

# ***The Question of Japanese-ness: Repatriation and Guilt in Postwar Japan***

Kilby Hammond, *University of San Francisco*<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

After World War II, the millions Japanese soldiers and civilians living abroad in Japan's former empire were sent home by Allied forces. This article explores the impact of that repatriation on the Japanese homeland, and the social phenomena of scapegoating, alienation, and cultural prejudices that met many returnees. Using memoirs and cultural works, this article considers the experience of repatriation from 1945 to 1958. In so doing, it highlights the connection between repatriation, national identity, and Japan's struggle with war guilt and responsibility as a defeated and occupied nation.

**Keywords:** Japan, identity, postwar period, World War II

## **Introduction**

At the end of World War II, millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians who had been spread across East Asia came home to Japan. The interaction between home island Japanese and these repatriates provides a useful lens to view the collective Japanese struggle to come to terms with the lost war. Japanese leaders called for collective repentance for the actions of the country, but guilt and responsibility were difficult burdens to bear in the ruins of a Japan that had suffered under Allied airpower. Although the issue of repatriation has received attention in most comprehensive works about the occupation of Japan, historian Andrew Gordon writes that repatriation, "was a complex undertaking which left a legacy that has not yet been fully studied or understood."<sup>2</sup> Occupation historian John Dower recognizes the need for additional work on repatriation in his expansive work, *Embracing Defeat*, calling it "a neglected chapter among the countless epic tragedies of World War II."<sup>3</sup>

This paper examines the impact of repatriation and the difficulties that many returnees encountered through the memoirs of two repatriates from Manchuria, Kazoku Kuramoto and Yasuo Kazuki. While the small sample set of only two memoirs does have limitations, Kuramoto and Kazuki represent diverse colonial experiences that were unified through the act of repatriation. Kuramoto was a third generation female colonial settler and Kazuki was a late draftee soldier who would spend years in a Soviet gulag before his eventual return. The use of memoir and repatriation-focused secondary sources reveals an internal struggle as the nation attempted to assign guilt and responsibility in the chaos of defeat. The goal of this research is to connect personal experiences to a broader picture of the mainland Japanese reaction to Japanese repatriates.

While Japanese at home and abroad were all Japanese citizens, Lori Watt distinguishes between *naichi* (literally, "inner territory"), those who lived in Japan as of August 15, 1945, and *hikiagesha* ("repatriates"), who lived abroad. The legal definition of *hikiagesha* in Japan is:

...people repatriated to Japan after August 15, 1945, who maintained their livelihood overseas continuously for more than six months... who had no choice but to repatriate because of conditions produced by the end of the war, the orders of foreign authorities, and the loss of means to earn a livelihood.<sup>4</sup>

This paper will consider how all Japanese, both in the *naichi* and *hikiagesha*, understood what it meant to be Japanese in Imperial Japan and also what prompted so many Japanese to leave their homes for the colonies. From there it will look at how the divergent experiences and rhetoric in the colonies and Japan began a separation of understanding between these two groups. By examining the accounts of Kuramoto and Kazuki, as well as later analysis from other scholars, this paper will show that the interactions between the repatriates and other Japanese was less than welcoming and in some cases even hostile. The final section will show how language created the backlash against the repatriates as the Japanese people attempted to come to terms with guilt, scapegoating, and responsibility in postwar Japan.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Construction of the Japanese Empire and Imperial Identity***

The 1868 Meiji Restoration began the process that would turn into a massive military and empire-building project for Japan. During the Meiji Era (1868-1912) a modern nation-state was created out of a feudal country. As part of that change under the Meiji Emperor, Japanese leaders, both public and private, began to work on a discourse for the new national identity. Before this time many Japanese had identified with their local region rather than the nation.

During this period, Japan built an empire from the spoils of war. Japan acquired its first colony, Taiwan, after the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Five years after the victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910. The League of Nations gave Japan special rights in China and mandate over Pacific islands following its participation in World War I. The 1930s saw an aggressive expansion into Manchuria, where Japan would set up the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932, and further expansion into China and Southeast Asia between 1937 and 1945. Through these conquests, Japan's military cleared the way for the colonial growth that would place millions of Japanese throughout East Asia.

By the end of World War II, entire generations of Japanese civilians had lived and died abroad in Japan's colonies. There were facts at home that "pushed," or perceived factors abroad that "pulled" people to a different land with the hope of a better life. The Japanese government made several moves through propaganda, new policies, and monetary incentives to artificially create these factors in Japan and its colonies, such as Manchuria. Similar to Horace Greeley's advice to Americans to "Go West, young man," the Manchurian Emigration Council called on Japanese youth to "Go to the continent young man," for "a new land awaits the village youth."<sup>6</sup> The largest programs that took many Japanese to the continent were village migration policies. These put civilians on the frontlines and, later, into the hands of Japan's enemies.

The massive mobilization of Japanese civilians to the colonies fell under quasi-public development companies that helped organize the Japanese in the new lands. While private companies, these massive bureaucratic organisms used public funds to help facilitate the transfer of people. The Oriental Development Company in Korea and Manchuria Colonization Corporation in Manchuria helped negotiate land acquisition for the future Japanese settlers from the native Koreans or Chinese, usually by forced relocation of the latter.<sup>7</sup> These companies created a buffer between the Japanese settlers and colonial natives. Not only did they acquire the land, these companies helped provide each new settlement with farming experts, police and defensive apparatuses, hospitals, factories, and schools.<sup>8</sup> The companies were helped by government propaganda urging the Japanese people to become “soldiers of the Hoe” for “the development of the Yamato race, to build a new order in Asia.”<sup>9</sup> Just as with earlier immigration projects, the Japanese government put more than just words in the minds of the average Japanese farmer in order to encourage immigration, they offered to put money in his pocket.<sup>10</sup>

These large scale policies needed help from grassroots counterparts in the form of local elites in each prefecture, and in the smaller villages in Japan. It was these elites who in the 1930s began to sell their villagers on the “glorious” idea of immigration to the continent. With the help of Prefecture bureaucrats, villages in Japan would recruit up to 300 households, sending up to a third of the total village population or recruiting from surrounding villages to meet a preordained quota.<sup>11</sup> Most villages would take up these recruitment drives for economic reasons. Immigration to Manchuria promised to ease the economic stress of the 1930s global depression. With the promise of more land to farm and money in their pocket, these recruitment programs could cut away the households that were a drain on the village’s resources and space. With government propaganda painting a pretty picture of the riches to be had in the colonies, and the push from local prefectures and villages, many Japanese jumped at the chance for a better life in a colony.

As citizens of a newly modern nation-state and empire, the Japanese needed a new identity for themselves and understanding of the world at large. Several scholars such as Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Michael Weiner have looked at the development of language and ideas during this time of empire expansion to understand how Japan created this new Imperial discourse on identity.<sup>12</sup> As their empire grew into Korea and China, the Japanese had to find a way to fit new groups into their understanding of the Japanese Empire.

Weiner and Morris-Suzuki have taken different approaches to show how this understanding of Japanese culture and terminology was used during the Imperial era. In his article entitled “Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan,” Weiner discusses the rise of culture (*minzoku*) and race (*jinshu*) within the Japanese identity after the Meiji Restoration. Weiner begins his analysis by distinguishing between the two terms. *Minzoku* is used in reference to Japanese language, culture and society.<sup>13</sup> *Jinshu* is translated as race, meaning the biological characteristics of skin tone, hair, and other physical traits.<sup>14</sup> These two terms have distinct meanings when translated to English, but Weiner points

out how they became blurred in the decades leading up to 1945. During the 1920s and 1930s, newspapers, magazines and scholarly journals argued the superiority of the Japanese on a biological and cultural basis.<sup>15</sup> State Shinto and devotion to the Emperor also played an important role in creating the idea of Japanese uniqueness and superiority over the peoples of Asia.<sup>16</sup>

Historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki looks at the development of different words in Japanese understandings of themselves and their identity on the world stage. Morris-Suzuki observes how the Japanese understanding of culture changed over the early years of the Meiji period from a symbol of westernization into a concept of Japanese uniqueness.<sup>17</sup> Morris-Suzuki focuses on the famous Japanese ethnographer Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) as an example of how Japanese intellectuals in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century struggled to create a framework to understand “Japanese-ness.”<sup>18</sup> In his early writing, Yanagita focused on the distinctions between small villages around Japan, noting differences between people of the plains versus people of the mountains and those that lived in more urban environments. However just as Weiner points to the intellectual shift in the 1930s and 1940s, Morris-Suzuki notes a shift in Yanagita’s work towards a more encompassing “Japanese culture” rather than distinction between various prefectures.<sup>19</sup> This one author’s shift represents a trend in Japanese society that began building upon the larger idea of Japanese distinctiveness. A sense of cultural uniqueness was a driving force in segregation within the colonies and Japan’s perceived duty to protect other Asians from the West.

Weiner and Morris-Suzuki point to statesmen, bureaucrats, and unofficial spokesmen who constructed ideas of what it meant to be Japanese from the Meiji through the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Through language in newspapers, movies, and other mass media avenues, these leaders used “Japanese-ness” to encompass more than just ethnicity, but also cultural markers. While academic circles continued to use *minzoku* and *jinsu* according to the proper definition, common usage of the words began to merge as early as World War I.<sup>21</sup> Just as *minzoku* created this unified understanding of what it meant to be Japanese, the focus on the term culture also helped build this unity through creating a national sense of culture that was meant to foster national harmony among Japanese.<sup>22</sup>

The blending of blood and culture as two parts of the same identity is an important aspect of the Japanese understanding of “Japanese-ness.” This construction of an all-or-nothing Japanese identity through the language of culture imposed a utopian vision of a harmonious and united Japanese society.<sup>23</sup> This vision fell apart after the war. When the *hikiagesha* returned to Japan, the seemingly small differences between *naichi* and *hikiagesha* would provide enough ground to isolate the group for scapegoating and shifting of blame.

### ***Divergent Experience between Homeland and Colonies***

Japanese citizens, both at home and abroad, had long endured the propaganda of Imperial Japan, which nurtured an intense love for the Emperor and the state of Japan; yet when Kazuko Kuramoto was repatriated, she wondered, “why, then, do I feel a stranger?”<sup>24</sup> Children who had grown up in the colonies had

been taught that they were the symbols of Japan's Imperial might in Asia.<sup>25</sup> The Japanese soldiers, too, had been held in the highest esteem, receiving gifts from villages back in Japan during the war. Soldiers like Yasuo Kazuki had "thousand-stitch belts" made for them by school children and families as a way to connect common civilians in Japan with the soldiers overseas.<sup>26</sup> These soldiers and settlers were the forefront of representing the Japanese culture to the world, symbols for Japan and Japanese *minzoku*.

This time abroad and the experiences of the colonies would slowly change the future *hikiagesha* into a unique group of Japanese that differed from the *naichi* on the home islands. In the colonies of the Japanese empire, strict segregation laws had created a multi-tiered caste system with the privileged Japanese above the native populations.<sup>27</sup> The colonial Japanese lived in privileged worlds separated from the norms of Japan and even from the countries they inhabited. Colonists in places like Korea and Manchukuo rarely experienced the bombings and fear that the home island Japanese knew. However, being an isolated minority in a hostile population produces its own kind of fear. Kuramoto describes an incident before the end of the war in Manchuria when she met *naichi* girls recently arrived from Japan in a Red Cross training program in Manchuria, writing that it seemed they, "had come from different backgrounds—Japanese as we all were."<sup>28</sup> The fact that she had grown up in the colonies created a separation between Kuramoto and these *naichi*, which she noticed even as a young girl. While this could be explained as a response to schoolgirl teasing, Kuramoto's reaction to the *naichi* girls had deeper meaning. Kuramoto's memoir describes the way the *naichi* girls critiqued Kuramoto's manners, attire, and her interactions in social situations, calling Kuramoto disrespectful because she failed to follow the strict social protocol that came second nature to them.<sup>29</sup> This is an instance of cultural differences such as manners and speech patterns having an effect on one's perceived "Japanese-ness" and, yet, this occurred prior to repatriation.<sup>30</sup>

The desire for separation was not only initiated by the *naichi*. Kuramoto made a conscious effort to separate herself from *naichi* girls who were teasing a Korean house maid's Japanese language skills.<sup>31</sup> If that is the way people act in Japan, she thought, then that's not the place she had been taught about through government propaganda.<sup>32</sup> The Japanese colonial settlers were not radically different from *naichi*; colonial Japanese did not reject their heritage. But the colonial environment allowed for enough change over time for the *naichi* and *hikiagesha* to possess slight, yet significant, differences in identity. The variation and differences between settlers of different colonies was probably equally noticeable, but the act of repatriation would be the unifying force that would create the single group of *hikiagesha* out of all the settlers and former soldiers.

After Japan's surrender, life in the colonies took a sudden and dramatic shift. Hostile local populations, who for the most part had suffered under Japanese rule, surrounded Japanese colonists. Kuramoto's home was quickly becoming a strange place for her and her fellow Japanese, but even so, she could not comprehend the need to return to Japan, because Manchuria had been her family's home for three generations. In her mind, she was already home.<sup>33</sup>

However, as the world around Kuramoto began to collapse she would feel differently. In her memoir, Kuramoto described Manchuria as a “living hell” of not knowing who in a crowd might attack over some past grievance against the Japanese.<sup>34</sup> The experiences of this “living hell,” along with repatriation, would unite Kuramoto with other colonists, all the while furthering the separation from their *naichi* counterparts.

Similarly, Kazuki, who had been stationed in northern Manchukuo at the time of surrender, described the end of the war as a powder keg that exploded with the local Chinese finally able to express their enmity and hatred towards the Japanese.<sup>35</sup> Without the colonial and military apparatus, the loss of the strict segregation brought about confusion on all sides in the colonies, leading to violence and misunderstandings. Kazuki made a point in his memoirs not to blame the local populations for their actions during those chaotic first months. While he had not witnessed any of the atrocities himself, he had heard and believed the confessions of other Japanese soldiers who committed such acts.<sup>36</sup> Social structures were failing as the Japanese government dissolved and left, leaving space to be filled by Allied soldiers.

The relative safety of Manchukuo during the war came to an abrupt end when the Soviets broke their non-aggression pact and invaded in early August 1945. Life under Soviet control was a struggle for Japanese like Kuramoto and her family. Uncertainty paired with the threat of violence as the Japanese waited to return home. Kuramoto heard stories from her mother and others about the “ex-convicts” that the Soviets had used as their frontline forces for the Manchurian invasion—stories of violence, pillaging, and rape.<sup>37</sup> To protect herself, Kuramoto dressed in her brothers’ old clothes and even had her hair cut short so as to look more like a boy.<sup>38</sup> The reason for her decision was not lost on the barber, who told her she would not have to cut her beautiful hair if she just remained indoors and away from the soldiers. When her mother told her of the necessity for Japanese girls to have abortions before their repatriation, Kuramoto lamented, “Did I grow up, maybe ten years in ten weeks?”<sup>39</sup>

### *Kazoku Kuramoto*

Kuramoto’s family faced other trials while awaiting repatriation in occupied Manchuria. Chinese policemen stopped Kuramoto’s father while he was cutting firewood in their family’s front yard and informed him that he could not destroy the property of the Chinese government. The Japanese in the colonies lost all property rights, and even their sense of agency. When discussing the growing violence and disorder in various cities on the Liaodong Peninsula, Kuramoto’s father attempted to find solace in the fact that, “the Chinese and Soviets will sort things out.”<sup>40</sup> Passivity seemed to have settled over Kuramoto’s father in the knowledge that he could do nothing but wait for the Allied Powers to decide things among themselves. Such experiences, shared by Kuramoto, her family, and other repatriates, created a divide between the *hikiagesha* and the national *minzoku*. Kuramoto would be detested for being a woman in Soviet occupied area. The fears of repatriated women tainted by rape and disease were all too real for the *naichi*, who insisted that *hikiagesha* be sprayed with DDT and tested for

diseases upon their return.<sup>41</sup> Fear of disease went hand in hand with the fear of mental contamination from the soldiers who the *naichi* worried would bring back communism to Japan.

### *Yasuo Kazuki*

The journey back to Japan for former soldiers captured by the Allied Powers such as Kazuki was as traumatic as Kuramoto's experience as a female civilian repatriate. In addition to the changes that all colonists experienced, the soldiers were interned by the Allied Forces, further straining the soldiers' "Japanese-ness." Kazuki and his fellow soldiers would face confusion after the war, as he and his unit spent months travelling south towards Korea, and ultimately to Japan, until one day the Soviet forces loaded the Japanese on a northbound train.<sup>42</sup> These soldiers could not have known the long road ahead of them that went through the Soviet gulag before they could return to Japan. Upon their repatriation, these soldiers and colonists, who had been the heroes of Imperial Japan, would find that they had lost not only the war, but their place in Japan's *minzoku* as well.

### **The Return of the Hikiagesha**

The repatriation of the *hikiagesha* was a massive undertaking for the Japanese government and the Allied Powers that controlled Japan. By the end of the war, over 6.5 million Japanese were still in the colonies and territories previously controlled by the Japanese empire, accounting for roughly nine percent of the Japanese population.<sup>43</sup> On September 2, 1945, the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP), under General Douglas MacArthur, took control of Japan's existing bureaucracy to ensure the repatriation of Japanese nationals.<sup>44</sup> Under Article Nine of the Potsdam Declaration, the Allied agreement that outlined the goals and conditions for Japanese surrender, Japanese forces would be able to "return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives."<sup>45</sup> When deconstructing the Japanese Empire, SCAP and the Allied governments approached repatriation through ethnic and racial lines. In SCAP's view, it was as simple as sending Koreans to Korea, Chinese to China, and Japanese to the four main home islands of Honshu, Kyushu, Hokkaido, and Shikoku. All attempts by Japanese officials to negotiate the return of overseas Japanese had to go through SCAP, which now acted as the foreign relations arm for the Japanese government.<sup>46</sup> As the shock of defeat settled upon the Japanese that remained overseas, they had to find ways to survive in foreign lands without the colonial apparatus that had provided them a privileged position among the native Chinese, Korean and other Asian ethnicities.

The length of the wait for repatriation was predicated on a number of factors. Where and when repatriation would take place depended on location, social status, which Allied Power controlled the region, and finally, bureaucratic red tape. While one of SCAP's proclaimed priorities was to disarm and repatriate the remnants of the Japanese Imperial army as quickly as possible, this was not the case everywhere. The Allied Powers saw the defeated enemy soldiers as labor to

be used around Asia—the British retained 113,500 Japanese soldiers in Southeast Asia, the United States used 100,000 Japanese soldiers to help rebuild parts of Okinawa and the Philippines.<sup>47</sup> When the Soviet forces raced across Manchuria in the final days of the war, they captured a large number of the Japanese forces stationed there and shipped around 700,000 Japanese to labor camps in the USSR.<sup>48</sup> Kazuki was one such Japanese soldier shipped to a gulag in Siberia, an experience that would have a profound impact on his life as a painter after his return to Japan.<sup>49</sup> These Japanese soldiers in Soviet custody would wait longer than most. One SCAP official accused the Soviets of repatriating no captured Japanese soldiers until June 1946, while other Allied Powers had repatriated at least over half by that time.<sup>50</sup> These delays seem to be clear violations of the Potsdam Declaration. Repatriation would ultimately take place from all major areas, including the Soviet administered territories. However, the act of return would be just the beginning of the *hikiagesha's* postwar struggle.

Before the war, one of the reasons many small villages in Japan supported the colonial project and encouraged members to settle the colonies was to conserve resources back at home. By 1945, the war effort and Allied forces had destroyed Japan's infrastructure. Many Japanese did not know where their next meal would come from. The scarcity of food, money, and fuel increased with the return of *hikiagesha*. Millions of Japanese faced starvation on the home islands during the occupation and thousands died from it.<sup>51</sup> Civilians and soldiers returned to find family members long dead, or even that they themselves had been declared dead.<sup>52</sup> Soldiers who returned were seen as failures to the Emperor's cause or looked upon with suspicion about what possible unjust violence they had committed during the war.<sup>53</sup> It was easier for the *naichi* to assign blame for atrocities to the soldiers as a group, rather than recognizing them as individuals who had been trying to survive death, either from enemy bullets or their commanders' katana. The soldiers would provide a scapegoat that the *naichi* could point to when questions of war responsibility were laid at Japan's feet.

The *hikiagesha* returned to a Japan that had suffered under Allied air power. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been reduced to ash by atomic bombs and many more cities had been burned to the ground. Communications between the colonists and the home islands were cut during the closing weeks of the war, leaving the colonists and soldiers with little knowledge of the devastation to which they were about to return.<sup>54</sup> The divergent experiences in the colonies before and after the war would create a vast separation between *hikiagesha* and their *naichi* brethren. This ignorance went both ways; the *naichi* knew just as little of the hardships that the colonists and soldiers were subjected to before returning.

Ignorance about the other group's experiences might have been resolved through open communication and dialogue between the *naichi* and *hikiagesha*. Unfortunately this dialogue was prevented, perhaps unintentionally, by SCAP. The Allied occupation had strict censorship rules, along with all the other reforms SCAP had enacted, to help rebuild a democratic Japan. This censorship was far-reaching, and yet arbitrary and unpredictable in its application to



all Japanese media from 1945-1949.<sup>55</sup> SCAP gave Japanese publishers and editors vague instructions on what would be censored, with phrases such as “adhere strictly to the truth,” and print nothing that would “disturb the public tranquility.”<sup>56</sup> William Coughlin’s important contribution to the understanding of SCAP censorship has been the identification of the taboo subjects that limited the Japanese press, with such restrictions as “criticizing Russia, criticizing Korea (and Koreans), criticizing China, criticizing other Allies, criticizing Japanese activities in Manchuria, employing ‘Greater East Asia’ propaganda, describing black market activities, overplaying starvation, and inciting violence or unrest.”<sup>57</sup> These taboos, coupled with the vague instructions to Japanese publishers described by Coughlin, would have prevented *hikiagesha* from sharing their story with a wider audience.

The initial years after the war would have been the perfect time to bridge the gap between the *naichi* and the *hikiagesha*. Those labeled as “red repatriates,” like Kazuki, could not speak out about the treatment and indoctrination they had experienced while interned in Siberia. Likewise, settlers like Kuramoto could not have written disparaging remarks about her and her family’s treatment in Manchuria. Of course, the censorship worked both ways; the hardships of the *naichi* experience would have likewise been censored from publication. Without the opportunity for genuine dialogue, rumors, fears, and hearsay created a barrier amongst the Japanese. This Allied censorship is a likely reason for the lack of early *hikiagesha* memoirs that scholars can use to study as primary sources of their experiences in early postwar Japan.

### **Return of the Settlers**

Upon her return to Kyushu, Kuramoto and her family sought out her paternal family in Oita. The reactions of her relatives surprised Kuramoto. Her cousin repeatedly described Kuramoto’s family as “lucky” because they did not experience the firebombing and other tragedies that befell Japan in the closing months of the war.<sup>58</sup> Kuramoto looked to her father to tell his family the horrors they had endured in Manchuria, but for reasons he never directly expressed, he did not. There was no sharing of experiences, only assumptions made. The *hikiagesha* and the *naichi* simply did not understand each other’s experiences.

Kuramoto described her first meeting with her *naichi* family: “Taro [Kuramoto’s cousin] always referred to us as ‘repatriates,’ as if we were of another race, not ‘real’ Japanese... The man who welcomed us had said, ‘Welcome home, my fellow repatriates.’ He had not said ‘welcome home, my fellow Japanese.’”<sup>59</sup> Through subtle and nuanced language, the *naichi* separated themselves from the *hikiagesha*. Language is a powerful yet delicate tool. Language is how the idea of an all-or-nothing *minzoku* was created and enforced to attain a notion of national harmony. But language can be used to divide the *naichi* and *hikiagesha*. The insistence of both family and strangers on using the term “*hikiagesha*” reveals the conscious need to label Kuramoto as something other than a true Japanese because of her time in the colonies. This separation will provide fertile ground for placing the blame or attempting to shift responsibility for the lost war to the repatriates.

### **Return of the Red Repatriates**

The return of the Soviet internees in particular would have an impact on how all *hikiagesha* were viewed by the *naichi*. By 1948 Japanese POWs began to return in larger quantities as SCAP negotiated with the Soviets.<sup>60</sup> However, during the years of their internment, the Japanese soldiers, including Kazuki, were subjected to communist indoctrination, which created distrust among the *naichi*.<sup>61</sup> An infamous occurrence at the Maizuru Repatriation Center involved Japanese soldiers locking arms in the formation known as “landing in the face of the enemy” singing the *Internationale*, a communist and left-wing anthem.<sup>62</sup> The incident caused widespread worry in Japan—fear of communist sympathizers grew among both the American occupiers as well as the Japanese. Then again, in his memoir, Kazuki recalled days of singing *Internationale* at the tops of his lungs in preparation to return to Japan, but only because of a rumor that those who were seen singing the anthem would be repatriated sooner.<sup>63</sup>

While the Japanese interned by the Soviets would not have been ignorant of the indoctrination process, one can assume that many did not think about possible repercussions back in Japan. The indoctrination, or simply the perceived threat of communist indoctrination, effected how the *naichi* would react to the soldiers. Communism had been suppressed, at times violently, during the decades leading up to the World War II. While Weiner does not reference political affiliations in his discussion of *minzoku*, it would not be a stretch to infer communism as an un-Japanese quality as understood by the common people in Japan. These soldiers returned tainted in the eyes of Japan.

### **The Language of Guilt and Responsibility**

The division of experiences during and after the war between *naichi* and the repatriated Japanese created a unique opportunity to see how a society reacted when forced to break with, and reconcile, the past. Under the imperial machine that urged the Japanese people to join the army or to help settle the expanding territories, Japanese colonists had been held in high esteem by Japanese society at home. But with the end of the war, these repatriated soldiers and civilians had to come to terms with their new place in Japanese society, a place that was no longer held in high esteem.

The separation achieved through language and distinctions in experiences allowed the *naichi* to use the *hikiagesha* as an “other” to separate themselves from blame. Most Japanese would have heard the broadcast for the “repentance of the 100 million,” in which the government attempted to spread the guilt and responsibility of the war among all Japanese rather than directly upon the government or the Emperor. The Japanese had different reactions to this call for a dispersed culpability among every Japanese. Dower points out several ways that the Japanese dealt with their guilt, including remorse for failing the Emperor in his holy war, and for the intelligentsia, remorse in failing to stop the military clique from taking power in a democracy.<sup>64</sup>

One Japanese reporter described a confrontation between a *naichi* and a *hikiagesha*, in which the *naichi* proclaimed, “if you hadn’t gone out to the colonies,

there wouldn't have been a war."<sup>65</sup> While this inflammatory statement has some truth, it shows this particular man's desire to place the blame elsewhere. Kuramoto's older brother had a theory for the cold welcome they received from their family on Kyushu: guilt.<sup>66</sup> In their *naichi* family's mind, it would have been better for Kuramoto and her family to be strangers. Strangers are easier to distance oneself from, but when your own blood returns to remind you of your own complicity in the lost war, the truth can be harder to bear.

Kazuki explained the difference he saw between the postwar experiences of *naichi* and *hikiagesha*. On his trip north into Siberia, Kazuki noticed a "red corpse" of a Japanese man on the side of the road. The body had been stripped, beaten, and possibly skinned.<sup>67</sup> Kazuki postulated that the red corpse had suffered the vengeance of the local population for the atrocities of the colonial government. He compared this "red corpse" to the "black corpses" left behind at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kazuki explained, the "black corpse" would go on to symbolize the victim story of Japan in the postwar world, while the "red corpse" would remain silent on the side of the road.<sup>68</sup> The "red corpse" is not that of a victim, but a victimizer who fell to the tragedy of war just like his victims. Kazuki did not make the distinction between civilian and military repatriates but instead perhaps viewed the repatriation process as a unifying experience all *hikiagesha* went through. The *hikiagesha* were living "red corpses" in Kazuki's mind: husks of victimizers who have suffered for the sin of blindly following orders. Without attempting to excuse their actions or their guilt, Kazuki asserted that it is the "red corpses" that Japan must remember in the postwar era so as not to make the same mistakes again.

### **Conclusion**

It would take years for Japan to come to terms with the lost war and the role citizens played in the conflict. While the *hikiagesha* were not the only marginalized subgroup of postwar Japan, their experience is little recognized in scholarly analysis. They were and remain Kazuki's living "red corpses" that represent forgotten casualties of war. The *hikiagesha* encountered extreme hardship in the face of hostile local populations, both before and after the war. When they landed in Japan and came face-to-face with the *naichi*, repatriates soon learned that they had indeed lost more than the war. They had lost some part of what in meant to be Japanese, as it was understood in the Imperial era. Together, both *naichi* and *hikiagesha* had to incorporate all their wartime and Imperial experiences into a collective whole, so that they could begin to rebuild their nation and national identity.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge the people who have helped me with this research. I thank Andrew Barshay, who took the time to speak with me about repatriation and shared his personal translation of Yasuo Kazuki's memoir. I would also like to thank the presenters and attendees of the East West Center 2015 Graduate Conference for their suggestions and comments. Thank you to John Nelson and Brian Dempster for their help on the early drafts of this work, and to Genevieve Leung and Cynthia Schultes, who helped me expand this paper and think about the topic of repatriation in a different way. I would like to thank Dayna Barnes, not only for her assistance with the final drafts but also for recommending John Dower's *Embracing Defeat* to me during my first semester at USF.
- <sup>2</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 230.
- <sup>3</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton and Company, 1999), 48.
- <sup>4</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 177.
- <sup>5</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 267.
- <sup>6</sup> Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 367.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.
- <sup>10</sup> For an example of further governmental assistance, the Colonial Ministry provided a one-time payment of 4,750 yen, and another 14,733 yen per year, for the first three years to help pay for these settlers and set up expenses for the new settlement. Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 358.
- <sup>11</sup> Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 376.
- <sup>12</sup> Michael Weiner, "Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18.3 (2010): 433–56, accessed November 1, 2014, doi: 10.1080/01419870.1995.9993873; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture,'" *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.3 (August 1995): 759–80.
- <sup>13</sup> Weiner, "Discourses of Race," 433–56.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.
- <sup>16</sup> For an explanation of State Shinto, see Shimazono Susumu and Regan E. Murphy, "State Shinto in the Lives of the People: The Establishment of Emperor Worship, Modern Nationalism, and Shrine Shinto in Late Meiji," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 93 (2009): 93–124.
- <sup>17</sup> Morris-Suzuki, "The Invention and Retention of 'Japanese Culture,'" 763.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 765.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Weiner, "Discourses of Race," 445.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.
- <sup>22</sup> Morris-Suzuki, "The Invention and Retention of 'Japanese Culture,'" 766.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 772.
- <sup>24</sup> Kazuko Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy: Memoirs of a Japanese Colonist* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 114.
- <sup>25</sup> Watt, *When Empire Comes Home*, 142.

- <sup>26</sup> Kazuki Yasuo, *Watashi no Shiberiya* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1984); unpublished translation: Andrew Barshay (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 28.
- <sup>27</sup> Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy*, 68.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Weiner, "Discourses of Race," 445.
- <sup>31</sup> Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy*, 76.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Kazuki, *Watashi no Shiberiya*, 35.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy*, 86.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.
- <sup>41</sup> Eiji Takamae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 112.
- <sup>42</sup> Kazuki, *Watashi no Shiberiya*, 35.
- <sup>43</sup> Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 407.
- <sup>44</sup> U.S. Army Center of Military History, "MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase," in *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1, supplement (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1966), 152; accessed February 1, 2015, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1%20Sup/Index.htm> .
- <sup>45</sup> Takamae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 112.
- <sup>46</sup> Shinji Yokote, "Soviet Repatriation Policy, U.S. Occupation Authorities, and Japan's Entry into the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15.2 (2013): 36.
- <sup>47</sup> U.S. Army Center of Military History, "MacArthur in Japan," 152.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.
- <sup>49</sup> While "gulag" is not the appropriate term for the internment camps for Japanese soldiers, multiple sources and the common lexicon have adopted the term enough to warrant its use to maintain consistency. Andrew Barshay, *The Gods Left First: The Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in Northeast Asia, 1945–1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 11.
- <sup>50</sup> Yokote, "Soviet Repatriation Policy," 41.
- <sup>51</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 228.
- <sup>52</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 48.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>54</sup> Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy*, 118.
- <sup>55</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 386–423.
- <sup>56</sup> William Coughlin, *Conquered Press: The MacArthur Era in Japanese Journalism* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1952), 149.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>60</sup> U.S. Army Center of Military History, "MacArthur in Japan," 186.

<sup>61</sup> Watt, *When Empire Comes Home*, 126.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>63</sup> Kazuki, *Watashi no Shiberiya*, 81.

<sup>64</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 256.

<sup>65</sup> *Hikiage minpo*, October 10, 1946, as cited in Watt, *When Empire Comes Home*, 86.

<sup>66</sup> Kuramoto, *Manchurian Legacy*, 122.

<sup>67</sup> Kazuki, *Watashi no Shiberiya*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

## References

- Barshay, Andrew E. *The Gods Left First: The Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in North-east Asia, 1945–1956*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Coughlin, William J. *Conquered Press: The MacArthur Era in Japanese Journalism*. Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1952.
- Dower, John. *Embracing Defeat in the Wake of World War II*. New York: Norton and Company, 1999.
- Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Kazuki Yasuo. *Watashi no Shiberiya*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1984. Unpublished translation by Andrew Barshay. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kuramoto, Kazuko. *Manchurian Legacy: Memoirs of a Japanese Colonist*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999.
- Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "The Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture.'" *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.3 (August, 1995): 759–80.
- Susumu, Shimazono, and Regan E. Murphy. "State Shinto in the Lives of the People: The Establishment of Emperor Worship, Modern Nationalism, and Shrine Shinto in Late Meiji." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 93 (2009): 93–124.
- Takamae, Eiji. *The Allied Occupation of Japan*. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Tamanoi, Mariko. *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- U.S. Army Center of Military History. "MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase." In *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1, supplement. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1966. Accessed February 1, 2015. <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1%20Sup/Index.htm>
- Watt, Lori. *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Weiner, Michael. "Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18.3 (2010): 433–56. Accessed November 1, 2014. doi: 10.1080/01419870.1995.9993873.
- Yokote, Shinji. "Soviet Repatriation Policy, U.S. Occupation Authorities, and Japan's Entry into the Cold War." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15.2 (2013): 30–50.
- Young, Louise. *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

**Kilby Hammond** is a recent graduate of the University of San Francisco's Masters in Asia Pacific Studies (MAPS) Program. He was the Valedictorian speaker for May 2015 Arts and Sciences Commencement ceremony and is a recipient of the 2014-2015 Center for Asia Pacific Studies Fellowship.