escape from behind the 'bamboo curtain'. Concerns about the spread of physical illness from repatriates to the home population had always plagued repatriation officials and there were strict quarantine measures in place in repatriation camps.<sup>13</sup> As returnees from Communist areas reached Japan, however, the necessity for some kind of 'ideological' quarantine became an urgent concern. The disruptive potential of repatriates had been made clear first when a train load of repatriates released from a Siberia rioted at Osaka station in summer 1949, and it was revisited every time Communist brainwashing was suspected or apparent amongst repatriates. Repatriation officials became quickly attuned to the melody of the 'Internationale' emerging from an approaching ship, as this heralded all kinds of difficulties, not least of which was a bunch of very uncooperative returnees.<sup>14</sup>

The fear that returnees had been brainwashed and might form part of a vanguard

11 Sebald 1965, pp. 135–149. See also Nimmo 1988, pp. 84–95.

12 Trefalt 2007.

13 See for example Hikiage engochō 1952; *Engo gojūnen*, p. 57; Trefalt, forthcoming (b).

14 Nimmo 1988, p. 102.

of Communist infiltration and revolution certainly also tainted the reception of the more than 26,000 Japanese sent back from Communist China in 1953. At a public level, anxiety about the repatriates' ideology, and thus their loyalty to Japan's political system, translated into almost explicit questioning of their 'citizenship' and identity as Japanese. Their potential as a divisive element in Japanese society was further illustrated, as far as many commentators in the press were concerned, by the surprisingly positive account many of these repatriates gave of their life in China. Contradictorily, such positive accounts were dismissed as mere Chinese propaganda, even as they were taken as signs of the doubtful loyalty of the returnees.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless the process of repatriation from China provides a telling example of the many ways in which the repatriation process acted as an ice-breaker in the frozen channels of communication of the Cold War. The PRC was more successful in using repatriation for its own purposes than was the USSR. As we have seen, Nimmo argues that the USSR prevaricated about repatriation of Japanese partly in order to gain a better foothold in the Occupation of Japan, and this failed miserably.<sup>16</sup> The PRC, in contrast, was able to use the repatriation of Japanese citizens during the Spring of 1953 to launch a 'public relations' offensive on the population of Japan. As K.W. Radtke has shown, this was consistent with earlier strategies designed to foster positive views of 'the New China' in Japan as well as to form the basis for some kind of trade while bypassing the Japanese government entirely. One such example was the Peking Peace Conference of 1952, which was attended by Japanese non-official delegates, but only after much wrangling with the Japanese government on the subject of travel documents.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the PRC was forced to rely on what it called 'people to people' diplomacy to repatriate Japanese citizens from China allowed for a great deal of loud ideological trumpeting. Since Japan did not extend recognition to the PRC, the PRC was forced to bypass the governments on both sides by having the process of repatriation negotiated and managed by non-governmental organisations: the Chinese and Japanese Red Cross organisations, and the Japan-China Friendship Society (*Nitchū yūkō kyōkai*) and the Japan Peace Liaison Group (*Nihon heiwa renraku kai*). The choice of these partners was a blatantly political choice on the part of the PRC, since there existed another well-established organisation dedicated to repatriates and their families and highly experienced in the processes of repatriation: this was the Association of the Families of the Missing (*Nihon rusu kazoku dantai*). Unlike the other two organisations, which were explicitly pro-Chinese (the Japan Peace Liaison Group was an offspring of the Beijing Conference, and the Japan China Friendship Association had been established in 1950 with the express aim of creating and strengthening links with the PRC), the Association of the Families of the Missing was walking a tightrope between cajoling and condemning the Japanese government in order to speed up repatriation, and between castigating and commending

15 Trefalt, forthcoming (a).

16 Nimmo 1988, p. 123. Of course, the main reasons for the incarceration of Japanese in Siberia was the need for labour. As Nimmo also shows, the plan to create Communist footsoldiers out of brainwashed Japanese prisoners also failed, as the great majority of returnees abandoned whatever devotion to Communism they had acquired within a few months of their return (Nimmo 1988, p. 110).

17 Radtke 1981, p. 195; see also *Nihon Chūgoku yūkō kyōkai* 1966, pp. 21–23.

the governments of China and the USSR for their treatment of Japanese citizens.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that the PRC designated the Japan-China Friendship Society as its partner in the repatriation program of 1953 was crucially important for the Society's public profile, as Franziska Seraphim has suggested.<sup>19</sup> There was already a great deal of public interest in the issue of delayed repatriations—interest fostered and fanned by the Association of the Families of the Missing, now left out of the negotiations and understandably bitter.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, many of those concerned with repatriation in one way or another were already disgruntled with the Japanese government for its perceived failures in looking after repatriate interests. By riding the tide of concern with repatriation, the Japan-China Friendship Society was able to publicise itself and its own aims. Importantly, it suggested moreover that the dissatisfaction with the government that many families with missing relatives felt was, in fact, fundamentally the same dissatisfaction that the members of the Japan-China Friendship Society had with the government's non-recognition of the PRC. This was, needless to say, hardly the case: the widespread ambivalence with which allegedly Communist repatriates were greeted, and the widely publicised dismay at their positive assessment of the 'New China' suggests that the families of the missing were as conservative as the majority of other Japanese at the time. The Japan-China Friendship Society's gain, if it was one, of an 'instant' constituency during the repatriation process was a short-lived one. Nevertheless, as the pages of the Society's journal *Nihon to Chūgoku* 日本と中国 clearly show, the occasion of repatriation was one which could clearly be used for political purposes: there are abundant references to the PRC's magnanimity and progressive nature in the matter, especially compared to the Japanese government's iniquity and backwardness, to the fact that, if Japanese citizens were stuck in China, it was no one else's fault by the Japanese government, and to the fact that, in any case, Japanese citizens in China were enjoying excellent living conditions under the Communist regime. Letters to the editor published in *Nihon to Chūgoku* also condemned the Japanese government: one letter writer even suggested that thanks to the Japan-China Friendship Association, they had come to understand the 'New China' and to be so impressed with it that they wanted to go and live there.<sup>21</sup>

Such blatant manipulation of the repatriation issue by pro-Chinese associations in Japan was bound to be condemned. The Japanese government's own assessment of the situation of Japanese nationals in China provided a clearly contrasting image of the PRC. In a booklet distributed internationally in 1952, the Japanese Foreign Ministry stated that:

These detainees have been forced to remain against their will to render services to Communist China and their desire to return home has been suppressed by the government of Communist China. The Japanese are poorly paid and find it difficult to live. . . . [The Japanese wives and children of Chinese nationals] are leading a miserable living as servants of Chinese families or wives or concubines

18 Trefalt 2007.

19 Seraphim, 2001, pp. 141–142.

20 *Rusu kazoku dantai* 1959, p. 294.

21 *Nihon to Chūgoku* 1953.



of Chinese.<sup>22</sup>

The gap between this description and the progressive paradise extolled by the Japan-China Friendship Association was large enough to suggest a degree of bias to anyone but the most uncritical of observers. Indeed, the famously critical French reporter Robert Guillain gave vent to his many suspicions about Communist China in his coverage of the arrival of the first ship of repatriates to Japan in March 1953 for *Le Monde*. Guillain argued that China had allowed Japanese citizens to go home as part of a ‘psychological offensive,’ that the repatriation of these citizens was designed to influence positively the image of China in Japan and likely to succeed, and that the PRC had managed to pull the wool over the Japanese government’s eyes over who, exactly, was entering Japan in these ships. According to Guillain, there was a clear possibility that Chinese and North Koreans were slipping out of the repatriation ships into Japan: he suggested that amongst them were Communist agents who ‘will thus enter Japan and lose themselves in the population,’ a deliberate ploy on the part of Communist China to subvert the Japanese political system.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the widespread anxiety that the arrival of repatriate ships raised about Communist contamination, repatriates ultimately posed little threat to the conservative fabric of Japanese society. As Wakatsuki suggests, the growth of the Japanese economy from the mid-1950s onwards absorbed repatriates into the workforce, and avoided long-term marginalisation in most cases.<sup>24</sup> However, it is also clear that the process of repatriation kept open informal—and occasionally contested—channels of communication in the early 1950s. Beyond the mass repatriation of 1953, discussions about short-term visits to their home countries of Japanese women married in China and of Chinese women married in Japan kept the issue current into the late 1950s, as did the continuing searches for information as to the numbers of Japanese nationals resident in China and the fate of Japanese missing there. As Radtke has made clear, the pathways that were forged between the two countries in this period were not closed once the program of mass repatriation was over, but broadened and multiplied quickly into exchanges that were ‘informal’ in name only, mediated by non-governmental organisations that actually counted in their membership and leadership powerful political figures both in China and in Japan.<sup>25</sup> Throughout these exchanges, the repatriation of Japanese from China, and, to a lesser degree, of Chinese living in Japan, provided the pretext for these bilateral discussions. Calling repatriation the pretext for these meetings is not to lessen its importance, but indeed to suggest that there were broader, future-oriented interests at stake about trade and economic development that could be explored thanks to the necessity of organising these population movements.

Furthermore, as these living bodies moved across borders, so did ideas about politics, daily life, education, the role of women in the workforce and the future of Japan China relations.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, it could be argued that on one level, the exchange of cultural

22 Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1952.

23 *Le Monde* 1953.

24 Wakatsuki 1995, pp. 277–278.

25 Radtke 1981, pp. 202–203.

26 Trefalt, forthcoming (a).

and political ideas was so enmeshed in Cold War propaganda on both sides that more barriers were put up than were broken down. It is also clear that not all tensions were entirely ideological, as Takagi Busaburō 高木武三郎 shows in the case of the temporary visits of Japanese women married in China. The joy of reunion could quickly give way to quibbling about lack of space, communication problems with the women's Chinese-speaking children and resentment about the cost to their families of the visit by mostly penniless relatives. Some of the visits were short-lived indeed, and some of the women came under the attention of the police.<sup>27</sup> Whether this was because of their poverty or because of ongoing suspicion of Chinese Communist spies is not clear: certainly the Chinese Red Cross complained as late as 1962 about the fact that Japanese government agents were following returnees around as if they were spies.<sup>28</sup>

But even in the ambivalence with which the repatriates were received was the recognition that these were people who had valuable first hand knowledge and experience of China. If nothing else, they provided an alternative vision of 'the New China' and of China-Japan relations, a version in which the PRC was a benign, progressive and useful neighbour rather than a looming threat. There were many amongst these repatriates who took a leading role in the promotion of China's image after their return, and in improved relations between the two countries. Aside from the Japan-China Friendship Association, which continued to grow in the decade, another example is found in the Liaison Group of China Returnees (Chūgoku kikansha renraku kai). This association was formed in 1957 after the return of more than one thousand Japanese war criminals from China. The majority of these had initially been imprisoned by Soviet forces, and then transferred to China in 1950. They were pardoned and repatriated to Japan in 1956 for the most part, although three of them did not get back to Japan until 1964.<sup>29</sup> During their incarceration in the PRC, many of these subjected to intense self-criticism and re-education. A number of them portrayed this in retrospect as a highly positive experience: it led them to reassess their understanding of the history of the relationship between the two countries, and their role as part of the Japanese military forces. As Megumi Makino has shown, these veterans have portrayed their 'conversion' during their incarceration at Fushun prison as a life-changing, miraculous event.<sup>30</sup> This conversion prompted them to devote the rest of their lives to the promotion of friendship and exchange between China and Japan. They were joined by other veterans of the Japanese invasion and by (Japanese) veterans of the Chinese civil war (both of the Nationalist and of the Communist Armies), and the association became another vocal proponent of a normalised relationship between Japan and China.<sup>31</sup>

As the repatriation process clearly illustrates, then, the lack of formal diplomatic

27 Takagi 1958, pp. 120–122.

28 Extract from *Sankei shimbun*, 3 June 1962. International Red Cross Archives, Geneva, ACICR B AG 232-048 022.02. The temporary visits of Japanese women residents in China to Japan were halted in 1958. On 5 June 1958, the Chinese Red Cross announced that it would be unable to assist in the program due to the Kishi administration's inimical views of the People's Republic of China. *Kōseishō engo kyoku* 1997, p. 54.

29 *Kōseishō engo kyoku* 1997, p. 89.

30 Makino 2006.

31 *Chūgoku kikansha renraku kai* 1996.

relations between Japan and China, and Japan's strong alignment with United States politics and ideology did not prevent China from maintaining a strong presence in Japan, both in tangible ways with the repatriates themselves, and in intangible ways in the fears and hopes this personal contact with the New China generated. However, this is not to say that the process of repatriation was uncomplicated or always found a way through international diplomatic impasses. Indeed, if Japanese repatriation from China was more or less successfully negotiated despite the barrier of non-existent diplomatic relations, this was not the case for the repatriation of Koreans and Chinese from Japan. That process was made intensely difficult by competing governments in their respective countries of origin on the one hand, and on the other, by the Japanese government's alignment with the U.S., and therefore Taiwan and South Korea.

This is best illustrated by the diplomatic wrangling that accompanied the repatriation of Chinese residents in Japan to Communist China. The Japanese official history of repatriation is remarkably succinct in its description of this process: it states that, during the mass repatriation of Japanese citizens back to Japan in the Spring of 1953, the PRC requested that the ships used to ferry repatriates to Japan from China be allowed to carry, on the way back, Chinese citizens who wanted to return to China. Accordingly, on 5 June 1953, the Japanese government announced that it would provide assistance for the repatriation of Chinese residents in Japan who desired to return home, and designated the Japanese Red Cross to administer this process. 3,756 Chinese residents boarded ships home over 14 voyages between 27 June 1953 and 29 June 1958.<sup>32</sup>

The process, however, was not as simple as this little paragraph suggests. Indeed, before the Japanese government was able to agree to the repatriation of Chinese citizens to the PRC, it had to placate the Nationalist government in Taiwan, which was highly suspicious about the way repatriation of Japanese might benefit its rival the PRC, and had insisted that the Japanese repatriation ships should carry neither people nor cargo to the Chinese mainland. This put the Japanese government and the Japanese Red Cross (as well as the would-be repatriates, needless to say) in an invidious position, because acceding to Taiwanese demands meant refusing the repatriation of Chinese citizens to the PRC. This in turn might well endanger the repatriation of Japanese back to Japan. Indeed, shortly thereafter, the International Red Cross delegate in Tokyo confirmed that the Chinese Red Cross was putting a stop to the repatriation of Japanese from China unless the repatriation of Chinese from Japan took place. Prince Shimazu Tadatsugu, the president of the Japanese Red Cross, wrote an urgent message to the International Red Cross in Geneva to request help and advice.<sup>33</sup> The International Red Cross was able to offer a solution by which an International Red Cross delegate would accompany the returning ships, notifying all governments concerned and thus giving the transport an internationally recognised apolitical and humanitarian character.<sup>34</sup> In the event, official diplomatic negotiations between Japan and Taiwan reached a compromise whereby Taiwan would not object to repatriation of Chinese residents in Japan to the PRC as long

---

32 Kōseishō engo kyoku 1997, p. 67.

33 Shimazu to Ruegger 1953.

34 Ruegger to Shimazu 1953.

as different ships were used—that is, as long as the movement was not quite as clearly an exchange between Japan and Taiwan's enemy the PRC. The International Red Cross even suggested to the Japanese Red Cross that an unrelated ship might be chartered for the purposes, for which the Japanese government could pay indirectly by donating the funds either to the Japanese Red Cross or the International Red Cross.<sup>35</sup> This initial hurdle was overcome in the event, and the same ships were used to repatriate Japanese from China and Chinese from Japan, but the negotiations of May 1953 clearly reveal the kind of impasses that occasionally blighted the process of repatriation.

A related incident in 1955 highlighted once more the fragility of the bridges that linked Japan and the PRC. On 20 November 1955, several Chinese would be repatriates refused to board the ship *Kōan Maru* in Maizuru—thus keeping the ship in port, in turn delaying the return of several dozen Japanese who were waiting for the *Kōan Maru* to take them home from Tientsin. The reason for the Chinese sit-in was sympathy for a Chinese student who had been apprehended by police on his way to Maizuru, ostensibly for breach of his visa conditions. The student in question had come from Taiwan on exchange, but was now wishing to go to mainland China. The Japanese government, unwilling to raise the ire of the Nationalists, would not allow him to get on board, and according to a *Mainichi* editorial, had no choice but to treat him as a political refugee who could go neither to Taiwan nor the PRC, rendering him in effect stateless.<sup>36</sup> According to Takagi, this was coming on the heels of an incident in the Hamamatsu jail on 3 November 1955, in which several Chinese awaiting deportation demanded to be sent to the PRC rather than Taiwan and were refusing to cooperate with their transport. A scuffle with police grew into a riot as other inmates joined in; several were injured, and furniture and windows were broken. Four of the Chinese inmates were charged with causing injury and remanded. The incident prompted the Chinese Red Cross to criticise the Japanese government for its lack of cooperation with the repatriation process, and it also insinuated that the Japanese government was biased against those Chinese residents in Japan who were unwilling to be repatriated to Taiwan and wanted to go to the PRC.<sup>37</sup> The last two cases reveal how blurry the distinction between 'repatriation' and 'deportation' could become in the context of the early 1950s. This is an aspect of the repatriation process that deserves a lot more attention, but which is outside of the limits of this particular analysis.

Cold War conditions, in that sense, were clearly able to affect the repatriation of Chinese residents in Japan, and in extreme conditions made them for all intents and purposes stateless. Similar problems affected the Korean community in Japan. Before the Korean War, the border between Japan and the Korean peninsula had been relatively porous, despite the best efforts of the Occupation Forces and the Japanese bureaucracy to control the extensive back and forth movement of both Korean and Japanese between the two countries as Tessa Morris-Suzuki has shown.<sup>38</sup> The difficulties that accompanied the repatriation of Koreans back to either South or North Korea in the 1950s are well illustrated by the archives of the International Red Cross. They suggest how difficult it

35 Angst to Ruegger 1953.

36 *Mainichi shimbun* 1955.

37 Takagi 1958, pp. 175–177.

38 Morris-Suzuki 2004.

was even for charitable organisations like the Red Cross to be, and to be seen as, apolitical in the 'hot' Cold War climate of the Korean peninsula in the 1950s. For example, in 1955, the Red Cross in Japan suggested to the Red Cross in North Korea that it might approach the Red Cross in South Korea for the latter to mediate on repatriation. The next thing that was transmitted to the ICRC in Geneva was the South Korean Red Cross Headquarters had been the subject of an extensive police search, because of President Syngman Rhee's suspicion of both Japan and North Korea.<sup>39</sup> That these international tensions also led to tit for tat delays of repatriations is also clear from International Red Cross Mission report from a camp in Pusan where Japanese were held: ICRC delegates were told bluntly that repatriations of Japanese from a camp in Pusan would not go ahead until repatriation of Koreans from Japan to South Korea had been finalised (despite the wishes of a great proportion of the Korean residents in Japan to be repatriated to North Korea).<sup>40</sup> Although repatriations of Korean residents from Japan to North Korea were successful by the late 1950s and took place for a limited number of years, the extent to which the repatriation process continued to be used for propaganda purposes is well illustrated by the highly idealised narrative distributed on that occasion by Democratic People's Republic of Korea.<sup>41</sup> Even so, the failure of the Japanese government to remain unaligned in the Cold War period meant that the repatriation of both Korean and Chinese resident groups in Japan was so complicated that they sometimes found that their best choice was to remain in Japan. Jonathan Unger, writing in 1973 on the Korean minority in Japan, ascribes various sinister motives to the Japanese government's failure to repatriate Chinese and Koreans to the PRC and North Korea, despite its suspicion of these groups. Unger says for example that the willingness of Taiwan to take from Japan's hands the most destitute and undesirable of Japan's Chinese minority was an incentive for Japan to cooperate with Taiwan on the repression of pro-PRC political activities amongst Chinese residents in Japan and the occasional deportation of Chinese activist to face political charges in Taiwan.<sup>42</sup> More recently, Korean researchers have argued that the Occupation Forces' border policies, and the subsequent Japanese alignment on the side of the US during the Cold War, actively prevented Korean residents from returning to Korea and thus were instrumental in maintaining a minority group in Japan.<sup>43</sup>

If successful repatriations open the door for communication between countries that were not on diplomatic speaking terms in the 1950s, the argument could be made that failed repatriations, then, also provided the basis for the development of transnational networks, as Chae Young-Kook has suggested in conclusion in the case of Koreans forced to remain in Japan. Indeed, the search for information on those many Japanese who decided not to return to Japan from the PRC in the 1950s kept the issue current for many years. Although the return of the so-called Chinese orphans has received attention particularly in the last ten years, in fact not a single year of the post-war period has passed without the return of several Japanese citizens from the PRC. Similarly, the Bureau of

---

39 ICRC 1955.

40 De Weck 1956.

41 Democratic People's Republic of Korea 1960.

42 Unger 1973.

43 Chae 2004; Chung 2004; Chang 2004.

Repatriate Welfare records that every year from the end of the war until 1980 several Japanese citizens returned to Japan from Korea. The contribution that these individuals made to the maintenance of links between Japan and its neighbours, and that the issue in itself has made to public perceptions of Japan's international and regional relations deserves more attention. The creation or maintenance of the Korean and Chinese minority groups in Japan by the failures of the repatriation processes are beginning to receive more attention as I mentioned above. I could only sketch briefly the specific break-downs in repatriation as they took place at the height of the Cold War in the case of those groups, but I hope that this shows that no analysis of post-war repatriation is complete—whether in the case of Japanese or in the case of Korean and Chinese—without taking the decade of the 1950s into account.

In conclusion, for many years after the defeat that engendered the mass repatriation of Japanese citizens, repatriation remained constantly in the news, and often in the surroundings, of the Japanese population. This did not foster close links with regional neighbours as much as maintain them despite the Cold War. The movement of people between Korea, China and Japan, so greatly intensified during the war years, continued despite the Cold War and Japan's new diplomatic and strategic alliances. And despite the simplistic rhetoric of the Cold War in the 1950s, the process of repatriation provided the means to explore alternative views of 'the New China'. The many forms of Japan's international relations in the 1950s can only be appreciated if we look below elite politics, and if we remember that the Japanese Empire endured beyond its formal 1945 demise—in the widely scattered citizens that were not repatriated for many years.

## REFERENCES

Angst 1953

Correspondence between Tokyo ICRC delegate H. C. Angst and ICRC President Ruegger, 22–31 May 1953, ACICR B AG 232 048-002.002.

*Asahi Shimbun* 1952

“Rurō no futatsu yōjo o sukū” 流浪の二つ幼女を救う. *Asahi shimbun*, 16 March 1952.

Chae 2004

Chae Young-Kook, “Repatriation of Koreans in Japan,” *Korea Journal*, 44: 4 (Winter 2004), pp. 60–83.

Chang 2004

Chang Seok Heung, “Overseas Migration of Koreans in the Colonial Period and the Historicity of Repatriation,” *Korea Journal*, 44: 4 (Winter 2004), pp. 5–29.

Chūgoku Kikansha Renraku Kai 1996

Chūgoku Kikansha Renraku Kai 中国帰還者連絡会, ed., *Kaette kita senpantachi no kōhansai: Chūgoku kikansha renrakukai no yonjūnen* 帰ってきた戦犯たちの後半生: 中国帰還者連絡会の四十年. Shinpū Shobō, 1996.

## Chung 2004

Chung Hye-Kyung, "The Forcible drafting of Koreans during the Final Phase of Colonial Rule and the Formation of the Korean Community in Japan," *Korea Journal* 44: 4 (Winter 2004), pp. 30–59.

## Democratic People's Republic of Korea 1960

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, *Korean Returnees from Japan*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960.

## De Weck 1956

Rapport de mission (Corée) M. de Weck et M. Michel, Archives of the International Red Cross, Geneva, ACICR B AG 121 056 001.

## Hikiage Engochō 1952

Hikiage Engochō 引揚援護庁, *Hikiage ken'eki shi* 引揚検疫史. 1952.

## ICRC 1955

ICRC to H. Angst (ICRC delegate in Tokyo), 8 August 1955. ACICR B AG 121 056 001.

## Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1952

Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *On the Unrepatriated Japanese Nationals* (1952). International Red Cross Archives, Geneva, ACICR B AG 232-000.

## Kimura 2005

Kimura Kenji 木村健二, "Hikiagesha engo jigyō no sui" 引揚者援護事業の推移. *Nihon gendai shi* 日本現代史 10 (2005), pp. 123–151.

## Kōseishō Engo Kyoku 1997

Kōseishō Engo Kyoku 厚生省援護局, *Engo gojūnen shi* 援護五十年史. Gyōsei, 1997.

## Le Monde 1953

Robert Guillain, "Japonais rapatriés de Chine." *Le Monde*, 24 Mars 1953. International Red Cross Archives, Geneva, ACICR B AG 232-048 002.02.

*Mainichi shimbun* 1955

*Mainichi shimbun*, editorial, 24 November 1955.

## Makino 2006

Megumi Makino, "From *Riben Guizi* (Japanese Devil) to Human: Experiences of Japanese Prisoners of War at Fushun prison between 1950 and 1956)," unpublished conference paper presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Wollongong, 26–29 June 2006 (quoted with permission of the author).

## Morris-Suzuki 2004

Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "An Act prejudicial to the Occupation Forces," *Japanese Studies*, vol. 24 no. 1 (May 2004), 5–28.

## Nihon Chūgoku Yūkō Kyōkai 1966

Nihon Chūgoku Yūkō Kyōkai 日本中国友好協会, *Nitchū yūkō undō no rekishi: Nihon Chūgoku yūkō kyōkai 16-nen no ayumi* 日中友好運動の歴史: 日本中国友好協会 16年の歩み. Nihon Chūgoku Yūkō Kyōkai, 1966.

## Nihon to Chūgoku 1953

*Nihon to Chūgoku* 日本と中国, see for example, 1 January 1953, 1 February 1953. Letters to the editor: Kazoku no koe, 1 January 1953.

## Nimmo 1988

William F. Nimmo, *Behind a Curtain of Silence Japanese in Soviet Custody, 1945–1956*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988.

## Radtke 1981

K. W. Radtke, “Negotiations between the PRC and Japan on the Return of Japanese Civilians and the Repatriation of Prisoners of War.” In *Leyden Studies in Sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981, pp. 191–213.

## Ruegger 1953

Telegram from ICRC President Paul Ruegger to Japanese Red Cross President Shimazu, 16 May 1953, ACICR B AG 232 048-002.002.

## Rusu Kazoku Dantai 1959

Rusu Kazoku Dantai Zenkoku Kyōgikai Henshi Kankō Inkaikai 留守家族団体全国協議会編史刊行委員会, *Ubareshi ai to jiyū o . . . hikiage sokushin undō no kiroku* 奪われし愛と自由を...引揚促進運動の記録. Kyōwatō 1959.

## Sankei shimbun 1962

Translated extract from *Sankei shimbun*, 3 June 1962. International Red Cross Archives, Geneva, ACICR B AG 232-048 022.02.

## Sebald 1965

William J. Sebald, *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1965.

## Seraphim 2006

Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945–2005*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

## Shimazu 1953

Shimazu Tadatsugu (President Japanese Red Cross) to ICRC President Paul Ruegger, 6 May 1953, International Red Cross Archives, Geneva, ACICR B AG 232 048-002.002.

## Takagi 1958

Takagi Busaburō 高木武三郎, *Saigo no kikoku sen* 最後の帰国船. Kōmeisha, 1958.

## Trefalt 2003

Beatrice Trefalt, *Japanese Army Stragglers and Memories of the War in Japan*,



1945–1975. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

Trefalt 2007

Beatrice Trefalt, “A Peace Worth Having: Delayed Repatriations and Domestic Debate over the San Francisco Peace Treaty,” *Japanese Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2007, pp. 173–187.

Trefalt forthcoming (a)

———, “A Homecoming of Aliens: Repatriations of Japanese Citizens from China, 1953,” forthcoming.

Trefalt forthcoming (b)

———, “Weeding out the strangers: repatriates, abortions and the Bureau of Repatriate Welfare, 1945–47,” forthcoming.

Unger 1973

Jonathan Unger, “Foreign Minorities in Japan,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1973), pp. 306–312.

Wakatsuki 1995

Wakatsuki Yasuo 若槻泰雄, *Sengo hikiage no kiroku* 戦後引揚げの記録. Tokyo: Jijitsushinsha, 1995.

*Acknowledgments:* I am grateful to the International Research Center for Japanese Studies for its invitation to the conference ‘Globalisation, Localisation and Japanese Studies in the Asia-Pacific Region,’ held at the University of Sydney from 10–13 November 2003, and also to the conference participants for their feedback on my research.