

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

## 戦後沖縄における満洲の記憶

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## **Lost Homeland: Colonial Memories of Manchuria in Okinawa after WWII**

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**Key Words** : Okinawa, Manchuria, migration.

### **I . Introduction**

In postwar Japanese society, various narratives on war memories have been written, but very few narratives on colonial memories exist. To be sure, the ways in which the war memories have been narrated varies according to the vicissitudes of international relations and domestic political situations, but the core of the narratives has always revolved around the memories of Japanese people as war victims. Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa have been the symbols of these memories. In this context, memories of the Japanese as perpetrators—that is, colonial memories—have been suppressed. Especially in Okinawa, more than 200,000 people fell victim in the battle, which was the only ground battle fought on the Japanese islands and is now called “the iron storm.” Here, colonial memories were not allowed to be articulated.

In postwar Okinawa, the main narratives centered on the victims in the Battle of Okinawa. Moreover, these narratives were affected by the context of the surge of social movements, such as anti-U.S. base struggles and the movement of reversion to Japanese administration. Therefore, in the postwar period, it was not easy to build a public space for the colonial memories to be articulated. The repatriates from Manchuria were not able to speak openly about Manchuria. They could only talk of the lost “homeland of Manchuria” among family members, and they yearned for more memories. In addition, as people who had been brought up in large, modern cities in Manchuria, the “repatriates” were surprised to see poor Okinawans who were still caught up in old habits when they repatriated. This caused them to feel as if they were “foreigners” or even

“aliens” there. Through exploring these suppressed narratives of the memories of Manchuria, the lost homeland, this paper will examine the daily worlds and the inner lives of the repatriates from Manchuria in the postwar period, and thus reconsider the “memory landscape” of postwar Okinawa in general.

## **II . A “Migrant Worker-Dependent Society”**

### **1. Transnational migration**

In the process of becoming incorporated into the administration system of mainland Japan and into the market economy through modernization along with Japanization after the Ryukyu Shobun (1879: the conquest of the Ryukyu) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), the life of the Okinawans became rigid. Especially under the “Cycad-Hell”, the great depression following WWI, many people immigrated to Japan seeking economic opportunities.

Starting with migration to Hawaii in 1899, Okinawa is one of the prefectures from which many people immigrated overseas. Sending as many as 67,000 immigrants to Hawaii, North America, South America and Southeast Asia, mainly the Philippines, they were gradually taking root as Uchinanchu-Diaspora in the host societies.

### **2. Migration to territories of the Japanese Empire**

At the same time, they also immigrated to Taiwan, the South Seas and Manchuria; that is to say, Okinawans moved to almost all places where the Japanese went. In total 50,000 immigrated to the South Seas, 15,000 to Taiwan and around 1000 to Manchuria, plus approximately 66,000 of the colony-related migrants; this resulted in a transnational migration from Okinawa easily exceeding 130,000 people.

### **3. Migration to mainland Japan**

Moreover, migration to mainland Japan, such as Osaka, was common from the beginning of the twentieth century, and it accounted for more than 40,000 in the 1940s. By estimating the total population of Okinawa to be 600,000 before WWII, more than a quarter (around 170,000) Okinawans moved to other areas, both inside and outside of Japan. In addition, the economy in Okinawa significantly depended on remittances from immigrants; therefore, prewar Okinawa was typically a migrant-worker-dependent society and transnational migration was not uncommon in such a society.

Okinawans not only moved to one place such as Taiwan, South Seas, Manchuria, or Osaka and

Tokyo, but they were also characterized by their high fluidity, which means they moved to many places in their lifetime. In addition, as remittances sent from Hawaii, North and South America and Philippines show, Okinawa was closely linked to the host societies all over the world; thus, the society of Okinawa before WWII was highly transnational.

However, Manchuria was a distant place for the Okinawan society. According to the data of 1920 when the “Cycad-Hell” attacked Okinawa, main destinations for immigrations were Brazil, Peru, and the Philippines. Later, with the development of the South Sea Islands combined with the exclusive recruitment of Okinawans, immigrants to the South Seas greatly increased in number. However, Manchuria still remained a distant place for them, both physically and socially. Migration to Manchuria only existed in two patterns; one was immigration to urban areas such as Dalian represented by migration from Taiwan to Manchuria. This started at the early stages and a few hundred people immigrated in this migration route. The second pattern is emigration to rural areas in the 1940s, which took place on a much larger scale as a part of the national undertaking project represented by the “migration of 30,000 households” project spearheaded by the Okinawan prefecture.

For example, Youichi Uehara, whose parents were originally from the Ishigaki Island, was born in Taiwan in 1927. His father, an engineer in the car industry, immigrated to Taiwan from Ishigaki Island. He then moved to Dairen, where his uncle worked as journalist, and he started to work for a Manchurian Railroad related company. Most of his relatives lived in the South Seas or Taiwan, and his uncle and father were the only two families living in Manchuria. After finishing elementary and junior high school in Dairen, he entered a university called Harbin-Gakuin, and after the repatriation, he continued his studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Chuo University. After his graduation, he played an active part as a public prosecutor, particularly in charge of Okinawa’s reversion to Japanese administration in 1972.

Another story is of a Japanese woman who was left behind in China. Haru Higa, born in 1920 in Okinawa, assisted with housework for a while after graduating from elementary school. Later she migrated to Shiga prefecture as a female textile worker with her female cousin. After moving to Tokyo, she found employment in a maternity center, and decided to obtain her nursing qualifications. However, because of discrimination against “Ryukyuan” (a person from Okinawa), she gave up and returned to Okinawa. There she succeeded in obtaining her qualifications as a midwife while working as a maid in a maternity home. Then she moved to Manchuria with a medical doctor in 1940, where nurses were in great demand due to the construction rush of prefectural hospitals. On the other hand, her father immigrated to Osaka, and had a new family

there. Her life story relates how migration to inside or outside Japan was one of the common phenomena in Okinawa in the 1930s for people who were of working age. Later, she became a head nurse at a prefectural hospital, and remained in China, because she thought, “There is nothing I can do if I go back to Okinawa which was devastated by the war.” She finally returned to her homeland in 1980 after her husband’s death, and she brought her children from China.

### **Ⅲ. The repatriates in post-war Okinawa**

#### **1. A big “space” in Okinawa**

Okinawa’s main island was heavily damaged by the Battle of Okinawa. The war victims reached some 140,000, and the physical as well as psychological damages were immeasurable. Moreover, after the defeat, many of the “mainlanders” who had controlled the political, economic, and governmental sectors in Okinawa retreated to mainland Japan, and this war damage and migration caused a large social and demographic “space” in Okinawa. For every survivor, the immediate challenges consisted of surviving daily life and repleting that which was lost in the Battle of Okinawa. For the Okinawa society, to fill in the functional “space” was a pressing matter. As soon as the war was over, the U.S. military launched its rule, but they were not in charge of making up for the “space.” It was into this “space” that colonial repatriates to Okinawa tended to enter.

#### **2. Repatriates in the post-war Okinawa**

A great majority of Okinawan pre-war immigrants who went to North and South America settled there as permanent residents, while those emigrants who were in Taiwan, South Seas, Manchuria and the Philippines and some of mainland Japan tended to repatriate to Okinawa or were sent back to Japan. Therefore, while Okinawa lost around 140,000 people in the war, as a result of the demobilization of people and repatriates after the war, it is estimated that the total population of Okinawa in 1950 exceeded that of 1944 by 490,000. Under U.S. rule, reconstruction of Okinawa including the educational, political and economic sectors was spearheaded by those repatriates and demobilized people.

#### **3. Post-war lives of repatriates from Manchuria**

For example, Mr. Ohmine from Ishigaki Island, a graduate from Tokyo Imperial University and a technical officer for the Taiwan Colonial Government, became a technical officer of Manchukuo. After repatriating, he returned to his former job in the Ministry of Agriculture, but

was called upon by his older brother in Ishigaki Island who was successful in business at the time. Later, he entered into the Okinawa Civilian Administration and lastly became a professor at Ryukyu University. Another example is Mr. Itoman, who was a technician in Manchuria, opened a printing office in Naha (a capital city of Okinawa Prefecture) on his return to Okinawa. After his repatriation, his business grew to be one of the leading printing companies in the area.

As these cases indicate, although they briefly experienced a harsh time immediately following repatriation, they played important roles in the devastated Okinawan society by making the best use of their skills obtained in the former colonies, because they did not face many obstacles in Okinawa. All Mr. Ohmine's children graduated from universities and worked as professionals or public officers. Mr. Itman's children graduated from universities or colleges and succeeded in his company.

These are the typical cases of what Naomi Noiri calls the "repatriate elite". Also, many repatriates who worked as officials in previous Japanese colonies succeeded in their lives after repatriating to Okinawa. That is to say, there were more opportunities for the repatriates to be actively involved in the rebuilding of the post-war society in Okinawa compared to the mainland.

On the other hand, most of the repatriates who were engaged in agriculture in Manchuria had to live off their relatives, and weathered a difficult time working as farmers or day laborers, employed at the U.S. base-related jobs. Their lives were as harsh as other Okinawans.

In addition, Uchinanchu (Okinawans) who had resided in the former colonies repatriated, while the Uchinanchu who immigrated to foreign countries decided to remain in their host country as immigrants. They also supported the reconstruction of the postwar Okinawan society, by sending their remittances and other payments such as the "transportation of 550 pigs."

#### **IV. Repatriates from Manchuria and Discussion on Postwar Okinawa**

##### **1. Militarization of Okinawa after WWII**

The impression exists that the U.S. military ruled Okinawa rather "indirectly," because they allowed Okinawans to establish a democratic parliament. However, when the cold war started, they built up a principle to enforce the militarization of both mainland Japan and Okinawa, especially which turned Okinawa into a permanent U.S. base provider. As a result, the postwar Okinawa society centered on the U.S. bases.

## **2. Dominant discussion on post-war Okinawa**

At the same time, the anti-base-movement gained an important social meaning in the society. Prewar Okinawa was an internal colony of Japan and experienced suppression. At the same time, sacrifices paid to WWII and the Battle of Okinawa, both forced and voluntary, meant that Okinawans began to become accepted as respectable Japanese.

However, the bloody battle that is now called the “Iron Storm” caused devastating damages and resulted in the loss of 30 percent of the total population living in Okinawa. In addition, “group suicide” forced by the Japanese military became a trauma for those who survived.

Under the rule of the U.S. military government, Okinawa was separated from mainland Japan, and the situation remained the same even after the implementation of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952. In spite of the fact that they fought as a shield of mainland Japan and paid a great sacrifice at the devastating battle in order to become “real” Japanese during WWII, the Japanese government did not demand that Okinawa be returned. In other words, Okinawa was abandoned once again.

Moreover, even though the existence of the U.S. military base became an apparatus reminding Okinawans of the Battle of Okinawa, they were not allowed to discuss the battle in a public space, because it was a means of criticizing the U.S. Army. This is the reason that the battle was talked about in various private locations, but not in public.

As the war in Vietnam was escalating, anti-war movements emerged in both the mainland U.S. and Japan, which led to criticism against the U.S. military bases in Okinawa and to the surge of reverse movement in mainland Japan. However, even after the 1972 reversions, the base did not disappear from Okinawa and their scale became even larger.

## **3. Suppressed memories of Manchuria**

Ms. Ikuko Kinjyo repatriated with a group from Manchuria, where she had lived for a long time with her father who worked for the company related to South Manchuria Railway. She entered Ryukyu University with to make a living by working on the base. When she heard from a high school teacher about the wartime junior high school nurse teams (“Himeyuri-gakutotai”), she was shocked at its brutality and felt that she would never talk about her experience in Manchuria.

Another informant, Ms. Youko Aragaki, repatriated from a large city in Manchuria at the age of ten. When she told her classmates of her life in Manchuria such as using a dial phone and a flush toilet and wearing a pair of shoes made of leather, they called her a liar, and she stopped discussing her life in Manchuria. She was surprised to see the gap between Okinawa and fashionable Dairen

and to hear the Okinawa dialect. She was also astonished to face the exclusivity of Okinawans and grew up with the feeling of being out of place.

In this way, “discussion spaces” in postwar Okinawa were built up around such issues as the Battle of Okinawa, the existence of the U.S. military bases and the anti-base struggles, and the movement for reversion. Under these circumstances, there was no room for the repatriates from former colonies, especially from Manchuria. Moreover, embracing a sense of being left out and guilt because of failure to participate in the Battle of Okinawa, they refrained to talk about their war experience or their life experiences in former colonies.

It was in 2001 that Okinawa-Manchuria Association was first organized in Okinawa. Although an organization of repatriates was established around 1950 when compensation for the repatriates was being discussed, this was only a subordinate organization of the national organization that worked on the Japanese government for compensation. The one established in 2001 was the first local and original association organized by the repatriates from Manchuria who are currently residing in Okinawa. The association was proposed and established by the participants of a visiting tour to Manchuria that celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war in 1995. It has 229 members and a general meeting is held once a year. Additionally an annual bulletin is published.

It is a friendship association which provides the repatriates with opportunities to talk about Manchuria to their hearts’ content, to long for Manchuria and to enjoy their reunion. It is mainly organized by urban dwellers of Manchuria, and former agricultural immigrants are small in number and marginalized. The number of Japanese children and women who were left behind in China is also small, and because its inauguration was late, their support is conducted in person but not through the association.

Mr. Satsuma, a core member of the Okinawa-Manchuria Association states, “I frequently recall Manchuria. I remember Manchuria well. I don’t know why, but I sometimes recall Manchuria.” Mr. Uehara, president of the association, relates, “The reason we yearn for Manchuria is that it’s our lost homeland, and because it will never be back.”

All of them are core members of the Okinawa-Manchuria Association and were brought up in the city. Their parents worked as professionals, which mean they grew up in a wealthy status. For them, the colonial life in which they lived in a modern, big city with many privileges must represent memories of good old days. Although each of them lived a harsh life immediately after the war, they quickly regained their footage and secured their middle-class positions in the middle of Okinawa’s postwar reconstruction.



## **V. Conclusion:**

### **Cherishing Memories of “The Lost Homeland: Manchuria” in Okinawa**

#### **1. The differences in situation between Okinawa and mainland Japan**

Lastly, I would like to examine the reasons why it took such a long time for the Okinawa-Manchuria Association (in 2001) to be established. Through the examination, I attempt to characterize the repatriates from Manchuria and also compare their lives in postwar Okinawa to that in mainland Japan.

I have been conducting research on the repatriates from Manchuria who returned to mainland Japan, especially former agricultural immigrants. From this experience, the slow development of the organization of the Okinawa-Manchuria Association and the existence of repatriates from Manchuria in Okinawa represented in that Association fascinated me greatly. The reason is that most of the associations organized by Manchuria repatriates in mainland Japan were established either immediately after the war for a purpose of mutual aid, or in the 1970s for purpose of reunions and reminiscence of Manchuria when their lives were finally settled. Moreover, recently many of those associations no longer exist, because the members are aging, or, in some cases, their children have taken over the activities. Therefore, I started to question why the Manchuria repatriates in Okinawa was organized in 2001, and why around half of its members attend a gathering once a year and collectively yearn for Manchuria. I think there are three reasons for this.

#### **2. Hypothetical conclusion**

(1) Firstly, those who repatriated from Manchuria to mainland Japan organized associations immediately after their return for a purpose of mutual aid, but this did not happen in Okinawa. As its result, they did not have the opportunities to collectively talk about their experiences in Manchuria.

One reason for the failure of establishing the mutual aid association in Okinawa was that the repatriates from Manchuria were too small in number to organize an independent association. The second is that because in Okinawa they re-established themselves through personal as well as familial ties that offered mutual help; they never united as a group. As previously mentioned, in rural areas of Japan, there was a life support system among family members and relatives, so-called “shared poverty,” while in cities, they adapted to their lives independently by using their experience in Manchuria.

Another important point is that it was relatively easy to achieve social success, to some extent, in the postwar Okinawa society which had a “hollow.” As the term “repatriate-elite” symbolizes,

repatriates from Manchuria strove to get out of the rigid and difficult lives of the postwar era in Okinawa by making the best use of their professional experiences in Manchuria and provided their children with higher education, while other Okinawans suffered from damages of the war for a long time. Those children who were born and raised in urban Manchuria, where it was common to receive higher education, had strong aspirations. Even in postwar Okinawa, which underwent the institutionalization of its education system, the children became well-educated professionals.

Throughout this process, they made great efforts to adjust themselves to the post-war Okinawa society, and because they succeeded in establishing themselves in a relatively stable social condition, resentment towards their lives was not as intense, which meant that they did not have to recall Manchuria in a nostalgic way in order to escape from the miserable reality of their lives.

(2) The next point is that repatriates from Manchuria did not draw much attention in postwar Okinawa. Due to its continuity with the situation of being “colonized” by Japan before the war and by the U.S. after the war, people in Okinawa were more concerned about issues related to them, such as the Battle of Okinawa, the U.S. military bases, and the reversion to mainland Japan. Above all, it was difficult for repatriates to talk about lives and experiences in former colonies in the Okinawa society. Moreover, most of the repatriates from former colonies consisted of those from the South Seas, Taiwan and the Philippines. Therefore, there was little attention to the repatriates from Manchuria because of their small number.

(3) Lastly, the Manchuria repatriates themselves tended not to talk about Manchuria when they considered enormous damages caused by Battle of Okinawa, and they also felt alienated for not having experienced the Battle of Okinawa. In addition, it was difficult for them to accept a poor living standard in Okinawa society coupled with “unsophisticated” tradition and customs characterized by Okinawa dialects and the miserable colonial situation, after having experienced the luxurious and sophisticated lives in urban Manchuria. Moreover, it was not comfortable for them to talk about memories of Manchuria, after falling from the privileged ruling position in the colony to the miserable situation under the U.S. military rule. Feeling alienated and being “foreigners” in the Okinawa society that was tied up in old customs, as well as experiencing a decline in their status from rulers to the ruled, they realized that to discuss Manchuria in a public space was insignificant. These could be the reasons for the hesitation of the repatriates from Manchuria to talk about their experiences.

In mainland Japan in the 1970s, it was common for repatriates’ associations to have a reunion. These associations were established when people regrouped after having settled in Japanese

society or retired from work, and also when the normalization of the diplomatic relations between Japan and China were realized. At the time, instead of providing a mutual help to members, the main purposes of the organizations were to cherish memories of Manchuria, to promote the “friendship” between Japan and China relations that was achieved during the Manchuria era, and to support the return of Japanese women and children who were left behind in China.

On the other hand, there was no such organization established in Okinawa at the time because the 1970s was a turning point for Okinawa. Its main concern was the reversion to mainland Japan (1972) followed by Okinawa’s “Japanization” and economic recovery. In the 1990s, by completing significant social changes after the reversion and succeeding in Japanization in many senses, the association was organized with the Tour to China (1995) as a first event, which was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of war. But why did it happen at the time? It is easy to imagine that their nostalgia for Manchuria was intensified by the visiting tour. Another reason is that the core members of the association shared a feeling of being unfulfilled, even though each of them was a member of the national-alumni association of Manchuria. Therefore, with the advance of old age, they tried to accept their lives by making a space for talking about and sharing their experiences in Manchuria. The relatively young people also pay respect to this activity because they believe memories of Manchuria, which they often heard from their parents, set a foundation for their lives. At the annual meeting and several board meetings organized by the association, they are able to relive their lives in Manchuria by sharing and cherishing their memories with each other.

## Notes

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## 戦後沖縄における満洲の記憶

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