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Cover illustration A memorial from the chief eunuch Bian Dekui — “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing During the Qing” by Ye Xiaoqing, see p.81.

JAPANESE ORPHANS FROM CHINA: HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN A “RETURNING” MIGRANT COMMUNITY

 Li Narangoa

Migration is not always forever. Sometimes changing political and economic circumstances lead a settled migrant community to leave its “new homeland” and “return” to an older one. In recent times Germans have “returned” to Germany from the former Soviet Union and other parts of Eastern Europe, while Dutch Indies and Chinese Indonesian communities have “returned” to the Netherlands and China from Indonesia. In the nineteenth century, former slaves from the Americas “returned” to Liberia and Sierra Leone. This process of “return” is often wrapped in romantic notions of national or ethnic reunification, but it seldom happens smoothly. Long residence in a different land leads inevitably both to different historical experiences and to cultural differences, which often lead in turn to unexpected feelings of being alien in a half-familiar “homeland.” Even more important, however, the history of migrant communities can seldom be disentangled from that of the homeland or from the history of that homeland’s relations with their former land of residence. The arrival of “returning” migrants commonly reminds the homeland of its own history, often in disquieting ways, adding to the complexity of the relationship between the two groups. “Return” also takes place in an economic context, often offering individuals a sense of economic opportunity missing in the land of residence. The consequence is the emergence of a new minority identity which both belongs and does not belong to the host community in ways very different from immigrants whose arrival cannot ever be construed as a “returning.”

All these issues emerge sharply in the case of the Japanese orphans who were left behind in China at the end of World War II and who began to “return” to Japan in the 1970s. This “return” was at first greeted with much

An earlier version of this paper was presented at a seminar in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, in May 2002. I would like to thank Tamura Keiko and two anonymous *East Asian History* readers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I am also indebted to Robert Cribb for his comments and especially for his help in improving my English.

¹ The word *zanryū* means 'remaining' but also has the implication of 'staying behind', hinting that these people might have made an active choice to remain in China. This expression might have been suitable for those adults who stayed in China for whatever reason, even though they had the chance to return during the repatriations of the late 1940s and 1950s. For the orphans, however, the suggestion that they decided to stay was not appropriate, because they had no choice and most of them were abandoned or lost by their parents.

² Kōseishō Shakai Engōkyoku Engo 50 nenshi Henshū I'inkai, *Engo 50 nenshi* [The History of 50-year Support] (Tokyo: Gyōsei, 1998), p. 402.

³ Araragi Shinzō, "*Chūgoku kikokusha no seikatsu seikai*" [The life of the returnees from China] (Kyoto: Kōrosha, 2000), p.25. Even after thirty years, they were often ashamed of their marriages and wanted to escape to Japan. Because they were not officially classified as orphans, however, they were at first not entitled to Japanese government help. The argument of the government was that these women had stayed on in China of their own free will. The government claimed that they had earlier opportunities to return to Japan if they had wanted to. In the autumn of 1993, however, a group of these 'left-behind' women came to Japan at their own expense, because the government was not willing to pay their travel costs. Their action attracted considerable public and media attention and breathed new life into the issue of those left behind. Finally, in December 1993, the Japanese government exchanged a verbal agreement with the Chinese government, promising to provide support for women in this category. Yagi Iwao, "*Chūgoku kikokusha no jitsujō to sono haihei*" [The circumstances of returnees from China and their background], in Etaba Keisuke et al., *Ijū to tekiō: Chūgoku kikokusha no tekiō katei to enjō taisei ni kansuru kenkyū* [Report on discussion of how to help returnees from China] (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1996), pp.30–3.

⁴ This figure excluded short-term visits (including those who were invited to search for their relatives). Between 1972 and 2000 the number of people making this kind of visit reached 5,167, among whom 909 were officially classified as orphans ("*Chūgoku kikokusha shi'en ni kansuru kentōka*" OVER

enthusiasm in Japan, but as time passed the problems arising from the separate history and identity of the orphans became apparent. The orphans, raised in Chinese society, existed between three worlds—a wartime past, a revolutionary Chinese present and a prospective Japanese future, and each of these worlds carried its own complex of meanings.

According to the definition of the Japanese Ministry of Welfare, war orphans (*zanryū koji* 残留孤児, literally "staying-behind orphans")¹ as they are called in Japan today, are people who were left behind in China as children and who fulfil the following five conditions: first, that both parents were Japanese; second, that they were lost or separated from their parents in the turmoil after the Japanese surrender in August 1945; third, that they were not older than thirteen years at the end of the war; fourth, that they knew their parents' address; and fifth, that they had been living in China since the war.² People who did not fit into these categories were called simply *zanryū bōjin* 残留邦人, "staying-behind compatriots." Most of those who failed to be classified as orphans were older than thirteen at the end of the war; many of them were women whose parents had given or sold them to Chinese farmers as wives or servants after the war. As Araragi Shinzō 蘭信三 has pointed out, these women generally felt that they had been forced to stay in China and forced (*shikata ga nai* しかたがない) to marry Chinese whom they had previously regarded as "filthy coolies."³

Most of the war orphans were in fact children of Japanese farmers in Manchuria. The retreat of Japanese civilians from Manchuria at the end of the war had been a chaotic affair. Family members were separated from one another and many people had died in the fighting or from hardship, disease and exposure. This chaotic situation produced many orphans who were lost or left behind in Manchuria. After the normalisation of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972 it became possible for the orphans to return to Japan. The Japanese and Chinese governments then investigated the matter and undertook the laborious process of identifying individuals and inviting them to Japan to seek out and identify their relatives. During most of the 1980s, two or three groups of orphans came to Japan each year to discover whether they could find their long-lost relatives. Up until 2002, about 20,000 people moved from China to live in Japan.⁴ About half of those repatriated were officially classified as war orphans together with their families; the remainder were others who had been "left behind" for one reason or another. Many of these were also orphans, though they did not meet the strict criteria demanded by the Japanese government.

For most of these grown-up orphans, returning to their long-dreamed-of "homeland" and rediscovering their families was initially a happy affair. After some time, however, many of them had to realise that they faced a huge gap in culture as well as in language. Having lived for decades under completely different social, political and economic circumstances, the orphans had difficulties in adjusting to the new environment in Japan. In China, their home for many decades, they were considered to be Japanese, and thus

foreigners. Now, they had “returned” to Japan but again they were made to feel like strangers.

Nonetheless, their circumstances made them a special group in Japan in two ways. First of all, because they had been lost in the aftermath of World War II, their position in Japanese society was bound up with the complex Japanese attitudes to the imperial era. For many of those Japanese who had been involved in one way or another in Japan’s Manchurian endeavour, the wartime settlement of Japanese there had been an honourable enterprise, even if the overall Japanese imperial venture was not. A very large number of Japanese had spent time in Manchuria and wanted their part in Japan’s history to receive proper recognition. They felt that the Japanese government had a strong moral obligation to look after those unfortunates who had been trapped in China by historical accident. To these groups, the orphans from Manchuria were much more deserving than the numerous immigrants of Japanese descent from Latin America, known as *Nikkeijin* 日系人. The latter were considered to be the descendants of economic emigrants who had never made a contribution to Japan’s national aims.⁵ On the other hand, the arrival of the orphans was also an uncomfortable reminder to post-war Japan of the country’s imperial past. The orphans were not particularly blamed for or linked to Japan’s wartime policies, but their presence forced reluctant Japanese to think about historical realities which they had been comfortable to forget.

Second, the new arrivals from Manchuria were considered to have “Japanese blood” and “Japanese hearts,” despite their assimilation into Chinese culture. The *Nikkeijin* from Latin America, by contrast, had preserved more of a sense of Japanese community in their distant lands, but they had also acquired elements of Latin American culture which seemed to most Japanese far more alien than the Chinese culture of the orphans from Manchuria. On the other hand, the Manchurian orphans were still not “Japanese” enough to fit seamlessly into Japanese society. In practice, therefore, they failed to achieve equal status with the rest of that society. Their identity was caught between two cultures and two nations.

The traumatic personal history of the war orphans was thus bound up with the glory and defeat of imperial Japan. Their very existence and problems reflected the long-term trauma of a war as well as the complexity of identity between history, culture and ancestry. They believed that they had Japanese blood and that therefore their personal history was part of Japanese history. Their Japanese-ness and their personal experience of being lost at the end of the era of Japanese imperial expansion gave them access to Japan, but the culture in which they had grown up pushed them to the margins of Japanese society.

/hōkokusho” [Discussion report of supporting the returnees from China], in <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/s0012s1204_16.html>, accessed on 20 October 2002.

⁵ *Mainichi Shimbun*, 16 November 1999.

The History that Created the War Orphans

⁶ See Louise Young, *Japan's total empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press), 1998.

Most of the war orphans were the children of Japanese farmers and civil officers who had lived in northern Manchuria, far away from the big cities of the south, between 1937 and 1945.⁶ The vast territory of Manchuria (today officially referred to as Northeast China) was conquered by Japan in 1931 and was reorganized into a client state called Manchukuo 滿洲國 in 1932. Japanese settlers had been moving into this region even before the occupation, but in 1936 the Japanese government launched an ambitious program of mass colonisation, aimed at sending one million Japanese households to Manchukuo

from 1937 onwards over a period of twenty years. The farmers were intended not only to grow food for the empire but also to be yeoman farmers (*busō nōmin* 武装農民), providing a military reserve for the Japanese Kwantung Army which dominated Manchukuo. Altogether, about 300,000 Japanese households—more

Figure 1

A courtyard in Manchuria with a Japanese flag hanging from the wall (postcard printed in Tokyo in 1930s or 1940s)

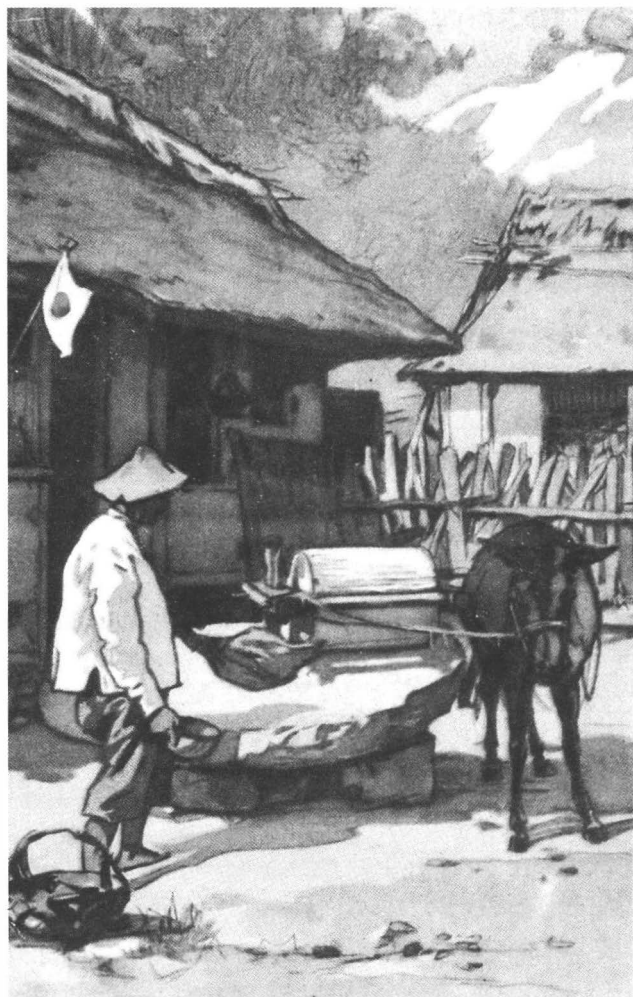


Figure 2

Japanese women cultivating Manchuria (cover of Kaitaku Gahō [Illustrated magazine of cultivation], Tokyo: Tairiku Kensetsusha, 1942)



than a million people—settled in the territory, fewer than intended, though nonetheless an impressive number. As the war in China dragged on, and especially after the Pacific War began in 1941, many of the male settlers were recruited into the army. When the Pacific War turned against Japan in the second half of 1942, the Kwantung Army sent troops in increasing numbers to Southeast Asia, particularly to the Philippines. Migration from Japan to Manchuria continued until 1945, but by the last months of the war, only a skeleton garrison of troops was left in Manchukuo and the Japanese population there consisted mainly of women and children. Apart from the families of farmers, there were also the families of soldiers, mainly living in barracks in the big cities such as Harbin 哈爾濱, Mukden (Fengtian 奉天 (Shenyang 沈陽) and Xinjing 新京 (Hsinking, Changchun 長春).⁷

In May 1945 the war in Europe ended with disastrous results for Germany, Japan's ally in the West. The Soviet Union refused to continue its treaty of neutrality with Japan which, according to the existing agreement, should have remained in effect until April 1946. Aware that the Soviet Union would invade Manchuria, and that the northern border of Manchukuo was in danger, the Kwantung Army decided to abandon the remote northern regions, concentrating its limited forces instead in the heavily populated and economically important south. They created a defence zone in South Manchuria with the capital city Xinjing just inside the defensive line. The remainder of Manchukuo—three quarters of its territory—was destined to be “thrown away”

⁷ Endō Mitsuo, *Chūgoku zanryū kōji no kiseki* [The miracle of the orphans left behind in China] (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1992), p.40.

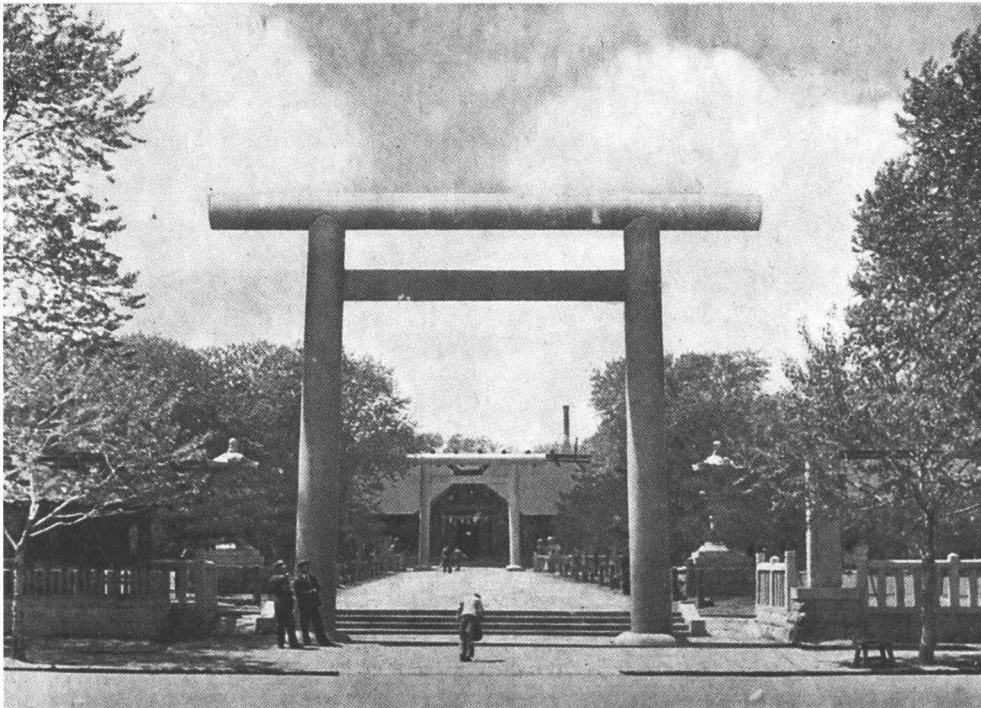


Figure 3

Shinto shrine in Xinjing, the capital of Manchukuo (postcard printed in Tokyo before World War II)

⁸ Shimada Toshihiko, *Kantōgun* [The Kwantung army] (Tokyo: Chūkō Shisho, 1965), pp.183–5.

⁹ There is an extensive Japanese literature on the situation of the Japanese civilians at the end of the war. For example see Man-Mō Dōhō En'gokai, ed., *Man-Mōshūsenshi* [Stories of Manchuria and Mongolia at the end of the war] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1962); Kakuda Fusako, *Hakajirushi naki bachiman no shisha* [Eighty thousand unburied corpses] (Tokyo: Chūō Bunko, 1982); Gōda Ichidō, *Kenshō Manshū 1945–nen natsu: Man-Mō kaitakudan no shūen* [Witnessing Manchuria in the summer of 1945: the end of the pioneers in Manchuria and Mongolia] (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2000).

(*bōki* 放棄). All units were to be pulled back within the defence zone but hardly any provision was made to evacuate the civilian population of this region. Japanese civilians, including most of the settlers outside this defence zone, were left without any military support.⁸ In fact, few of them had any real idea of the progress of the war, thanks to their isolation and to official restrictions on the flow of information. On 9 August 1945, when Soviet armed forces crossed the Amur River into Manchukuo, most of these civilians were completely unprepared for the new situation.

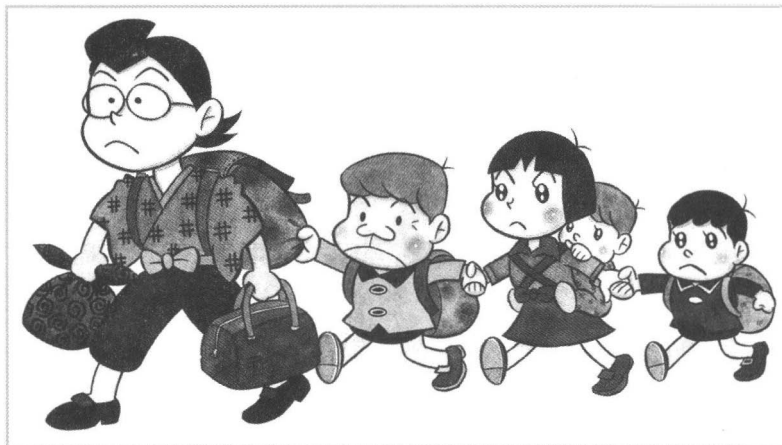
Staying put was not an option. Not only were the Japanese settlers deeply fearful of the Soviet forces, but also they faced a huge threat from local Chinese communities. The lands which the Japanese farmers had settled had often been acquired forcibly from previous Chinese owners or tenants. With the defeat of Japan, these Chinese were determined to recover their land. Some of the settlers saw no way out at all and committed collective suicide.⁹ Parents would shoot or strangle their children then turn their guns on themselves or blow themselves up with hand grenades. Others fled south, hoping to reach the Japanese defensive lines or at least to stay ahead of the advancing Soviet forces. Many, especially women, killed themselves on the way to avoid capture and rape by the Soviet troops. The hardship on the journey was enormous. It was the height of summer. Water and food were scarce, distances were great, and no medical care was available. Under these circumstances, many families handed their small children over to Chinese families for safekeeping. For most, it was an act of desperation. They were sure that if they did not do so, their children would die on the journey.

Despite the hardships and difficulties of the journey, tens of thousands

eventually reached the big cities where they could get some assistance from Japanese organizations formed to help Japanese refugees. By the time they arrived, however, Japan had surrendered and Soviet troops marched into cities such as Harbin, Xijning, Mukden and Dairen (Dalian 大連) as occupiers rather than conquerors. Conditions in Manchuria continued to be chaotic during the months after the Japanese surrender. The Soviet troops remained in the territory until April 1946, but Manchuria quickly became a battleground between rival Chinese forces, the communists and the Kuomintang (*Guomindang* 國民黨). Remnants of the former Manchukuo administration did not last long. The emperor of Manchukuo abdicated three days after the

Figure 4

"Carrying a big backpack and holding firmly onto mother we walked all the way to Fengtian 奉天," by Akatsuka Fujio 赤塚不二夫, in *Boku no Manshū* [My Manchuria] (Tokyo: Akishobō, 1995) (reproduced courtesy of the author and the publisher)

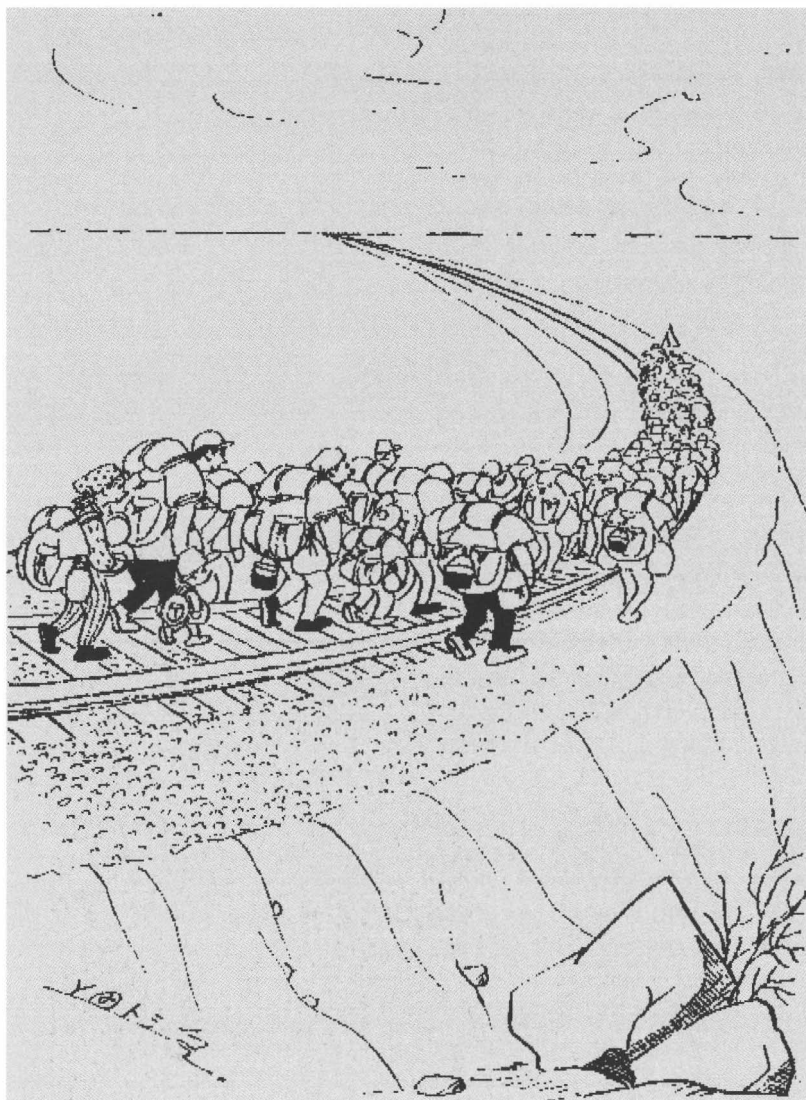


war and was captured along with his high-ranking ministers by Soviet troops and taken to Siberia. The Japanese embassy in Manchukuo was unable to negotiate with Soviet generals to protect their civilians. In this uncertain situation, the Japanese civilians struggled to survive. Even for the city-dwellers in the south who had not been forced to flee, life was hard, food was scarce and they experienced a precipitous loss of status. From having been the *de facto* rulers of Manchukuo they were now a defeated people. Families sold their possessions piece by piece in the street, ate frugally and huddled together to keep warm as the harsh Manchurian winter approached. The old Manchukuo currency lost all its value, so that any savings the Japanese may have had were worthless. Economic instability was made worse by the introduction of Soviet currency, then Chinese communist currency, and Guomindang currency as well where the nationalists were established.¹⁰ Those who could make themselves useful to the Soviets or to the rival Chinese forces took low-paid jobs as nurses or technicians. For the refugees from the north, life was still more difficult. Those who had nowhere else to go assembled in refugee camps in or near the larger cities. Temples, schools or factory buildings were provided as shelter for the refugees. The desperate conditions in the camps also led mothers to give their children away to Chinese families who might be able to look after them. It was reported that there even existed a kind of black market in human beings. Chinese families would buy Japanese children as servants or farm labourers; Chinese men would buy women or girls as brides or concubines. Some adult Japanese women accepted marriage offers from Chinese men as the only way of guaranteeing their own and their children's survival.¹¹

Since there was no governmental organizational support these Japanese refugees, the Japanese Associations (*Nihonjin iryūkai* 日本人遺留会) mobilized themselves and tried to obtain help from the Soviet occupation troops, and later from the Communists as well as the Nationalist troops. The Soviet occupiers were not much interested in helping the repatriation of the Japanese, but when the Soviet troops withdrew the situation became still more chaotic because of the civil war between Nationalists and Communists in China. The control of cities and countryside shifted frequently between the two sides. The Communists provided some help to the Japanese to cope with the shortages of food and clothing, but they were not so enthusiastic about helping the Japanese to repatriate. They were not yet the official government in China and they were interested instead in recruiting Japanese technicians and nurses. The Nationalist Government was still the official government recognized by the great powers and most Japanese were more sympathetic to the Nationalists than to the Communists. The Japanese communities thus put their hopes in Nationalist government assistance with repatriation. In the end, the repatriation began with the cooperation of the Allied powers and the Chinese Nationalist government in May 1946. Though at that time the big cities in the northern part of Manchuria, such as Qiqihar 齊齊哈爾 and Harbin were under Chinese Communist control, American mediation between

¹⁰ Man-Mō Dōhō En'gokai, *Man-Mōshūsen-shi*, pp.54, 142-60, 363-97.

¹¹ Endō, *Chūgoku zanryū koji no kiseki*, p.40.

**Figure 5**

"Journey for repatriation," by Ueda Toshiko 上田トシコ, in *Boku no Manshū* (reproduced courtesy of the author and the publisher)

Figure 6

the rival Chinese parties made possible an agreement to facilitate the homeward transport of Japanese from northern Manchuria.¹²

Despite the importance of Manchukuo in Japan's former imperial plans, the post-war Japanese government paid little attention to the plight of its people marooned in Manchuria. They took hardly any measures to organize the repatriation of Manchurian Japanese. Despite urgent appeals for help from the commander of the Kwantung Army and from the Japanese ambassador to former Manchukuo, the Japanese government ignored the region. Instead they encouraged the Japanese civilians in Manchuria and Korea to stay put and to live "in harmony and prosperity" (*kyōson kyōei* 共存共榮) with local people.¹³ This official appeal was a hollow echo of the wartime rhetoric of racial harmony in Manchukuo and did nothing to help the abandoned Japanese. The Japanese government still seemed to think that it could use wartime ideology to control its civilians. This inactivity on the part of the Japanese government caused more

¹² Man-Mō Dōhō En'gokai, *Man-Mō shūsenshi*, pp.562–6.

¹³ These were mainly farmers and small-business people and their families, because the first repatriation of 300,000 which took place in winter 1945 were largely army and officials' families. Sakamoto Tatsuhiko, "Manshū kara no 'hikiage' o okurasete ita Nihon seifu" [How repatriation from Manchuria was delayed by the Japanese government], *Shūkan kinyōbi* 353 (2 March 2001): 70.

¹⁴ Araragi, *'Chūgoku kikokusha' no seikatsu sekai*, p.24.

civilian casualties and led more children to become orphans. For example, shortly after the end of the war in August 1945, Fangzheng 方正, one of the refugee camps south of Harbin, sheltered about 8,640 Japanese. When the refugees were finally repatriated in May 1946, however, this number was greatly reduced. More than a quarter of these Japanese (27%) had died of illness or committed suicide. Another 27% became wives to Chinese, 14% escaped, another 14% moved to Harbin and 5% were taken by Russian army and sent to Siberia. Only a handful survived to return to Japan.¹⁴ In part this reluctance to arrange repatriation was a consequence of the extreme economic difficulties faced by Japan immediately after the war. Ironically, however, the Japanese government gave greater priority

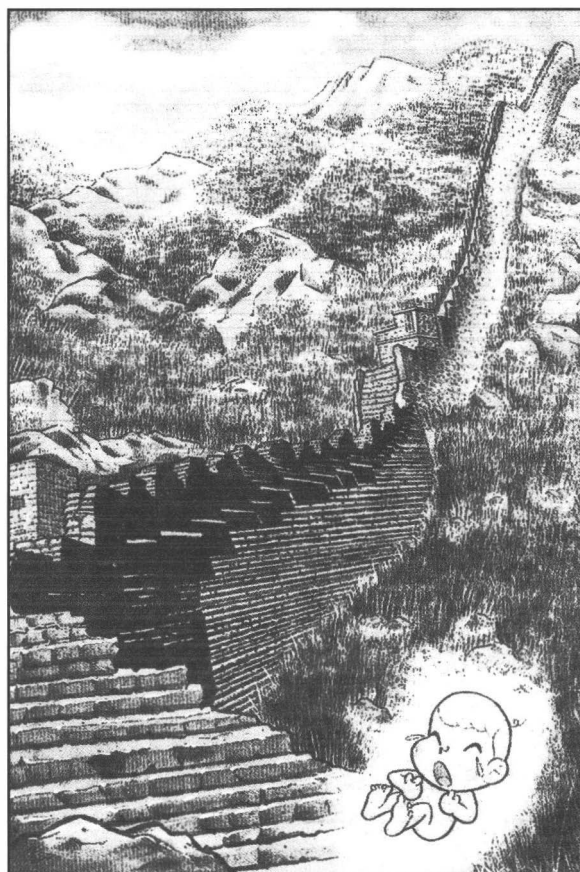
to bringing home Japanese from Southeast Asia and China proper than to recovering the Japanese in Manchuria. Only in May 1946, when most of the repatriation from Southeast Asia and from China proper was completed, did the main part of the repatriation from Manchuria begin.¹⁵ The reasons for favouring repatriation from Southeast Asia and China proper were complex and included the fact that the Western Allies were better established in Southeast Asia and therefore able to arrange the repatriation, and the fact that there were few Japanese civilians in there in any case. The Japanese government felt that its principal responsibility was to its soldiers, rather than to civilian settlers. The fact that Manchuria was a more familiar terrain, where Japanese had been settled for several years, may also have encouraged the Japanese to believe that repatriation was not so urgent, especially in view of the economic problems in Japan itself.

At the end of World War II, there had been more than 1.5 million Japanese living in Manchukuo. By 1949, all in all about one million Japanese returned from China (including Manchuria) in the repatriation operation.¹⁶ In 1952, the Japanese government negotiated a new arrangement for repatriation with the new People's Republic of China, and the repatriation process dragged on until 1958, when relations between China and Japan broke down. According to official Japanese figures, some 280,000 Japanese from Manchuria did not take part in the repatriation. This figure, however, included a large number of missing persons—especially Japanese soldiers who had been taken off to Siberia or Mongolia at the end of the war to serve in Soviet labour brigades, as well as people who had perished without record during the difficult post-war months. The figure included a smaller number of Japanese who decided to stay in Manchuria, because of new family connections, because they approved of the communist government or because of attachment to the local environment. Amongst the missing, however, were also a considerable number of Japanese trapped in Manchuria by circumstance. Many of the war orphans were in this category: they were often still young enough to be dependent on their Chinese families, or else lived in isolated regions where they did not receive information on the possibility of repatriation. Although diplomatic circumstances, rather than a sense of having completed the job, put an end to repatriation in 1958, there developed a common perception in Japan that the work of bringing Japanese home from Manchuria had finished. This perception remained dominant until 1972.

¹⁵ Man-Mō Dōhō En'gokai, *Man-Mō shū-senshi*, p.567.

¹⁶ There were also people (22,500 in all) who were able to return from Dalian immediately after the war. See Endō, *Chūgoku zanryū koji no kiseki*, p.41.

"I was born in a place close to the Chinese Great Wall," by Akatsuka Fujio, in Boku no Manshū (reproduced courtesy of the author and the publisher)



Searching for the Lost Children

¹⁷ The agreement was based on talks between China, the International Red Cross, the Sino-Japanese Friendship Association and the Japanese Peace Liaison Association.

¹⁸ On the Chinese-Japanese negotiations for the repatriation of Japanese, see, for example, K. W. Radtke, "Negotiations between the PRC and Japan on the return of Japanese civilians and the repatriation of prisoners of war," in *Studies in Sinology*, ed. W. L. Idema (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), pp.191–212.

¹⁹ In 1958, right-wing Japanese nationalists removed the Chinese flag from the trade exhibition at Nagasaki. The PRC government accused the Japanese government of having failed to provide adequate security and of not responding forcefully to the incident.

²⁰ In 1971, the PRC was formally admitted to the United Nations, and in the following February President Richard Nixon of the United States visited Beijing. In September 1972 Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei announced in Beijing that Japan recognized the People's Republic of China as the legal government of China, of which Taiwan was an integral part. Later the Japanese Foreign Minister Ōhira Masayoshi issued a statement annulling the 1951 peace treaty with Taiwan.

²¹ The Japanese government has been criticized in recent times for its failure to act at the time in order to search for these war orphans. Endō, *Chūgoku zanryū kōji no kiseki*, pp.40–2; Sakamoto Tatsuhiko, "Manshū kara no 'hikiage' o okurasete ita Nihon seifu," p.70.

In order to explain the long silence about the existence of Japanese war orphans in China, we have to look at both the international and domestic political circumstances and at the social and economic situation of both Japan and China. The repatriations ceased abruptly after the Chinese Communist Party came to power in Beijing in 1949. In 1950, the People's Republic of China concluded a thirty-year treaty with the Soviet Union pledging mutual assistance if either were attacked by Japan or its allies. Within months the Korean War broke out, and Chinese forces supported North Korea. China was declared an aggressor by the United Nations and, together with Taiwan, was excluded from signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951, which formally ended the war against Japan. The same day Japan signed a security treaty with the United States and a peace treaty with the Kuomintang government in Taiwan, thus recognizing it as the legitimate government of China and rejecting the legitimacy of Communist China. From 1953, however, the repatriations were resumed, though with difficulties. In March 1953, the so-called Peking Agreement¹⁷ resulted in more than 26,000 Japanese women being allowed to return. Then in June 1956, in accordance with a further agreement reached in Tianjin 天津, another 1,368 people (including 1,018 alleged war criminals who had not been prosecuted) were repatriated to Japan. The war orphans (*zanryū kōji*), however, were not mentioned at all in these agreements. Indeed, their very existence was ignored. No one raised a voice on their behalf.¹⁸ In 1958, due to the Japanese government's position on the Taiwan–Mainland China problem and the Japanese Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke's 岸信介 mild response to the Nagasaki Flag Incident,¹⁹ the Sino-Japanese diplomatic relationship was disrupted. Until the normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972,²⁰ it was impossible to negotiate any further repatriation of those left behind in China.

Parallel to these international problems, several domestic political and economic problems worked to distract attention from the orphans. Japan had been militarily defeated, its economy was broken and it was under foreign occupation. The government had neither knowledge of nor interest in the position of the Japanese remaining in Manchuria and gave no priority to the repatriation process²¹ while the Japanese public itself was busy with the challenges of everyday survival. More important, there was a political reaction against the Japanese settlers in Manchuria. Even though settlement in Manchuria had been strongly promoted by Japanese governments, after the war the settlers were widely seen as colonizers, people who had abandoned their own country and migrated to Manchuria for the sake of material advantage. Those who returned to Japan, therefore, could expect no understanding or sympathy, let alone assistance, if they admitted publicly that they had left their own children behind in Manchuria to save themselves. Only much later did a public perception begin to emerge that the settlers in Manchuria had gone there at the behest of the Japanese government and had therefore not

simply been motivated by self-interest.

In China, moreover, many of the orphans, especially the older ones, were painfully aware of their ancestry and of the fact that they were the children of recent enemies. Their position was especially difficult during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. People who had the slightest foreign connections were purged and put in extreme danger. Those who had studied in Japan were suspected of being Japanese spies and the remaining Japanese in China were condemned as “Japanese devils” (*Ribenguizi* 日本鬼子). Even orphans who did not know that they were of Japanese origin were “discovered” by over-ambitious and fanatical Red Guards. They and their spouses suffered torture, public humiliation, and loss of status and career prospects. Some found it impossible to marry or were even pressured to divorce their partners.²² Under these circumstances, any attempt to seek repatriation to Japan would have been extremely dangerous. Ironically, though, the experience of being ostracized contributed powerfully to the interest of these Chinese-Japanese in searching out their Japanese roots after 1972.

Even after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the normalization of relations between China and Japan in 1972, neither government would have been interested in the fate of the Japanese remaining in China if it were not for the initiative of the orphans themselves and of Yamamoto Jishō 山本慈昭, who was head of a small Buddhist temple in Nagano 長野 prefecture. Yamamoto began pursuing the issue even before the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. His own background gave him an immediate interest in the orphans. He had gone with his family to Manchukuo in May 1945 in order to teach at a primary school in Baoqing 寶清, Andong 安東. When the Soviet army invaded Manchukuo, he was taken to Siberia. After one and a half years he returned to Japan, where he discovered that his wife, his two daughters and 39 of his 45 pupils in Manchukuo had failed to make it back to Japan. Like other former residents of Manchukuo, Yamamoto at first kept silent about this painful past. After listening to a dying friend lament the children he had lost in 1945, however, Yamamoto contacted the Ministry of Welfare, asking them to begin searching for the Japanese children who had been left behind. In 1973, Yamamoto established a Japanese-Chinese Friendship Association (*Nitchūyūkō te o tsunagu kai* 日中友好手をつなぐ会) for people who were concerned about the children in China and who supported his activities. This association was the start of organized searching for war orphans. The organization quickly grew and from all over Japan parents who had left their children in China became members. There were also a number of volunteer groups organized and inspired by Yamamoto's activities. Together they appealed again to the Ministry of Welfare for help.²³

In the meantime, the situation had also changed in China. The Cultural Revolution was over and the war orphans were now adults. Feeling that they did not belong in Chinese society, a few of them began to contact the Japanese embassy in Beijing to ask for assistance in searching for their parents

²² See, for example, Yoshida Hisako, *Haruka nari—aru Chūgoku zanryū koji no kiroku* [In the distance: the story of a left-behind orphan from China] (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1987); Endō, *Chūgoku zanryū koji no kiseki*, p.46.

²³ Ibid., pp.43–5.

²⁴ Kōseisho Shakai, Engōkyoku, ed., *Engō 50 nenshi* (Tokyo: Gyōsei, 1997), p.398.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.405–6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.399.

and relatives. Thus the activities on both sides, in Japan and China, began to bear fruit. The Japanese Ministry of Welfare now decided to work with the Chinese government to collect information on the former war orphans in China. In 1976, the Japanese Government released a list of 397 war orphans. Of these children, 191 were identified by their relatives.²⁴

The efforts to re-unite lost children and their parents began to take place on a large scale in the 1980s. In March 1981, the first 47 orphans visited Japan as a group to seek their parents or relatives. The procedures involved were complicated. Each orphan had first to obtain a certificate from the Chinese authorities setting out the circumstances in which he or she had been left behind. The certificate was then referred to the Japanese authorities and if it was accepted as plausible the orphan was invited to Japan for a 14/15-day visit. The identification process in Japan consisted of two steps: first, there was an interview with Ministry of Health and Welfare officials, who asked the interviewees for specific information to use in identifying their families. This information was then widely publicized on television and in the newspapers. Second, if anyone from the community felt that they might be a relative of the orphan, a meeting was arranged so that they could confirm each other's memories, physical characteristics and so forth. In some cases, blood tests were carried out, though this happened only if both sides—the orphans and their possible relatives—were uncertain.²⁵ Some of the orphans found no-one, other encounters turned out to be fruitless, but significant numbers were reunited with relatives whom they had not seen for more than three decades. Of the first group of 47 orphans, some thirty made successful contact with their families. The visit and its aftermath were considered a big event and were covered extensively in the Japanese mass media; newspapers and television programmes reported the story for weeks, giving details of how the families had been separated and presenting moving stories of reunion. Those orphans who located family members in Japan were allowed to resettle in Japan and to stay for the long term if they so wished.

To begin with, only those who could find relatives in Japan were allowed to return there to live and be given their Japanese citizenship. In 1984, however, those orphans who had not been able to be identified by their relatives and who wished to reside in Japan were given an opportunity to settle, on the condition they find a *mimoto bosbōnin* 身元保証人 (guarantor) in Japan.²⁶ In fact, most of the war orphans chose to go back to Japan for the long term. In some cases, this decision caused social problems in China. Families were separated; parents lost their adopted children or had to move to strange new surroundings in Japan. Marriages broke up and children were caught between the two societies. The absence of a social security system in rural China meant that the loss of an adult family member sometimes had severe economic consequences for those who remained. Because of these problems, the Chinese government sought in 1982 to stop the repatriation programme altogether. In January 1983, however, the Japanese government agreed to pay a maintenance supplement to the adoptive parents and the programme was allowed to continue. In March 1984 a verbal agreement on

responsibility for the orphans was reached between the Chinese and Japanese governments. It specified that "the Japanese government pays half of the maintenance costs to the adoptive parents of the left-behind Japanese orphans who want to live in Japan permanently."²⁷ The two governments also agreed that orphans who wanted to stay in Japan permanently with their Chinese spouse and family were allowed to do so and that they would get financial support from the government.²⁸

The Japanese government believed that the intensive five-year official search from 1981 to 1985 (three groups each year, altogether 1488 orphans, visited Japan) was enough to find all the children who had been left behind and thus the government wanted to conclude the official search programme at this stage. Yamamoto's group and other concerned non-government organizations, however, were strongly against this decision. Under public pressure, the government compromised and continued the search, but this process was then called *bojo chōsa* 補助調査 (supplementary search) and visits were limited to one per year.²⁹ Between 1981 and 1999, altogether thirty visits to Japan were organized in order to offer the war orphans the chance of finding their relatives. In March 2000, another verbal agreement was made between the Chinese and Japanese governments concerning the identification of the Japanese orphans in China and it was agreed that officials from the Japanese side would come to China and together with Chinese officials interview the candidates. The information about those who were identified as orphans by both Chinese and Japanese officials would be publicized in Japan, but the orphans would be invited to visit Japan only if someone in Japan expressed an interest in meeting them for possible reunion.³⁰

Public pressure was not the only factor which encouraged the Japanese government to keep open the possibility of searching for these orphans and their parents. The issue of compensation for historical injustice had become important in international affairs in general, and there was considerable attention to the issue of American Vietnam War orphans (the abandoned children of Vietnamese women and American servicemen).³¹ The comfort woman issue had also begun to attract attention. Japan's economic growth moreover had led to a labour shortage. Like other developed economies Japan needed to recruit guest workers, but the Japanese government preferred for cultural reasons to attract workers with a Japanese background. From the late 1980s the Japanese government eased restrictions on the entry of the *Nikkeijin* from Brazil.³² At the very least, the Japanese government could feel confident that the orphans from China would contribute usefully to the Japanese economy. Economic prosperity also meant that the Japanese government could afford to give financial assistance to these orphans.

On the Chinese side, the interest in repatriation was also spurred by Japan's economic success. From the 1980s, Japanese goods, especially electrical household equipment such as televisions, tape recorders, video players and so on, suddenly appeared in vast quantities on the Chinese market. Japan appeared as a rich and developed country. There was a real

²⁷ The Japanese government agreed to pay Japanese orphans' adoptive parents who stayed in China the sum of sixty Chinese yuan each person per month for 15 years. This payment was remitted by the Support Foundation for Orphans Left Behind in China (*Chūgoku zanryū koji engo kikin* [The Foundation to support the orphans from China], founded in April 1983) to the Chinese Red Cross which then passed it on to the adoptive parents. 60 Chinese yuan was as much as an average worker's monthly wage in 1980s' China. The foundation collected a thousand million yen from private persons and governmental institutions. (*Chūgoku zanryū koji engo kikin* home page, <http://www.kikokusha-center.or.jp/kikokusha/kikin_f.htm>.)

²⁸ Kōseisho Shakai, Engōkyoku, *Engō 50 nenshi*, p.399.

²⁹ Yagi Iwao, "Chūgoku kikokusha no jitsujō to sono haikai" [The reality and background of the returnees from China], in *Ijū to tekiō: Chūgoku kikokusha no tekiō katei to enjō taisei ni kansuru kenkyū*, p.22.

³⁰ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 19 Sept. 2000; in the summer of 2000, Japanese officials from the Ministry of Health and Welfare visited China and identified twenty orphans. *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 20 Jan. 2001.

³¹ See for example, Kien Nguyen, *The unwanted: a memoir of childhood* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 2001); <<http://www.mamnon.org/multiculti/archive/0104/msg00011.html>>, accessed on 22 October 2002.

³² Tsuda Takeyuki, "The permanence of 'temporary' migration: the 'structural embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian immigrant workers in Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58.3 (1999): 687-722.

³³ Following 1972 a great number of cultural exchange programmes between Japan and China were organized. The number of Chinese students and short-term visitors in Japan increased rapidly. It is estimated that in 1997 there were in all 51,047 foreign students registered in Japan, and out of these 22,323 were from China. Paul D. Scott, "Chinese students in Japan: networking Asia," in *Japanese influences and presences in Asia*, ed. Marie Soderberg and Ian Reader (Richmond, London: Curzon, 2000), p.237.

"Japan-boom" in China from the 1980s to the 1990s.³³ As the image of Japan improved, so did the status of the Japanese orphans in China. They were no longer condemned as "Japanese devils" who had been abandoned by their own parents; instead they were even admired for their Japanese origin and for possessing the possibility of becoming wealthy. This change of status, of course, made Japanese war orphans proud to be Japanese and strengthened their sense of Japanese identity.

Thus, the motives of the Japanese war orphans in returning from China to Japan were complex and varied. Some of them sought family attachments they had lacked in China; others felt rejected by Chinese society; some engaged in an emotional quest for their own roots, while others were mainly interested in the possibility of improving their economic position. For most of them, however, the euphoria of becoming Japanese once more did not last long. They experienced unexpected difficulties when they actually came to live in Japan.

Problems of Becoming "Japanese"

³⁴ For example, the Association of Returnees from China (*Chūgoku kikokusha no kai* [Association for Returnees from China]) was initiated by Suzuki Noriko in Tokyo, 1982. It set up nine Japanese-language schools in Japan and one in Harbin, China, established in 1988. The idea behind this was to train orphans in the Japanese language before they went to Japan, so that they could adjust more easily. Endō, *Chūgoku zanryū koji no kiseki*, pp.202–5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.220–1.

³⁶ In April 1984 the Japanese Bar Union adopted a resolution to make the returning of war orphans a human rights issue. It put pressure on the Japanese government which sought to treat the problem only as a humanitarian issue. Yagi Iwao, "Chūgoku kikokusha no jitsujō to sono haihei," pp.25–6.

The orphans faced enormous difficulties after their arrival in Japan. To begin with, they encountered serious language problems. Few spoke more than a little Japanese but they were expected to begin functioning in Japanese society without any language training whatsoever. Having grown up in Chinese society, they generally knew few of the cultural codes which are so important in Japanese daily life. Moreover, many of them found it difficult to obtain employment in Japan. Skills which had been valued in China were often irrelevant or useless in the Japanese economy, and they found themselves working, if at all, in the most menial positions. Initially there were no governmental institutions to help the orphans to resettle. Only a few NGOs, volunteer groups and social welfare organizations supported war orphans with language training, job seeking, schooling and so forth.³⁴ Only in February 1984, after they realized that the orphan issue was generating social problems, did the Japanese government open a Promotion Centre for the Resettlement (Adjustment) of Orphans Returned from China (*Chūgoku kikoku koji teichaku sokushin sentaa* 中国帰国孤児定着促進センター) in Tokorozawa 所沢, Saitama 埼玉 prefecture. This happened after there had been several cases of murder, suicide and robbery committed by orphans or other returnees from China between 1982 and 1983. As the public in Japan and China became aware of these cases, they blamed the Japanese government for its inadequate support for the orphans.³⁵ The new Centre aimed at helping those returnees whose travelling costs had been paid by the government, by providing language learning and giving practical advice on life in Japan. After a four-month orientation course at the Centre, the returnees were moved to the district or city where their relatives or guarantors lived. From then on, the guarantors and families were responsible for everything. This constituted a convenient policy for the Japanese government.³⁶ Four

months' language training for adults who had never previously studied a foreign language, however, was clearly inadequate.

Moreover, even this limited assistance was strained by the growing number of orphans who settled in Japan. Adequate policies and institutions were needed to receive and guide the increasing number of returnees and their families. The Japanese Welfare Ministry enlarged the capacity of the centre and in 1987 it opened five sub-centres and, later, sixteen self-reliance study centres (*kikokusha jiritsu sentaa* 帰国者自立センター). After following the four-month intensive course, the returnees continued their study in self-reliance study centres.³⁷ The orientation and self-reliance study courses together took one year. After this training, the returnees were expected to begin to look for jobs and to try being independent.³⁸ The central government also encouraged the provincial governments to give the orphans preference in public housing, special arrangements for the education of their children,³⁹ assistance in finding jobs, and access to pensions.⁴⁰ The education facilities and housing preferences were provided relatively soon. However, the pension issue was a delicate one and after much discussion, finally in 1996 a special arrangement with restricted conditions was made to allow the returnees to take part in the national pension system. This arrangement was important, because most of the orphans arrived in Japan too late to accumulate individual contributions to the pension system.⁴¹

The Orientation Centre was the first official attempt to provide institutional help to immigrants. As its name indicates it was initially only for those who were officially classified as orphans from China. Other returnees were at first not allowed to enter the centre, but this policy was much criticised by the public and in 1994 the government released a Returnees' Support Law (*Kikokusha en'go hō* 帰国者援護法) which widened its support to other returnees (who did not fit to the official definition of orphan) from China and Sakhalin.⁴² Its name was changed to Returnees from China Resettlement Promotion Centre (*Chūgoku kikokusha teichaku sokushin sentaa* 中国帰国者定着促進センター).⁴³ Other immigrants from China or elsewhere, however, received no such concession. The *Nikkeijin* from Brazil received almost no help although they also faced significant social problems. In this sense the Japanese war orphans were considered a special group of people with special status by the Japanese government and Japanese society. Their tragedy of being lost at the end of the war had initially worked against them but in the end it led to their being provided with "better" treatment by the government.

Despite this "special treatment" to assist their initial settlement in Japanese society, the orphans and returnees faced many long-term difficulties. For most of them, their fate was to live on the margins of Japanese society. Most or all of them suffered from depression, self-isolation, and physical and mental illness. Their traumatic experience during the war, their unhappy experience of being "Japanese" in China and then their problems of being "Chinese" in Japan gave rise to a deeper set of problems. Their problems worked at several levels: first of all, returnees who arrived with their families

³⁷ Since the number of the orphans and other returnees from China dropped, the Ministry of Health and Welfare decided to close a number of Returnees' Centres (*teichaku sentaa*) gradually from the second half of 1998. Gyōsei Shisetsu, *Dōsei Dōki* [Solidarity] 13 (September 1998) at <http://www.kikokusha-center.or.jp/network/tongsheng/ton_f.htm>.

³⁸ "Sentaa ichiran" センター一覧 [Summary of the Centre], at <http://www.kikokusha-center.or.jp/joho/shien_map/center_ichiran.htm>.

³⁹ Between 1985 and 1996, the Orphan Support Association (*Koji engokai* [Association to support the orphans]) offered scholarships to 247 high school students, 61 for technical Colleges, and 76 for university students.

⁴⁰ *Kōseisho Shakai, Engokyoku, Engō 50 nenshi*, p.417.

⁴¹ The average age of returnees from China is 63.1. Most of the returnees moved with their family to Japan. 46.1% of the orphans and 62.4% of the returnee women accompanied by their children or grandchildren. "Chūgoku kikokusha shien ni kansuru kentōkai hōkokusho", 4 December 2000, at <http://www1.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/s0012/s1204-1_16.html>.

⁴² Japan had annexed the southern half of the island of Sakhalin after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, and this region had also been an important area of Japanese migration. In 1945, the whole of the island came under Soviet control.

⁴³ "Chūgoku kikokusha shien ni kansuru kentōkai hōkokusho", 4 December 2000, at <http://www1.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/s0012/s1204-1_16.html>.

⁴⁴ Etaba Keisuke, "Kazoku no tekiō katei," in Etaba, *Ijū to tekiō*, p.205.

⁴⁵ Oda Michiko, "Chūgoku kikokusha no ibunka tekiō" [The adjustment to the foreign culture by the returnees from China; *keigo* (敬語)], in Araragi, *Chūgoku kikokusha no seikatsu shakai* pp.92–3.

faced serious problems with internal family tensions. When one person in the family changed status—from Chinese to Japanese—the others followed along out of a sense of duty, because of family sentiment or in search of economic opportunities, the dynamics within the family changed. Adjusting to this change while also adjusting to a foreign society was difficult, and many families came under intense strain. A pattern developed in which families faced a crisis about three months after their arrival in Japan and stayed in this condition for about two years, after which things gradually improved. Three years after arrival, however, a further crisis tended to develop. These crises were often expressed as tension over financial difficulties.⁴⁴ In some cases, the crises were so severe that they led to suicides amongst the family members of returnees. The children and grandchildren of the returnees, moreover, struggled with the fact of their mixed ancestry in a society which publicly values ethnic homogeneity. The cultural identity of returnees itself was ambiguous, but this applied even more strongly to their children, who normally had one fully Chinese parent and who had often spent the first ten years or more of their lives in China. These children faced the problem of adjusting to a new society without having the special sense of historical victimhood of their parents. After having had about one year's instruction in Japanese, they were allowed to attend the entry examinations for technical college. However, they had to compete with Japanese and only a few could pass the exams. Those who did pass had difficulty in following lectures at college and they tended to graduate without being well trained. Even when they found employment, they faced language problems because they were not sufficiently conversant with the honorific (*keigo* 敬語) language which was necessary in business.⁴⁵

The low social status that most of the returnees had in China also undermined their sense of self-confidence. Takeyuki Tsuda has pointed out that the Japanese-Brazilians left a country in which they were generally considered a favoured minority. Most Japanese-Brazilians were from the middle class and their Japanese culture made them distinctive amongst the Brazilians. When they arrived in Japan, however, they had a low economic and social status as well as problems arising from the non-Japanese aspects of their cultural behaviour. In these difficult circumstances, the memory of their former favoured status in Brazil helped them to cope with the new difficulties. By contrast, most of the Japanese war orphans had grown up in farmers' households and did not have much education. Their social status in China was therefore lowly, though some of them had received some education and had found jobs outside farming, managing to make a career by hiding their Japanese identity. They had no memory of prosperity or success to sustain them in the new environment. Unlike many other minorities, the Japanese war orphans from China had never identified themselves as a minority community and had never had formal minority status in China. Instead, they had grown up seeing themselves only as individuals of Japanese descent. When they came to Japan, therefore, they did not bring with them the sense of coherence

and community solidarity which helped sustain the *Nikkeijin* as soon as they arrived in their new environment. Even though being Japanese in China had brought them some respect after 1972, the hostility which had led to their being labelled *Riben guizi* (Japanese devils) persisted in many parts of Chinese society. On the whole, therefore, they lacked the self-confidence to promote themselves in the new society.

The only grounds on which the returnees felt they had some special claim on Japanese society arose from their history. This claim, however, gave rise to complex issues of guilt and responsibility. The orphans and returnees blamed the war for their misfortune and they blamed the Japanese government for the war. They therefore expected the government to look after them and the rest of society to understand them. The emotional enthusiasm with which Japanese society had greeted the orphans when they began to return in large numbers in the 1980s cemented this feeling that they had a special moral claim on the Japanese state and society. In both government and society, however, there was a strong inclination to leave the past in the past and to consider that any special historical debts to the returnees had been cleared by allowing them to return to Japan and by assisting them in resettlement.

There were deep tensions, moreover, between the way in which the returnees interpreted their historical experience and the way it was interpreted in society in general. Until 1945 the orphans' parents were members of a ruling élite in Manchukuo. They felt the superiority of being Japanese, especially superiority over the local peoples they encountered when they arrived in Manchuria. They also had dreams of getting rich and of contributing to the new state-building process in Manchukuo. They felt moreover a kind of self-confidence in relation to the Japanese in Japan. In some respects Manchuria was Japan's frontier society, comparable to Siberia for the Russians or Australia for the British. People in Japan might have regarded Manchuria as a jewel in the Japanese empire, but they saw the region as distant and undeveloped. The Japanese who went there were seen as those who did not fit into Japanese society—political dissidents, unsuccessful businessmen, hungry farmers and footloose adventurers. In Manchuria itself, however, an entirely different interpretation soon developed. Those who left Japan made a virtue of their decision. They came to see Manchuria as a realm of freedom and opportunity, where new settlers hoped to create a prosperous society without the social restrictions and hierarchies of the homeland. In the intervening years, the orphans had experienced severe discrimination in China as the children of resented colonizers and a defeated nation. Once they were back in Japan, however, they quickly discovered that almost no-one in Japan shared or even recognized their view of Japan's Manchurian history. Not only was Japan's Manchurian venture of dubious political acceptability, but ordinary Japanese dismissed the suffering of the Manchurian Japanese by pointing out that everyone had suffered in the difficult days following the end of the war. Whereas the returnees generally thought of themselves as victims of the Japanese war machine and felt that their years of suffering entitled them to special treatment by the authorities, many Japanese regarded these

⁴⁶ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 15 May 1999, cited in Tomisaka Satoshi, *Semyū: zai Nichi Chūgoku-jin no hanzai* [Illegal immigration: criminality amongst Chinese residents in Japan], Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2001) p.92.

⁴⁷ Tomisaka, *Semyū: Zai Nichi Chūgoku-jin no hanzai*, pp.92–101.

orphans as little more than economic refugees, implying that they should be content with what they received. Sometimes the returnees staged public demonstrations, demanding what they saw as their rights, but these displays only confirmed the feeling amongst many Japanese that the returnees were grasping and un-Japanese. They resented the fact that local governments had to spend extra money on these people.

Thus, the orphans became simply imperfect Japanese, migrants from an economically weak Third World country with a different language, cultural background and behaviour that was not much valued by the Japanese. The returnees continued to suffer, moreover, from a residual perception in the society at large that they were former agents of Japanese imperialism in Manchukuo and that they therefore deserved no special consideration at all.

Within large families, moreover, the returnees experienced a special strain because of the circumstances of their separation and return. In many households, the existence of returned relatives from Manchuria became a standing rebuke to the families who had lost them and who had failed to make every effort to find them again. The cultural differences between returnees and other Japanese seemed even more acute within families than they were within the broader society. The difficulties which the returnees faced in integrating into Japanese society in general also put strain on their families, which often ended up having to provide financial and social help.

These burdens were compounded by the problem of illegal Chinese immigrants who used the repatriation programme as a cover for their entry into Japan. During the boom years of the Japanese economy, especially during the 1980s, there were acute labour shortages in Japan, but Japan's immigration policy remained highly restrictive. In the mid-1990s, it became apparent that illegal immigrants were using the repatriation system to gain access to Japan by pretending to be Japanese orphans or the relatives of orphans. According to a report of the Japanese immigration office, in 1998 60% of the applications to "return" to Japan were bogus. In Osaka the figure was even higher at 80%.⁴⁶ Despite the strict identification process on the Japanese side, professional Chinese people-traffickers found ways around the system and thus many Chinese became "Japanese" on the grounds of being orphans or their relatives. Not all these cases involved professional smugglers. In February 2000, a young pregnant woman who had migrated to Japan as a second-generation orphan was murdered in her apartment. It turned out that she had no true connection with Japanese orphans, but had reached Japan by paying ¥1,500,000 to a Chinese woman who had herself successfully pretended to be Japanese. The young woman's "relatives" had then asked her for more money. When the girl refused, they killed her.⁴⁷ This kind of tragic story was rare, but it received wide publicity and led many local Japanese to keep their distance from the returnees.

All these difficulties tended to force the returnees together. Although they had not shared a sense of community in China, after they arrived in Japan they tended to live in proximity to each other, creating small, ghetto-like com-

munities of their own. This arrangement reduced problems of loneliness. On the other hand, it put a burden on certain districts and city administrations, because the returnees had priority access to public housing, and the communal administrations could not provide adequate facilities, if their number was large, except at the cost of other services. Their demands gave rise to unfriendly encounters between returnees and the officers of the communal administrations. As one might expect, this antipathy towards the returnees was especially strong in those areas where the returnees were concentrated, notably Saitama 埼玉 and Tokyo. As a result, in the late 1980s, the Japanese government tried to prevent the further geographical concentration of returnees by seeking to send new arrivals to different areas.⁴⁸

Comparison and Conclusion

In some respects the position of the orphans and returnees is comparable to that of Germans from Russia who migrated to Germany after the fall of the Soviet Union. These Germans from the former Soviet Union are today called *Russlanddeutsche* (Russia-Germans). The *Russlanddeutsche* were not orphans left behind by their parents. Rather they were members of German communities in Eastern Europe which had been established as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although many had little direct connection with Germany and spoke no German, they had a strong sense of German identity and of Germany as their homeland, as did the Japanese settlers in Manchuria.⁴⁹ This identity gave them a platform for maintaining and reinventing their collective German identity. Their dreams of and longings for Germany were reinforced by their experience of being suppressed or marginalised by the Soviet Government because they were German and because they were considered to have been collaborators with Nazi Germany during World War II. In this respect, too, their position was comparable to that of the Japanese orphans in post-war China. They therefore dreamed of a "*Heimat*" (homeland), which would be much better than the one where they been born and raised. Like the Japanese orphans, they too received privileged access to their claimed homeland because of their ancestry. The Germans from Russia and other Eastern European countries could get German citizenship only on the basis of their German descent. They were accorded greater political and civil rights than thousands of second- and third-generation guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) from Turkey and elsewhere.⁵⁰

Like the Japanese returnees, the German immigrants (*Aussiedler*) from Russia described ethnic problems at home and the prospect of family reunion in Germany as their most important motives for returning to Germany. The dream of being "*Deutsche unter Deutschen*" (Germans amongst [other] Germans) was strong amongst the older generation. They did not mention an economic motive as important, though their compatriots who stayed on in former Soviet territory would state just the opposite.⁵¹ Just as the Japanese

⁴⁸ Yagi Iwao, "Chūgoku kikokusha no jit-sujō to sono haihei," pp.28-9. This policy contrasted with that in Germany, where the returnees were encouraged to live in spatially concentrated settlements. The idea was to give the new-comers a chance to gain self-assurance and self-confidence amidst new or even hostile social surroundings and to provide a base from which they could gradually integrate. The policy was proposed by German sociologist George Elwert, who believed that only after having achieved personal stability and self-confidence could the new-comers actively participate in local society. See G. Elwert, "Probleme der Ausländerintegration: Gesellschaftliche Integration durch Binnenintegration?", in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 34 (1982): 717-31. Reality, however, seems to be much more complex. Recent empirical findings suggest that the spatially-concentrated settlement of returnees has more disadvantages than benefits. See Ute Bauer and Hans-Joachim Bürkner, "The spatially concentrated settlement of ethnic Germans (Aussiedler)—an opportunity for integration? Experience from a model project in Brandenburg," in *Espace, Populations, Societies* 3 (1998): 431-40.

⁴⁹ Between 1990 and 1996, 1,292,997 Russians of German origin returned to Germany and it is estimated that there are still 3-5 million left behind. See, for example Andreas Baaden, *Aussiedler-Migration: historische und aktuelle Entwicklungen* (Berlin: Amo Spitz, 1997), pp.15, 23.

⁵⁰ Michael Wallis, "Re-creating the German Republic in Russia," in *Debatte* 5.2 (1997): 178-93, at 192.

⁵¹ Barbara Dietz, "Anders als die anderen," in *Steurope: Zeitschrift für genuin europäische Fragen* des *Steins* 42 (Feb. 1992): 157-8.

⁵² Ibid., p.158. See also Zenon Wiśniewski, "Aus Polen—nach Deutschland," in *Steuropa* 42 (Feb. 1992): 160–70.

returnees were disappointed when they found they were not truly accepted as Japanese, the Germans from Russia found that they were not considered to be truly German. They faced similar problems, such as a lack of linguistic competence, not knowing how to behave in the new environment, and so forth. Just like the Japanese, they experienced a tension between their perceptions of history, which made them a part of the German world, and the reality of cultural difference. For both groups, this tension created a sharp contrast between the dream of return and the reality of settlement. Barbara Dietz has pointed out the difficulty which other Germans have had in understanding how the life stories of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union is tied in with their German identity.⁵²

The case of the Japanese war orphans from China shows the complex interaction between history and identity within a migrant community. The character of Japanese colonization in Manchuria, the chaotic end of World War II, and the difficult post-war relations between China and Japan combined to create a distinct minority whose identity was defined partly by ethnicity and culture and partly by history. In straightforward cultural terms, the orphans and returnees were more Chinese than Japanese. Having grown up in Chinese families, they spoke Chinese fluently and they were familiar with the basic features of Chinese society. Their history of having been lost or abandoned at the end of the war, however, and of having been vilified as foreigners in China gave them a powerful connection with Japan. This connection was reinforced by their view of the ways in which Japanese settlement in Manchuria fitted into broader Japanese history.

Japanese society in turn recognized that the orphans were only slightly Japanese in culture, but acknowledged their blood and birth and, still more important, had sympathy for their traumatic history. Because of the contested place of Japanese imperialism in Japan's historical imagination, however, the historical standing of the orphans soon became ambiguous. They could be respected as loyal servants of Japan's national interests, but also rejected as an embarrassing relic of an unacceptable imperial past and dismissed as self-seeking adventurers. For Japanese society, too, the straightforward factors of ethnic similarity and dissimilarity and cultural confidence soon overshadowed the meaning of the history of the orphans. The communities of people who had come from China to Japan as orphans, returnees and their families, therefore came to sit in an uneasy position between their own historical claim to a special status and their cultural mismatch with Japanese society.

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