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Korean Repatriation and Historical Memory in Postwar Japan: Remembering the Ukishima-maru Incident at Maizuru and Shimokita

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Abstract: This essay focuses on the historical memory of Korean repatriation in postwar Japan, by examining the commemoration of the Ukishima-maru incident in which thousands of forced laborers died when their ship sank after striking a mine. We show how local memory activists in Maizuru and Shimokita mobilised to present an alternative narrative to that on display at the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum which overlooks Korean repatriation. It shows how despite limited means they were able to build a network of memory activists that transcends local and national borders.

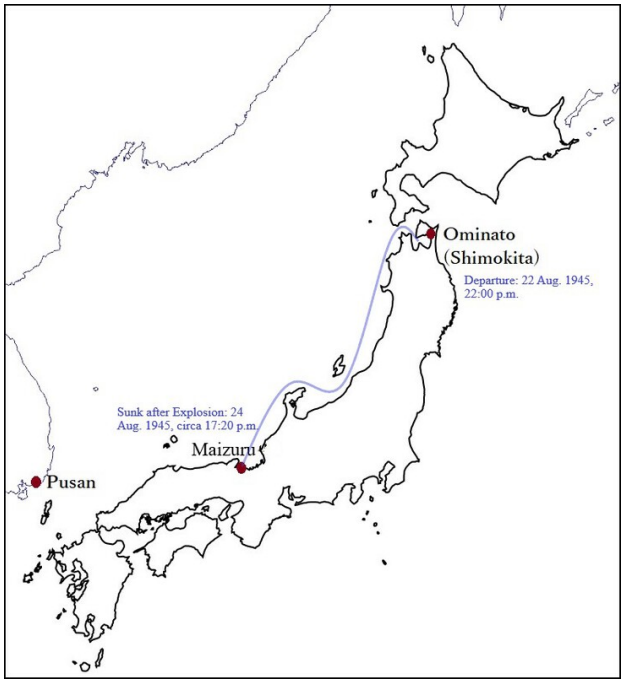
Keywords: repatriation, postwar Japan, historical memory, memory activists, Koreans in Japan, Maizuru, Shimokita, forced labour, Ukishima-maru

Introduction

On 8 December 1945 Son Il, the chairman of the Aomori Regional Office of the Korean Association in Japan (Zainihon Chōsen Renmei), visited the Hirosaki branch of the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP) to lodge a charge of war crimes. The written report he submitted alleged the "deliberate sinking by Japanese officials of a vessel containing several thousand Koreans." Son Il was requested to return in two days for an interview and was told that in the meantime his report would be translated. Eventually the SCAP officers found the report to be "entirely a hearsay account" and a second report submitted by Son Il on the date of his interview was found to be "differing in detail" from the first. Rather than simply dismiss the case "an attempt was made to impress upon Mr. Son Il the importance of, and meaning of, evidence [underlined in original] which would support his claims" and the officers further instructed him to submit signed witness statements from survivors. Son Il duly complied with these instructions, submitting three accounts from survivors before the end of December 1945. These witness statements were, however, deemed to "contain no concrete evidence of a war crime" in a report (dated 1 January 1946) submitted to the Investigation Division of the Legal Section of SCAP GHQ. Further examination by SCAP GHQ saw the case dismissed on 19 January 1946 citing "insufficient evidence for trial" (GHQ/SCAP Records, LS-39038).

The incident on which Son Il's claim was based has become known as the "Ukishima-maru incident" (Ukishima-maru jiken), a tragic event in which a military transport vessel, the Ukishima-maru, sank in Maizuru Bay (Kyoto prefecture) at approximately 5:20 p.m. on 24 August 1945 having apparently hit a naval mine. The vessel had left Ōminato port on the Shimokita peninsula (Aomori prefecture) bound for Pusan, Korea, on the evening of 22 August 1945, exactly one week after the emperor's radio broadcast announcing the imperial

rescript on surrender. The voyage was supposed to repatriate thousands of Korean labourers and their families. Many among them had been forced to work on military infrastructure projects across the Shimokita peninsula where they faced harsh conditions in what was a rushed effort to fortify the area in anticipation of the Asia-Pacific War coming to the Japanese main islands.[1]



Map showing the sites mentioned in this article and the course of the Ukishima-maru prior to its sinking

According to the Japanese government the Ukishima-maru left Ōminato port with 3,735 Korean passengers and 250 Japanese officers on board. At Maizuru 524 Korean and 25 Japanese lives were lost because of the explosion and subsequent sinking of the vessel. Many of the survivors were apparently rescued and aided by the people of a nearby fishing village who came out on their boats having heard the explosion. This local assistance is confirmed in the testimonies submitted by Son Il, but they contradict the Japanese government's official numbers. Instead the testimonies suggest between 6,500 and 8,000 were on board when the Ukishima-maru departed for Pusan and that approximately 6,000 perished—a death toll that would easily rank the Ukishima-maru incident among the greatest maritime disasters in history. Furthermore, they unequivocally concluded that it was a "brutal conspiracy [...] planned systematically by the authorities of the Japanese Government" perhaps to erase evidence and memory of Korean forced labour (GHQ/SCAP Records, LS-39038). Though SCAP closed its investigation without lengthy consideration, conspiracy theories as to whether the incident was an accident or planned event persist, and besides the disputed numbers, several questions regarding the incident remain unanswered: Why did the Ukishima-maru call at Maizuru rather than head straight to Pusan? Why was the decision made to repatriate the Korean labourers from the Shimokita peninsula in haste, prior to the implementation of an official repatriation programme?

The questions above and other ambiguities surrounding the Ukishima-maru incident have been thoroughly investigated by the late Kim Chanjong, a Korean journalist resident in Japan (Kim 1984). It is not our intention to determine the historical facts surrounding the incident, as those who have tried conclude that the remaining unanswered questions would probably require a full government investigation. Instead, we seek to examine how the Ukishima-maru incident has been remembered in Japan in the postwar period through to the present, and to do so as a lens from which to better understand issues surrounding the historical memory of postcolonial migration in Japan. In doing so we build on our previous research on the historical

memory of Japanese repatriation by considering Korean repatriation, of which the Ukishima-maru incident was probably the first state-organised example (Bull and Ivings 2019). In particular, we attempt to understand the process by which Korean repatriation from Japan—often referred to as deportation (sōkan) in Japanese—has come to be omitted from the historical memory of postwar repatriation in Japan despite the fact that the mass transfer of Koreans to their liberated homeland and of Japanese from their former colonial empire were intensely intertwined. In addition, we examine the activities and role of local Japanese "memory activists" at Maizuru and Shimokita in recovering the local memory of this tragedy and organizing the commemoration of the victims, making up for the silence on the subject in official narratives and in the display of the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum. In analysing these efforts, we show how local Japanese memory activists were able to transcend institutional constraints and create a transnational historical memory network. These efforts have provided a platform from which different Zainichi Korean groups could collectively commemorate the tragedy.

Such commemoration by activist groups is a longstanding feature of Japanese war memories though state-level initiatives have attracted the majority of attention both in mass media and among researchers (Seraphim 2006). Researchers have drawn attention to a disinclination by successive Japanese governments to atone for militarism and imperialism (Seaton 2007, Gluck 2007). At the level of official commemoration, throughout the Cold War, the state avoided addressing the fate of Japanese who were in the colonies and occupied territories when the empire collapsed (Watt 2009). Following the Cold War's end and the death of Emperor Hirohito, the mid-1990s was a period when several prominent politicians tried to acknowledge the complexities of Japan's empire and wartime actions (Tamanoi 2000). However, as Japan's 'lost decade' stretched into the 2000s and China became more powerful, the relative openness that existed around the time of the 50-year anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War dissipated. Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo increasingly became a touchstone for diplomatic and national popular memory skirmishes in East Asia. Since the 2010s, rising nationalism and hate speech have strained Japan's relations with China and South Korea. Abe Shinzō's second stint as Japan's prime minister (2012-2020) was especially provocative as his government questioned the Japanese military's responsibility for organising the 'comfort women' system. His government also continued to downplay the role of Korean forced labour in the Japanese empire, leading to worsening political and economic relations. In 2015 the discord spilled over into Japan's application for industrial heritage sites to receive recognition by UNESCO. The governments of South Korea and China strongly protested the application for failing to acknowledge the sites' role in forced labour (Underwood 2015).

Following this introduction, we briefly outline the movement of Koreans in Japan and throughout the empire in the context of the dismantling of the Japanese empire. Then, we turn our attention to the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum, discussing how it has largely omitted non-Japanese experiences of repatriation. We argue that the current display's overwhelming focus on the Japanese experience has nationalised the narrative of postcolonial return migration despite the reality of multi-ethnic repatriation and the emphasis the Museum placed on the universality of its themes in its successful bid to have some of its documents inscribed in UNESCO's "Memory of the World" register. The remainder of the paper examines the commemoration of the Ukishima-maru incident in both Maizuru—the site where the ship carrying Korean repatriates exploded and

sank—and Shimokita—the site where the Korean labourers on board had been forced to work and from which the Ukishima-maru departed. We describe and discuss the emergence of historical memory related activities connected to the Ukishima-maru incident in each location and the memory activists behind them. In the final section we consider historical memory in postwar Japan in light of Jay Winter's call to examine the local and "mundane" rather than national and "grandiose" in relation to remembrance (Winter 2006, 135).

Between Defeat and Liberation: Korean Repatriation from Japan

Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War and the resultant collapse of its colonial and wartime empire led to a fundamental redrawing of the map of Asia. The number of Japanese scattered across the various parts of the former empire was considerable. Approximately 6.9 million Japanese (3.2 million civilians and 3.7 million military personnel) were said to be strewn across this area upon Japan's defeat, a number equivalent to 9% of the Japanese population in 1945 (Watt 2009, 2). The repatriation of 95% of this number to ten Regional Repatriation Centres (RRCs) across Japan was carried out between 1945 and 1950 (Watt 2009, 77). Official Japanese repatriation ended in 1958, but flows of "return" migration to Japan continued. These cases, which persisted for decades, included Japanese women who had married foreign spouses in Sakhalin and persons of Japanese descent in China who had been orphaned there or entrusted to Chinese families by their fleeing parents during the chaos of Japan's imperial collapse (Araragi 2009; Nakayama 2019).

The growth of the Japanese empire and its eventual collapse entailed the movement of Japanese colonisers and non-Japanese colonial subjects alike. Koreans were involved in long standing migration flows to Japan, Manchuria and the Russian Far East, some of which predated the Japanese colonial era (1910-1945) but certainly intensified during it (Imanishi 2012; Kawashima 2009). These flows, combined with the hastened Korean labour and military mobilization for Japan's war effort, make it difficult to know exactly how many Koreans lived outside of the Korean peninsula on the eve of Korean liberation. If the last census taken during the colonial period is anything to go by, there were approximately 1.4 million Koreans in Manchuria and 1.2 million in Japan in 1940. Considering that the population of the Korean peninsula itself was 23.5 million in 1940, this meant that more than 10% of the Korean population was resident somewhere else in the Japanese empire other than Korea. These numbers would swell further with the intensified mobilization of Korea for Japan's war effort and it is estimated that as many as 5 million Koreans were resident somewhere abroad when the peninsula was liberated (Kim 2010, 203). Following liberation, as many as a million Koreans returned from Manchuria and 1.4 million returned from Japan. These numbers are only indicative as many remained mobile, fleeing military conflicts and economic hardship on the Korean peninsula (Ibid.).

The actual numbers aside, it is clear that Korean and Japanese repatriation were intensely intertwined at several levels. Though the ultimate direction of transport was usually (not always) different, both repatriation processes overlapped logistically and in terms of timing and jurisdiction (i.e. both countries were under foreign occupation). The same RRCs in Japan that received Japanese repatriates from destinations throughout the Asia-Pacific also served as points of departure for Koreans and other non-Japanese nationals. Repatriation vessels carrying Japanese to RRCs in Japan in many cases departed the same RRC with non-Japanese repatriates on board. Indeed, the first official repatriation (or

deportation) vessel utilizing the Maizuru RRC, the Unzen-maru, departed for Pusan on 16 September 1945, carrying 788 Korean repatriates. It returned to Maizuru on 7 October 1945, carrying the first contingent of Japanese repatriates (2,100 military personnel) to the port (Maizuru Shishi Hensan Iinkai 1988, 250).

In several respects Korean repatriation was more complicated than its Japanese counterpart. Prominent among these complications were the difficulties of transferring assets from Japan to Korea; the poor economic conditions in liberated Korea; and internal conflict which eventually culminated in a bloody civil war and the division of the Korean peninsula (Caprio and Yu 2009, 22). Unlike the Occupation of Japan, the Occupation of Korea was split along Cold War lines and caused further displacement and a Japan-ward flow of Korean refugees—many of whom were returning (Morris-Suzuki 2010). In occupying and dividing Korea, the Allied powers had "seriously complicated overseas Korean repatriation in the postliberation period" (Caprio and Yu 2009, 23).

Whilst many returned to Korea, many sought to remain in Japan. Whether pushed or pulled, many Koreans had travelled to Japan during the colonial period for work. Among their ranks a considerable number had settled, established businesses and acquired assets. For this group, repatriation to Korea effectively meant abandoning the life they had built for themselves in Japan. Estimates suggest that 600,000 Koreans resisted or delayed repatriation (Caprio and Yu 2009, 28). Remaining in Japan was also fraught with difficulty as the socio-economic discrimination of the colonial period did not disappear overnight—indeed Japanese defeat and Korean liberation may have lifted the lid on long-bubbling inter-ethnic tensions. A SCAP report in 1948 noted that most Japanese "would be only too happy to see all Koreans leave Japan" (Ibid., 33). This sentiment was shared by the Yoshida cabinet and SCAP itself which saw Koreans in Japan as politically problematic given strong ties with leftist organizations. The denial of Japanese citizenship to Koreans (in the colonial period Koreans were classified as Japanese nationals) impacted on their basic socio-economic and political rights, as did the suppression of Korean ethnic organizations and schools (Ryang 2016).

Faced with their ambiguous status, continued discrimination and dependence on the informal economy the appeal of repatriation for Zainichi Koreans grew as the Korean war ended. Some 90,000 Zainichi repatriated to North Korea between 1959 and 1984. This was, on the face of it, a voluntary movement "checked and recorded by an impartial, humanitarian body—the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross" (Morris-Suzuki 2009, 40). Yet as Morris-Suzuki powerfully argues, with the cover of a repatriation programme overseen by a respected international organization, the Japanese government sought to avert "the political odium that a policy of mass deportation otherwise would attract," whilst simultaneously riding itself of thousands of Koreans who were viewed as "indigent and vaguely communist" (Morris-Suzuki 2009, 47-49). Needless to say, Koreans who left Japan for North Korea often found conditions there did not live up to their expectations. With many families split and unable even to visit one another, the repatriation programme has left a painful legacy for Zainichi Koreans and many abandoned their dreams of return. Thereafter they sought to assimilate or to hide their identity as Zainichi, or they refocused their efforts to fight discrimination (Lie 2009, 169-170). Either way, the legacy of Korean repatriation—be it realised, terminally delayed, or altogether abandoned—is layered with several ambiguous and often painful memories. In this sense, the Ukishima-maru incident is only one episode of a drawn-out historical

trauma.

Remembering Return at the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum

By the end of 1950, apart from Maizuru, the last remaining RRCs had closed as SCAP wound up the repatriation bureaucracy. Now that the Allies had removed the bulk of Japanese from former colonies and occupied territories, the bureaucrats involved began reflecting on their work. To mark the occasion, they published A Record of Repatriation and Aid (Hikiage Engo Chō, 1950), the first of a series of official histories of repatriation. In the section on Maizuru, the authors noted::

> At the head of the bay was the top of the mast of the sunken Ukishima-maru. The boat was travelling from Ōminato carrying 3,000 Korean returnees when instructed by wireless by the Occupation forces to call at the nearest port. As it entered Maizuru Bay (24/8/1945) it hit a mine and sank causing many casualties. [The sinking] was reported in Korea to have been intentionally carried out by the Japanese side but the actual situation was as written here. (Hikiage Engo Chō, Hikiage Engo no Kiroku [A Record of Repatriation and Aid], 67-68)

The section continued: "Maizuru, from the earliest phase of the [repatriation] centre's opening, was assigned to sending off Koreans" (Ibid.). In 1961 Maizuru local officials also published a tome of description and statistical record of their work, recording that 662,862 people were processed at the Maizuru RRC during its 13 years of operation. Included in this number were 7,279 people who officials categorised as "non-Japanese" or "foreigner/other" (Maizuru Chihō Hikiage Engo Kyokushi, quoted in Uesugi 2010, 257).[2]

A separate table provided the number of Korean and Chinese deportees (sōkanjin), stating that 32,997 people had repatriated from Maizuru by 1958 (Maizuru Chihō Hikiage Engo Kyoku 1961, 543). Of this number, 29,061 were Koreans repatriated in late-1945 and early-1946; and 3,936 were Chinese repatriated from 1953 to 1958. In the 1950 account, central government officials sought to set the record straight on the Ukishima-maru incident. By 1961, however, the Ukishima-maru incident was eliminated from the The history of the Maizuru regional repatriation centre (Ibid.).

In 1988, 30 years after the RRC closed, the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum (hereafter 'the museum') opened. The opening was the outcome of nearly three decades of local collective remembrance activity supported by intermittent national media coverage and cultural production. Some of those most prominently involved in collective remembrance had earlier dedicated themselves to assisting with repatriation. Tabata Hana was one such individual whose work led the city to remember repatriation (Personal Correspondence with Curator of the Museum, Apr. 15, 2017). She became known as "the mother of repatriates", with some later writing to express their gratitude (Maizuru-shi Hikiage Kinenkan 2016, 42). Tabata played an important role in connecting the city to repatriate groups, including veterans' organisations that were active in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Tabata's moniker also reflects the highly gendered imagery imbuing Japanese media coverage of repatriation to Maizuru in the 1950s. Such imagery was reproduced in popular culture through two versions of a sentimental hit song about a mother longing for the return of a son which is never realised (Ganpeki no haha, 'The mother by the wharf') (Uesugi 2010, 275-279). By the 1980s, the 40-year anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War loomed and the main generation who had fought reached retirement age, whilst the "coming into memory" of the empire in the form of 'orphans left behind in

China' (Chūgoku zanryū koji) provided the circumstances in which Maizuru city launched its campaign to build the museum (Gluck 2007, 66). Much of the momentum for the museum came from the recollections of local memory activists, and repatriate and veterans' association members—recollections constructed in a society "characterised by the emergence of a victim consciousness […] and an erasure of Koreans and other former colonial subjects" (Ryang 2009, 63).

Maizuru city provided most of the funds to build the museum but there was also a substantial amount collected by local memory activists working with veterans' groups. The museum is run by the city. Because of the financial support provided by the city, the museum has often featured in local officials' tourism planning. Particularly in the late-1980s and 1990s, many visitors to the museum came as part of veterans' group visits. The museum helped Maizuru to maintain its image as the 'City of Repatriation' (Uesugi 2019, 228). During the mid-1990s visitor numbers to the museum reached a peak of approximately 200,000 a year. The city paid for an extension to the museum and supported a fundraising drive to build a recreation of the pier used for repatriation. By the 2000s, as groups of repatriates and veterans started to fold owing to the aging of their membership, the museum's visitor numbers also went into steady decline. Since the 2000s the city's tourism planners also emphasised other aspects of Maizuru's past such as red brick buildings that were used by the Imperial Navy. Declining visitor numbers led the museum to make changes to attract a younger audience that had no direct experience of repatriation. The changes included appointing a full-time curator on the city's payroll, redesigning the museum's display and making an application for a selection of documents held by the museum to be included on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register (hereafter 'MoW').

The display that existed from 1988 to 2012 was criticised by some researchers as derivative of the "national memory of repatriation" meaning it overwhelmingly focused on hardships suffered by repatriates (Hirano et al. 2009, 264). As a museum mostly financed by the local government the display also incorporated an account of the city's role as a repatriation port. However, that account "stress[ed] the uncontroversial aspects of repatriation and the importance local efforts by Maizuru citizens had for the national endeavour of repatriation" (Ibid., 269). After the display was redesigned as part of the museum's successful campaign for MoW status there was still little change to the message of repatriation as Japanese suffering. The new display does provide more context to help the visitor understand why Japanese required repatriation. It explains that as Japan expanded its empire in the 1930s by colonising northeast China government policy was to send thousands of people to become agricultural settlers.

After gaining MoW status the museum experienced a significant increase in visitor numbers. In 2016, numbers reached 125,000 which was almost double what they had been in 2012 (Personal Communication, April 15, 2017). With MoW status the museum's management also became optimistic that funding might eventually come from national government sources. At a time when Japan's regions face an increasingly challenging financial future, the cachet provided by the MoW 'brand' to the museum's display is considerable.

But did the new display provide sufficient information for the viewer to think critically about postcolonial migration in general, and Korean migrants in particular? The museum's displays have almost completely avoided addressing the complex reality of repatriation evident in the two official accounts introduced above. As of April 2017, the display contained only one mention of Korean repatriation from

Maizuru—a reference to the departure of the "first deportation vessel" (sōkan daiissen) on 16 September 1945 with 788 deportees aboard which appears on the museum's main timeline. This event on the timeline is followed by the official designation of Maizuru as a regional repatriation centre on 28 September and the arrival of the "first repatriation vessel" (hikiage daiissen) on 7 October carrying 2,100 military personnel, which appears in a larger font and is coloured in red. The observant visitor would realise that both the first repatriation vessel and first deportation vessel were in fact the same ship, the Unzen-maru, and that the ship travelled from Maizuru to Pusan and back repatriating people in both directions. This is the only hint in the museum at the intersection of Japanese and non-Japanese repatriation and Maizuru's role as a port of outbound repatriation. A prominently located monitor in the museum's entrance hall includes Maizuru's totals for "repatriates", "remains of the dead" and "repatriation vessels" but does not include deportees. A placard on the backside of a monument erected in 1970 which stands in the Repatriation Memorial Park behind the museum and mentions the total number of people who were repatriated from Maizuru provides the only other reference to deportees. The Ukishima-maru incident is not mentioned at all, though the memorial to the victims of the Ukishima-maru incident appears on a map in the museum's car park.

The museum's application to MoW stressed that the documents proposed for inclusion addressed "universal themes" of "internees' distress and despair, their zest for living, love of their families, and dreams of returning home" (Maizuru City 2014). Such themes are obviously not exclusive to the Siberian Internment and Japanese repatriation. They also apply to forced labour and Korean repatriation. As of April 2017, the museum had no plans to change how the periodisation of repatriation appeared in the display or to include any panels about the Ukishima-maru incident. From the museum's perspective, the incident occurred before official repatriation had begun, nor was it problematic to focus exclusively on Japanese experience. The museum director told us that by participating in the Ukishima-maru memorial service (see next section) the city had sufficiently acknowledged this aspect of the past. The curator, who seemed conscious of the potential controversy of excluding aspects of non-Japanese repatriation, simply emphasised that the message he wanted the museum to convey was that war only brings suffering (Personal Communication, April 15, 2017). Although some privately run museums take a more critical stance towards Japan's war responsibility, the curator's message remains a common one in most Japanese peace museums that have local or national government backing. Unsurprisingly, such a message often attracts scholarly criticism as a means of avoiding difficult issues (Fukuma 2019, 267).

The historian most familiar with the museum's collection said that he had not found any documents within it that he could use to elucidate Korean and Taiwanese perspectives in the Siberian Internment (Personal Correspondence, May 23, 2017). As for Korean repatriation from Maizuru, he agreed that the museum could include the numbers involved on the entranceway monitor. Furthermore, he thought that if the display included deportation, the museum could then incorporate the Ukishima-maru incident into its explanation. Katō Kiyofumi, possibly Japan's leading historian of repatriation, has made a similar point: "[Maizuru's role in deportation] is something we should not forget. For example, there were incidents such as the Ukishima-maru incident […]. We should recognise and consider such history. I think that considering and embracing these perspectives will allow us to appreciate more than the perspective of Maizuru as repatriation port for Siberian internees and connect it to world history and wider perspectives" (Masuda et al, 2017, 36).

The question remains, therefore, as to whether, the museum could be doing more to problematise the dominant narrative of repatriation as Japanese suffering.

Commemorating the Ukishima-maru Disaster: Maizuru

In the first two decades after the war, the Ukishima-maru incident was neither widely known nor discussed in Maizuru. It remained no more than a personal memory for those who witnessed it and the witnesses were not numerous as the incident had occurred at Shimo-Sabaka, some way from central Maizuru. Given this remoteness and the chaotic situation of an imperial naval base in the immediate postwar period, few civilians would have noticed or dwelt on the incident. Attempts to salvage the wreck of the Ukishima-maru (presumably for scrap) were carried out in 1950 and 1954. From these operations some remains of those who died were recovered and from 1954 onwards an annual memorial service was held in the east Maizuru public hall, though it was not widely publicised.

The head of the Maizuru Association, Yoe Kazuhiko, narrates the Ukishima-maru incident from the vantage point of the peak of the Gorogatake Park, Maizuru city.

Noda Mikio, a junior high school teacher who would long head the Association to Commemorate the Victims of the Ukishima-maru Incident (hereafter the Maizuru Association), did not hear of the Ukishima-maru incident until the mid-1960s. The incident arose in the context of efforts by the Maizuru City Teachers Association to educate pupils about Korea in order to alleviate discrimination and to stop frequent fighting between Japanese and Korean youths in Maizuru. These efforts were promoted by the Maizuru branch of the Japan-Korea Association (Nicchō Kyōkai) established in 1964, headed by Maizuru city Mayor, Satani Yasushi, an independent politician. The Japan-Korea Association aimed to promote Japan-Korea trade and cultural exchange across the Japan Sea, as well as "solving education problems." It had a membership of around 50, counting labour union officials, city councillors, priests, and Chamber of Commerce members among its ranks, besides those from the Teachers Association (Shinada 2008, 65).

The formation of the Japan-Korea Association and its network swelled the attendance of the Ukishima-maru memorial service at east Maizuru public hall in 1965 (the 20th anniversary) to approximately 400. Members from the Japan-Korea Association attended as did delegates from organizations such as the Maizuru Chamber of Commerce, Maizuru Regional Labour Union; citizen's groups such as the Maizuru branch of the Japan Peace Committee, Maizuru Women's Association (fujinkai); the Japan Socialist Party and Japan Communist Party. The members of the Teachers Association who were simultaneously active in the Japan-Korea Association began to

discuss the idea of establishing a monument (Shinada 2008, 58-69). Noda and Sunaga Yasurō—an official at the Labour Association at Maizuru City Hall—were especially keen on the idea but it was not until 1975 that the Maizuru Association was formed with the express aim of erecting a monument to the victims of the Ukishima-maru incident.

According to a 2008 publication documenting the Maizuru Association's activities, as well as our interviews with Yoe Katsuhiko, a retired school teacher and current head of the Maizuru Association, the initiative to build the monument strengthened as Japan passed through an era of high-speed economic growth. After the Anpo struggle and student movements in the 1960s, attention appeared to be shifting from politics to the economy and personal consumption. Social and peace activists alike were concerned by this trend and there was a sense that wartime experiences were being forgotten and that peace was being taken for granted. This was strongly felt by Sunaga in particular, who grew up in Manchuria as the son of an employee of the South Manchurian Railway Company. After the war Sunaga was interned in the Soviet Union and in 1947 was "repatriated" to Maizuru where he remained (Shinada 2008, 73-80). Considering his own experiences Sunaga felt strongly that war must never be repeated and that Japan had a responsibility towards China and Korea.

The monument was to serve as a physical reminder of the tragedy of war and Japan's war responsibility and thus pass on the memory of the Ukishima-maru incident to future generations. The Maizuru Association had the moral support of the City Mayor and other citizen's groups, yet Noda and Sunaga were its driving force. They settled on a parcel of land in Shimo-Sabaka in the vicinity of where the Ukishima-maru had actually sunk, but the site had the disadvantage of being far from the main residential areas in Maizuru. The Maizuru Association next had to secure an estimated ¥7 million of funding to implement their plan. Initially they approached both the main resident associations for Koreans in Japan—South Korea-linked Mindan and North Korea-linked Chongryon—for help, but were rebuffed by Mindan. It became evident that Mindan and Chongryon would find it difficult to officially cooperate with each other in the effort. Sunaga and Noda recognized that the rivalry between Mindan and Chongryon was rooted in the bitter reality of a divided Korea, which, like the Ukishima-maru incident, they recognized as "the result of Japan's colonial rule and war of aggression". As Japanese, they felt it was their own responsibility to implement the initiative (Shinada 2008, 90). This experience prompted the Maizuru Association to establish three principles for its activities: 1. political impartiality, 2. religious impartiality, 3. Japanese responsibility for commemoration. Donations to construct the monument were collected from Maizuru citizens including individual Zainichi Koreans.

The Memorial to the Victims of the Ukishima-maru Incident (above) at Shimo-Sabaka on the outskirts of Maizuru city, Kyoto

Prefecture. On the wall behind the memorial a photo of a repatriation vessel passing the Ukishima-maru wreck is shown with captions in Japanese and Korean (below).

The design of the monument and its construction was the source of some debate amongst the Maizuru Association's membership. Noda recommended Tsukamoto Kōsaku, a local middle school art teacher and a sculptor to lead the process. When Tsukamoto presented a design for the monument depicting a female figure in Korean dress clutching a baby whilst several distressed figures cling desperately to her lower body, some members criticised the design and called for hiring a professional sculptor. But in 1977 and 1978 the monument was sculpted at Tsukamoto's school workshop and installed. The current head of the Maizuru Association, Yoe Kazuhiko, and his wife, Yoe Mihoko, were both part of a team that worked on the sculpture together with Tsukamoto, and take pride in the fact that this was a monument built by local citizens (Personal Correspondence, Aug. 24, 2019).

Having prepared the ground at the site (renamed the Ukishima-maru Victims Memorial Park) the monument was unveiled on 24 August 1978. This was the first memorial service organised by the Maizuru Association and it has been held annually ever since. Typically, the service includes statements from various attendees and lasts about an hour. It is organised entirely by the Maizuru Association utilizing their network of local teachers and city hall employees to set up and later take down tents, seats and other equipment. Both the Maizuru city mayor and the Kyoto prefectural governor occasionally attended until recently, and still send flowers. In 1996, the Minister of Health and Welfare and future DPJ Prime Minister, Kan Naoto, sent a message to the service, after being prompted to do so by Nishiyama Tokiko, a JCP House of Councillors representative. This has been continued annually ever since and represents the only official Japanese government participation in the service. Though Yoe is positive about this acknowledgement he believes a message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be more appropriate.

Over time there has been a growth in Korean participation. Statements have been read out by delegates from the main resident's associations of Koreans in Japan (Mindan and Chongryon) and the memorial service has incorporated Korean dance, tea offerings to the victims and the singing of a folk song (Hamanasu no Hana Sakisomete) by a chorus of school girls from a Korean school in Kyoto or Osaka. In recent years, Korean media covered the memorial service and members from a Korean labour union attend and assist with setting up and packing away the necessary equipment.

This broader Korean participation is the result of the Maizuru Association's perseverance with the memorial service and a widening of their activities. In the late 1980s prompted by the discovery of a list of those said to have perished the Maizuru Association decided to compile and publish the main sources on it with a commentary that narrated the incident in light of Japanese colonization of Korea and Korean wartime forced labour (Ukishima-maru Junnansha Tsuitō Jikkō Iinkai, 1989). They also successfully contacted major publishers to include an Ukishima-maru entry in encyclopaedias, historical dictionaries, and other reference works. These brought the Maizuru Association in closer contact with local history researchers/teachers in Shimokita (Aomori prefecture) where the Ukishima-maru had departed for Pusan. Local history researchers/teachers in Shimokita had begun exploring the topic in the 1970s and eventually organised their own memorial service at Shimokita. These actions brought the group into contact with a wider network of peace activists and researchers, raised the profile of the Maizuru Association's activities and contributed documentary evidence in support of claims for compensation for survivors that were being lodged in Japanese courts in the 1990s.

In 1992 a citizen's group in Kyoto city made the Ukishima-maru incident, including Korean forced labour, the subject of a movie. The Maizuru Association supported the production of the movie as consultants on the history of the incident and provided logistical support, even serving as extras in the scenes shot in Maizuru. Directed by Itō Masaaki, a regular producer of anti-war films, and titled Eijian Burū – Ukishima-maru Sakon (Asian Blue – The Ukishima-maru Incident) the movie was released in the summer of 1995, fifty years after the war. Screened at smaller, independent cinemas, Asian Blue was viewed by approximately 300,000 people nationwide. Though it was hardly a blockbuster, the movie renewed interest locally in the Association's commemoration service (Shinada 2008, 154). The Maizuru Association marked the 20th anniversary of the construction of the monument with a local stage production that narrated both the Ukishima-maru incident and its commemoration by the Maizuru Association.

Yoe Katsuhiko with traditional Korean masks that he made. Cultural exchange with Korean citizen's groups spawned his

interest in Korean history and culture.

Together with the producers of Asian Blue, the Maizuru Association sought to have the movie screened in South Korea. Restrictions on the screening of Japanese movies in South Korea prevented this until 2000 when local citizen groups in Gwangju organized screenings. This led to an active exchange that continues to the present, with Gwangju citizen's groups often sending delegates to attend the commemoration service. The Maizuru Association updated their explanation board next to the monument to include an explanation in hangul in order to better serve the increasing number of Korean visitors from South Korea. This widening network enabled the Maizuru Association to host a symposium in Maizuru in 2005 to mark the 60th anniversary since the end of the war. The symposium included a discussion of the Ukishima-maru incident, but with the overarching theme "the necessary conditions for peace in Northeast Asia," it addressed issues of social, political and cultural cooperation, and was attended by academics, local citizens and peace activists from several countries in East Asia.

Since then the Maizuru Association has deepened its links with Ukishima-maru incident memory activists in Shimokita. Yoe, himself, has become active in other grassroots memory activist groups in Japan (constructing a monument in Nagasaki to victims of the atomic bombing) and in Gwangju related to war memory and colonial history. The Maizuru Association have also brought Korean visitors to the site and incorporated them into the commemoration service. This has included assisting Korean media documentaries and features on the incident (Maeil Broadcasting Network, Korean Broadcasting System) as well as hosting several visitors from South Korea—including South Korean naval forces who made a point of visiting the site during a scheduled call on the Japan Self-Defence Force naval base in Maizuru. The Maizuru Association also continues to reach out to schools and youth.

Attempts have also been made by the Maizuru Association to have the incident included in the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum. Yoe presented several documents to the museum for this purpose but thus far nothing has transpired. He speculates that the Japan War-Bereaved Families Association (Nihon Izokukai) would oppose the idea and the museum is mindful of upsetting this group which is noted for its neo-nationalist views of Japan's wartime past. Yoe feels that the Ukishima-maru incident is "just another part of Maizuru's [repatriation related] history," and thus from the Maizuru Association's perspective an information board or even a simple mention of the Ukishima-maru incident in the museum is warranted. He insisted that "the citizens of Maizuru are not opposed [to its inclusion]." Given colonial rule, Koreans and Japanese were a single nationality at the time, he insists, so the logic of stressing the "Japanese" experience alone is misleading. Regarding the musuem's UNESCO application, Yoe expressed surprise bordering on disillusionment at UNESCO's approval despite the exclusion of Korean repatriation and the Ukishima-maru incident from the museum's display. Yoe reports that he periodically receives a call from the museum as some visitors enquire about the Ukishima-maru incident (Personal Correspondence, Aug. 24 2019).

Still very much a grassroots citizen's group, the Maizuru Association has grown from a small handful of memory activist teachers into a group involving an extensive network of memory activists that transcends local and national borders. The Maizuru Association has also outlived its founders. The achievements of the Maizuru Association illustrate how local historical memory—in this case of non-local

marginalised groups—can be fostered by the efforts of local citizens without dependence on local or national government support to institutionalise that memory.

Commemorating the Ukishima-maru Disaster: Shimokita

This article began with an allegation by the head of the Aomori Korean Association that the Ukishima-maru incident was a war crime, prompting a short-lived SCAP investigation. It is not clear what happened immediately after the investigation was dropped. However, the incident itself was not widely known in the remote corner of Aomori prefecture. It was not until the late 1960s that local school teachers active in Shimokita history circles became interested in researching the issue. Indeed, Narumi Kentarō and Akimoto Ryōji, who for a time became the leading figures in efforts to research the topic, first heard of the Ukishima-maru incident at a teachers' convention held in Kyoto (Shimokita no Shōgen wo Hakkan suru Kai 1992). Narumi published his first article on the topic in the local history journal Usori in 1972 (Narumi 1972) and over the next two decades occasional articles appeared in more local history journals. However, given the limited circulation of these journals, knowledge of the Ukishima-maru incident was hardly widespread in the Shimokita area.

This situation changed in 1991 as a result of Narumi's presentation on the Ukishima-maru incident at the 17th Shimokita Education Convention. In the talk Narumi investigated how and why so many Koreans were brought to Shimokita, what kind of lives they lived, and why the ship that was supposed to bring them home to Pusan instead went to Maizuru. A strong sense that "we should not close our eyes to the mistakes of the past" among those in attendance sparked efforts to collect local testimonies and locate survivors in Korea. The following year saw the publication of the fruits of this labour, Aigo no Umi – Ukishima-maru Jiken Shimokita kara no Shōgen [Crying Sea – Testimonies from Shimokita on the Ukishima-maru Incident], which provided a detailed account of Korean forced labour across the Shimokita peninsula.

According to Jay Winter, "oral history and the 'memory activists' who conduct it can be the trigger which precipitates the ending of the reign of silence." (Winter 2010, 24) This proved to be the case in Shimokita. The process of compiling the publication galvanised participants, who resolved to pass on this history and formed a group called The Ukishima-maru Shimokita Association (hereafter Shimokita Association) in 1993. The shooting of sections of the movie Asian Blue at Shimokita the next year further encouraged the group to extend its activities. On 22 August 1994, the anniversary of the Ukishima-maru's departure from Ōminato, the Shimokita Association held the first commemoration service at the site of the ship's departure, an annual effort continued ever since. At the first commemoration service approximately 50 were in attendance, including some who had travelled from Maizuru (Tōō Nippō, Aug. 23, 1994). In 2012, the Shimokita Association erected a wooden information board at the site of the Ukishima-maru's departure at a total cost of ¥200,000. This was funded entirely by donations and the costs were principally for materials. The inscription and carpentry work were done for free by an acquaintance of the Shimokita Association, and Mutsu city did not charge for the ground it was erected upon (Personal Correspondence, Feb. 20, 2019). In 2018 26 people attended the service led by Murakami Junichi, a retired high school math teacher from Mutsu who now heads the Shimokita Association (Tōō Nippō, Aug. 23, 2018).

Murakami Junichi, head of Shimokita Association, and the information board that the association erected in 2012

In February 2019, the authors visited Shimokita to meet Murakami and discuss the Shimokita Association's activities. According to Murakami, the Shimokita Association currently has about 30 (mostly elderly) members the majority of whom are, or were, school teachers. Interestingly, the group also counts Japanese repatriates from Sakhalin (Karafuto) among its members. Around the time of the publication of Aigo no Umi and the shooting of Asian Blue, Shimokita Association membership peaked at about 100 members. Since then membership has gradually declined as members passed away. Besides the annual commemoration service, which is their main activity, Shimokita Association members also give talks at local schools and organise occasional events at Mutsu city library, such as screenings of Asian Blue and talks from outside speakers. They have also assisted Korean media (KBS) and other visitors investigating the wartime forced labour of Koreans. Though the Shimokita Association has a limited scale and scope of activities it is part of a grassroots memory network that commemorates the Ukishima-maru incident and forced labour. The connection with the Maizuru Association is particularly strong and the groups participate in each other's commemorative service either in person or by sending a message. Shimokita Association also sends an offering to Yutenji temple in Tokyo where the remains of some of the victims are held (Underwood 2010). Links with Korea Museum (Kōrai Hakubutsukan), a non-affiliated museum in Tokyo, are maintained and speakers from the museum have been invited to give talks in Mutsu. Locally, Shimokita Association works closely with a group that commemorates those who died in the Allied air-raids on Shimokita in April and August 1945.

Murakami explained that the Shimokita Association sprang from the passion of local school teachers to research the history of their region. Narumi's research was initially part of wider local historical research activities. It was not until the early 1990s that a specific Ukishima-maru related group was started with the aim of collecting testimonies and later organizing a local commemoration service. According to Murakami, Saitō Sakuji, a local social studies teacher and "man of action," was at the forefront of organizing the group. In terms of what motivated these early leaders, Murakami speculated that education and local history was Narumi's "purpose in life" (ikigai) and that Saitō's activism sprang from the shock he felt when learning of the Ukishima-maru incident. When asked about his own motivation, Murakami simply stressed the importance of "remembering the past" as a means of "maintaining peace today" (Personal Correspondence, Feb. 20, 2019).

The Shimokita Association has not faced explicit opposition to its activities until now, but Murakami felt that it was necessary to keep up their efforts, referring to the rise in hate speech directed towards Koreans in Japan in recent years, in addition to the continuing

debate on constitutional revision actively promoted by the Abe administration. In this context the Shimokita Association seeks to remind people of the local connections to and experiences of the tragedy of war, including forced labour, so that locals do not take peace for granted.

We also questioned Murakami on the initial silence regarding Korean forced labour in the immediate decades after the war, and why it was not until the early 1990s that the Shimokita Association was formed, but he was unable to provide an explanation. Later we put this question to Yoe (head of the Maizuru Association) who speculated that unlike Maizuru, where local people had sought to rescue Koreans from the vessel, Shimokita was the site of exploitation of Korean forced labour. In the absence of positive elements to the local story there was probably a stronger tendency towards silence and forgetting, conscious or otherwise (Personal Correspondence, Aug. 24, 2019).

An abandoned railway bridge of the discontinued Ōma railway line constructed using Korean

Parts of the interview with Murakami hinted at a sense of tension towards the Ōminato Naval Self Defence Force base and those connected with it. Murakami recalled difficulties collecting testimonies from local construction companies during their oral history project in the early 1990s. The mobilization of Korean labour during the war involved various levels of state organization and oversight, but once the government assigned and distributed labourers to specific areas it was often major construction companies or military bases who were supposed to manage labour. In most cases, however, the actual on-site management of labour was conducted by subcontractors—the Sezaki-gumi (Hakodate), Aizawa-gumi (Akita), and Koyanagi-gumi (Niigata) in the case of the Ōma railway—who then further subcontracted to local construction companies (Shimokita no Shōgen wo Hakkan suru Kai 1992, 190). According to Murakami, some of these local firms survive to the present and the Self Defence Force base remains an important source of business for them. The reluctance or refusal to participate in the Shimokita Association's oral history project suggests that some local firms were engaged in the use and abuse of forced labourers.

In our interview, Murakami was critical of the Self Defence Force base, not so much as a legacy of the imperial naval base to which Korean forced labourers were attached, but for its overbearing presence and engagement in various building projects without public consultation. Murakami acknowledged that the Self Defence Force was popular locally as an important source of local employment as well as community service. Nevertheless, he felt that local citizens had to be mindful of the base, because if left unchecked, Shimokita—which is also a host to a temporary nuclear waste storage facility—risked undergoing an "Okinawa-ization" (Okinawaka)

process, that is domination of the locality by the military, in this case the Japanese military (Personal correspondence, Feb. 20, 2019). By reminding citizens of negative aspects of the base's past, the Shimokita Association provides a critique of its continued presence. Stressing the connections between past and present also allows the Shimokita Association to justify its continued activities.

Conclusion

In this article we have sought to answer Winter's call to shift "the scale of vision from the national and grandiose to the particular and mundane" in relation to the study of war monuments and remembrance (Winter 2006, 135). We have focused on the memory of migration in its immediate aftermath, examining the initial forgetting and eventual commemoration of an incident in which a hastily arranged repatriation vessel carrying Korean forced labourers from the Ōminato naval base on the Shimokita peninsula to Pusan sank after an explosion in Maizuru bay. As Winter shows, "sites of memory are created not just by nations but primarily by small groups of men and women who do the work of remembrance." These "social agents of remembrance" either prompt the state and wider society into engaging in remembrance, or, through their grassroots efforts, attempt to substitute for the void left by an absence of state or institutionally organised memory activities (Winter 2006, 136). The Maizuru and Shimokita Associations covered in this article fit this model, and, in the case of the Maizuru Association in particular, demonstrate how such approaches can sometimes transcend the regional and national levels of the state with alternative networks of remembrance. Both associations, based largely on the initiatives of local school teachers, have demonstrated remarkable resilience by continuing their remembrance services, if on a smaller scale, in the face of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

With much media attention given to the so-called "history wars" in East Asia and the frequent critique of Japan's failure to address its wartime and colonial past, it is worth stressing that at the grassroots level a network of remembrance has emerged, sustained a movement over many decades, and proved remarkably resilient (Morris-Suzuki et al, 2013). At the state level, Japan-Korea historical disputes continue to poison Japan-Korea relations. Nevertheless, the case of the remembrance of the Ukishima-maru incident points to the possibility of a degree of reconciliation between citizens of Japan and Korea without state involvement. Furthermore, through the organizing by a Japanese citizens' group of the ongoing Ukishima-maru remembrance service, the Maizuru Association has provided a platform for differently aligned Zainichi Korean groups to participate in collective remembrance alongside one another. This has been achieved despite the connection of the incident to repatriation, a topic of great sensitivity to any diasporic community, but perhaps especially for Zainichi Koreans given the prolonged division of their homeland and the complicated legacy of actual postwar repatriation. Though participation in the remembrance service at Maizuru does not represent a full reconciliation between Japanese and competing Zainichi Korean groups in Japan, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Local memory activist groups like the Maizuru and Shimokita Associations are fully dependent on the people who take it upon themselves to engage in such activities. Compared to institutionalised forms of memory activity, such as state-sponsored monuments and museums, they operate with limited resources and while sometimes displaying enormous resilience and commitment over decades, when the initial memory activists grow old or pass away, the movements may decline or disappear. As the

case covered in this article demonstrates, the achievements produced by local memory activists can be both lasting and meaningful. They have filled in for aspects of the past that the state and institutions connected to the state, such as the Maizuru Repatriation Memorial Museum, choose to overlook; they have ensured that records and sources of the incident have been published; and they have provided a platform for opposing Korean resident's associations to meet and remember their dead.[3] These are no small feats considering the limited resources at their disposal. As such, media outlets and scholars of historical memory alike would do well to give such grassroots activities the attention they deserve.

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Notes

[1] In this article we focus on the Ukishima-maru incident itself and its connection to the historical memory of postwar repatriation rather than forced labour. Nevertheless, given that the Ukishima-maru was repatriating forced labourers it is also connected to the historical memory of forced labour. We cover this briefly in a later section on Shimokita, but for further details on the forced labour issue we recommend that readers consult the wealth of articles published in this journal on the issue. (https://apjjf.org/site/search/level/2/title/forced)
[2] Our article in Japan Forum gave a higher number of 664,531. This is the number included on a monument in the Repatriation Memorial Park. However, it includes people who arrived at other ports in Japan but who Maizuru RRC officials subsequently had responsibility for processing as repatriates.
[3] In recent years there has been a spike in interest in the Ukishima-maru incident in Korea. In 2019 a documentary called *Ukishima-maru Massacre* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ee50iIu39Vc) was released and in 2020 the North Korean government has demanded compensation and an apology from the Japanese government for "killing the Koreans on board" (Yonhap News Agency Online 24 Aug. 2020 (https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200824001700325)). It is unclear if this is in any way a result of the raising of the incident's profile by the activities of the Maizuru and Shimokita Associations.