

ISSN: 2658-6444

RUSSIAN JAPANOLOGY REVIEW

2025. Vol. 8 (No. 1)



Association of Japanologists

RUSSIAN JAPANOLOGY REVIEW

2025. Vol. 8 (No. 1)

MOSCOW

Editorial Board:

Streltsov Dmitry V. Professor, MGIMO-University (Editor in Chief)
Dyakonova Elena M. Professor, Gorky Institute of World Literature of RAS
Grishachev Sergey V. Associate Professor, HSE University (Executive Secretary)
Kazakov Oleg I. Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of RAS
Lebedeva Irina P. Professor, Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS
Meshcheryakov Aleksander N. Professor, HSE University
Nelidov Vladimir V. Associate Professor, MGIMO-University
Trubnikova Nadezhda N. Professor, Institute of Philosophy of RAS

Editorial Council:

Alpatov Vladimir M. Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Chugrov Sergei V. Professor, MGIMO-University
Datsyshen Vladimir G. Professor, Siberian Federal University (Krasnoyarsk)
Gordon Andrew (USA) Professor, Harvard University
Gurevich Tatiyana M. Professor, MGIMO-University
Iwashita Akihiro (Japan) Professor, Hokkaido University
Katasonova Elena L. Professor, Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS
Kawaraji Hidetake (Japan) Professor, Kyoto Sangyo University
Kistanov Valerii O. Professor, Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of RAS
Korchagina Tatiyana I. Associate Professor, Moscow State University
Nechaeva Lyudmila T. Professor, Institute of Afro-Asian Studies (IAAS)
of Moscow State University
Numano Kyoko (Japan) Professor, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
Panov Aleksandr N. Professor, MGIMO-University
Pestushko Yurii S. Professor, Khabarovsk State Institute of Culture (Khabarovsk)
Shimotomai Nobuo (Japan) Emeritus Professor, Hosei University
Shodiev Fattah K. (Belgium) Head of International Chodiev Foundation
Simonova-Gudzenko Ekaterina K. Professor, Institute of Afro-Asian Studies (IAAS)
of Moscow State University
Stephan John J. (USA) Emeritus Professor, University of Hawaii
Stockwin Arthur (UK) Emeritus Professor, University of Oxford
Suzuki Yoshikazu (Japan) Professor, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
Timonina Irina L. Professor, Institute of Afro-Asian Studies (IAAS)
of Moscow State University
Voytishek Elena E. Professor, Novosibirsk State University

With the support of International Chodiev Foundation

E-mail: japanstudiesinrussia@gmail.com

Website: www.japanreview.ru

CONTENTS

<i>Klimov A. V.</i>	Matsuda Denjūrō's Service in Hakodate and the Surrounding Area From October 31, 1799, to January 1, 1801 (Based on the <i>Tales of the Northern Barbarians</i>) 5
<i>Datsyshen V. G.</i>	Japanese in Harbin in the Early 20 th Century. Russian-Japanese Relations During the Early History of the Chinese Eastern Railway 28
<i>Grishachev S. V., Shmakotina Z. A.</i>	Rewarding Japanese Servicemen With Russian Awards During World War I and the Russian Civil War (1914–1922) 48
<i>Degtev I. A.</i>	From the Khalkhin Gol Events to the Neutrality Pact: Relations Between the USSR and Japan in the Reports of Soviet Diplomats in Tokyo (1939–1941) 73
<i>Streltsov D. V.</i>	The Narrative of the Northern Territories in the Socio-Political Discourse of Contemporary Japan 93
<i>Imawan R., Surwandono</i>	The Failure of Japanese Whale Diplomacy: A Constructivist Analysis of Changes in International Norms 119

**Matsuda Denjūrō's Service in Hakodate
and the Surrounding Area
From October 31, 1799, to January 1, 1801
(Based on the *Tales of the Northern Barbarians*)**

A. V. Klimov

Abstract

The manuscript *Tales of the Northern Barbarians* (*Hokuidan*, 「北夷談」) by Matsuda Denjūrō (松田伝十郎, 1769–1843) is a valuable source on the history of Russian-Japanese relations, the development of the northern territories inhabited by the Ainu conducted by the Japanese, relations between the Ainu and the Japanese, their barter trade. The written source consists of seven notebooks. The manuscript was created in the first years of the Bunsei era (文政, 1818–1831). It describes the events from 1799 to 1822 in chronological order, i.e., events that occurred during the 24 years of Matsuda's service in the lands of the Ainu. The manuscript is written in cursive (Japanese: “grass writing”, *sōsho* 草書). The second half of the first book examines the bear festival and the *inau*, cult objects of the Ainu, which were described in detail by the author in [Klimov A.V. 2024].

This article is the continuation of the description of the events of the first notebook, in which Matsuda describes: wintering in Akkeshi, the life and clothing of the Ainu, the peculiarities of hunting sea lions, the attitude towards the moon fish, wintering in Aputa, the fight against the smallpox epidemic that arose, and his return to Edo. The text is accompanied by numerous sketches. The illustrations in the manuscript are of great value, providing additional information that is missing from the text itself. Matsuda's descriptions refer to November 1799 – January 1801. The

Hokuidan manuscript has not yet been translated into any of the European languages other than Russian. The author of this article provides translations of fragments of the written source in the chapters of published collective monographs [Klimov A.V. 2020; Klimov A.V. 2021; Klimov A.V. 2022]. The translation was carried out from the published text of the Japanese manuscript in the ten-volume series of written monuments entitled *Collection of Historical Materials About the Life of the Common People of Japan* (*Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shū sei* 日本庶民生活史料集成), in the fourth volume [Matsuda 1969]. In addition to this series, the *Tales* were published in Old Japanese in the fifth volume of a six-volume series of written monuments called *Library: Northern Gate* (*Hokumon sō sho* 北門叢書), published in 1972.

Keywords: Matsuda, Hokkaido, Hakodate, Ainu, Aputa/Abuta, *Tales of the Northern Barbarians*.

Introduction

Matsuda Denjūrō (松田伝十郎, 1769–1843), a low-ranking official of the military government (*bakufu* 幕府), who was sent to develop the lands inhabited by the Ainu in Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the southern islands of the Kuril Chain, called “barbarian lands” (*ezochi* 蝦夷地), worked in direct contact with the local population. Therefore, his diary entries, entitled *Tales of the Northern Barbarians* (hereafter *Tales*, *Hokuidan*, 「北夷談」), contain valuable information for researchers dealing with Russo-Japanese relations and the Japanese exploration of Ainu lands at the very onset of the 19th century.

In the part of the *Tales* that deals with Matsuda’s service in Hakodate and its vicinity, he is mentioned under the name Jinsaburō (仁三郎), rather than Denjūrō, the name of his stepfather, which was passed on to him after the latter’s death. The text of the manuscript in Old Japanese, published in 1969 in the *Collection of Historical Materials About the Life of the Common People of Japan* [Matsuda

1969, pp. 77–175], was used as the basis for this work. The actual events of 1799–1801 are reflected on pages 83–94 of the printed text of the manuscript, along with black-and-white illustrations. The manuscript itself (pages 86–165) in digital form, which is kept in the Cabinet Office collection under the code 35114 (*Naikaku Bunko* 35114, 内閣文庫 35114) of the National Archive of Japan (*Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan* 国立公文書館), was also used. The manuscript is published in the official website of the archive.¹ In the manuscript itself, the sketches are presented in color.

There is still no translation of the *Tales* into Western European languages and there are no detailed studies devoted to this source. Western European and American researchers only mention its name, mostly in connection with Mamiya Rinzō (間宮林蔵, 1780–1844), to whom they ascribe superiority in the discovery that Sakhalin is not a peninsula, but an island.

On the 1st day of the 1st moon of the 12th year of the Kensei (寛政) era (January 25, 1800, of the Gregorian calendar), the Matsumae clan transferred the lands of the [Eastern] barbarians² to the direct administration of the military government in fulfillment of the shogun's order [Klimov V.Yu. 2021]. The author of the *Tales* names two points on the boundary line of the Eastern lands: the

¹ *National Archives of Japan, Digital Archive*: <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/file/1225358.html>

² Present-day Hokkaido was divided into the Matsumae clan's Japanese lands proper of the Oshima Peninsula in the southern part of the island, the "Eastern Barbarian Lands" (*Higashi Ezochi* 東蝦夷地), the part of Hokkaido facing the Pacific Ocean, as well as the islands of Kunashir and Iturup, and the "Western Barbarian Lands," the part of the island facing the Sea of Okhotsk. Sakhalin (called Karafuto by the Japanese) was called the "Northern Barbarian Lands" (*Kita Ezochi* 北蝦夷地) or the "Distant Barbarian Lands" (*Oku Ezochi* 奥蝦夷地). After the unfinished Meiji bourgeois revolution, the toponym Hokkaido appeared in 1869.

settlements of Shiriuchi-mura 知内村³ on the eponymous river and Mitsuishi ミツイシ.⁴

In this regard, in accordance with the instructions coming from Edo, Matsuda was ordered by Ōta Jūemon (太田十右衛門), Ōshima Ejirō (大島栄次郎), Mizukoshi Gembae (水越源平衛) to stay for the winter in Hokkaido and prepare to conduct procurement in the Ainu settlements from Washi-no-ki (鷲の木)⁵ to Horopetsu (ホロペツ).⁶ Matsuda, together

³ The toponym Siriuchi (知内) is etymologically derived from two words of the Ainu language: *chiri* チリ and *ochi* オチ, meaning “a place where falcons are found.” Incidentally, the falcon is now one of the symbols of the urban settlement of Siriuchi-chō.

⁴ The toponym Mitsuishi ミツイシ is derived from the Ainu word in the Japanese pronunciation ピットウシ *pittoushi*, “land full of small stones.” This place name is now spelled with the characters 三石 or 三ツ石 (literally translated: “three stones”). The Matsumae clan’s lands was originally limited to a small area of the Oshima-Hanto (渡島半島) Peninsula. Mitsuishi was on the border of the Matsumae daimyo’s lands, and from here the lands of the “barbarians”, i.e., the Ainu, began. From the second half of the Edo period (1603–1868), Mitsuishi was administratively referred to as the “Eastern Barbarian Lands” (*Higashi Ezochi* 東蝦夷地).

⁵ The toponym is given in kanji, unlike many other cases. On the side of it, there is an okurigana reading in small hiragana letters.

⁶ A rare occurrence. In the text of the *Tales*, as a rule, Matsuda does not use nigori marks. But, in this case, the half-nigori sign (*handaku ompu*, 半濁音符) is placed above the written sign *he* へ, and it should, in this case, be read as *pe* ぺ, not *he* へ, or *be* べ. We know that, quite often, the word for river in Ainu, *betsu* べつ, often enters and completes toponyms in Japanese. Therefore, it would probably be logical to assume that we should read the name of this area as *Horobetsu* ホロベツ. In support of this idea, we can find a town of this name on the modern map of Hokkaido, but with the kanji spelling 幌別. However, the dictionary *Nihon Daihyakka Zensho*, 日本大百科全書 (Nipponica, ニッポニカ), gives the following explanation: “the name of the area goes back to the Ainu word *Poropetsu* ポロペツ, which means Big River.” <https://kotobank.jp/word/%E5%B9%8C%E5%88%A5-1417568>

with Toyama Motojūrō, left Hakodate on the 15th day of the 10th moon of the 11th year of the Kensei (寛政) era, or November 12, 1799. Because of the great snowfall that began, they were forced to stop at the village of Ōno-mura (大野村) that day. After the snowfall, they traveled to the mountainous area of Kayabe (カヤベ, the modern kanji spelling is 茅部), verified the correctness of the logistics routes, and determined the locations of warehouses and guard posts at the *basho* trading areas. Matsuda and Toyama stayed for the winter at a place called Aputa (アプタ). On the sidelines, in small script okurigana, Matsuda gives the kanji spelling of the toponym as 虻田, selected from similarly sounding characters *abu* (虻), or “gadfly,” and *ta* (田), “rice field” [Matsuda 1969, p. 83]. But, in this case, this binomial is to be read as *Abuta*, not *Aputa*. Etymologically, the name of the area goes back to the Ainu word in the Japanese pronunciation, *Aputa-petsu* (“the river that creates fishing hooks”).⁷ Matsuda served in that area from October 31, 1799, to January 1, 1801. During the Edo period (1603–1868), this area was used to raise livestock.

It was there that Matsuda familiarized himself with the peculiarities of the bear festival, noting that it was held wherever the Ainu lived [Sokolov 2014, Pilsudskii 1914]. For clarity, he left eight sketches in the *Tales*, emphasizing the importance of this ritual in the life of the barbarians (*ijin* 夷人). Here is a full translation of a short text dealing with this subject.

“In early spring, a female bear gives birth to a cub, it is captured, and a barbarian woman feeds it with her milk and raises it. With the coming of the 5th to the 6th moon, it is kept like a dog. Then, having made a cage of wooden poles, they place it inside and feed it dried fish.

With the onset of the 10th – 11th moon, of course, relatives of the owner feeding the bear, acquaintances, as well as elders from the nearest villages gather [for the celebration]. On the appointed day, everyone lines up wearing festive clothes (*haregi* 晴れ着), with bows and arrows. They release the fattened bear from the cage, tie it with a thin rope and

⁷ Kotobank: <https://kotobank.jp/word/%E8%99%BB%E7%94%B0-26716>

fasten it to a pole in the middle of the area where this takes place. The host launches an arrow first, then relatives shoot in turn, and the already weakened bear is strangled with a log.

After that, they decorate [the place of celebration] with vessels (*kibutsu* 器物), which barbarians rank as jewels, set up *inawo* (イナワ, a kind of sticks or twigs, which are comparable to *heihaku* (幣帛) Shinto prayer papers in our homeland), they worship them, chanting something in a prayerful and monotonous way. And then, having prepared the food, they eat raw meat, bring their share of raw sake (*nigorizake* 濁り酒) prepared in advance for the occasion, and have a feast (*sakamori* 酒盛りをする).

The woman ([in the barbarian language,] *menoko* メノコ), who raised and fed it with her milk while it was still a cub, weeps bitterly and is very sad when it is shot with arrows and killed before her eyes. It is a heartbreaking sight (*shikyoku* 至極). And yet, the *menoko* takes part in the feast and eats the meat. When you see this, you feel startled. In the attachment below, I provide sketches of the bear festival.” [Matsuda 1969, pp. 83–84]. The published manuscript contains five drawings.

Matsuda goes on to describe the sacred Ainu objects used during the feast, explaining their meaning and significance and comparing them to Japanese objects. Let us quote this part of the text without editing: “*Inawo* can be compared to *gohei* 御幣 (paper strips at the entrance to a Shinto shrine – A. K.) in our country. In the lands of the barbarians, starting from Heaven and Earth, everything and in relation to everything, gods are worshiped reverently. In this country, the most important thing is the worship [of the gods]. Therefore, whoever you are, whatever you do, you must first of all honor the gods and worship them. And this is called [in the language of the barbarians] *kamai·nomi*⁸ (カマイノミ). *Kamai* means god and *nomi* means to pray, to honor. During the *kamai·nomi* prayer to gods, *inawo* is necessarily used. Therefore, *inawo* is the most important item when honoring the most luminous gods (*shinmei* 神明). First of

⁸ The Japanese text does not have a two-word breakdown. This can be seen in the above Japanese word combination written in katakana characters.

all, humble your body, purify your mind and flesh, and then make the object that is depicted.⁹ The forms of *inawo* that are created are strikingly different from each other depending on which god you pray to. *Inawo* also has another name: *nusha* (ヌシヤ).¹⁰

Description of Wintering in Akkeshi and Ainu Clothing

The military government, determined to actively develop the lands inhabited by the Ainu, decided to have Japanese officials there year-round, albeit in small numbers [Shchepkin 2017]. Matsuda further reports on his personal experience of wintering in Hokkaido. In particular, he writes that they arrived by ship in Akkeshi at the height of summer¹¹ during the 6th moon.

At the time of arrival, while aboard, the Japanese wore two cotton-wool kimonos, one above the other. When they came ashore, they wore cotton underwear and one cotton-wool kimono over it. During the day, when it became hot under the sun, they wore an unlined summer kimono. However, after the 9th hour and a half (2 p.m. – A. K.), it became colder, and they put on lightly lined kimonos or cotton-wool kimonos. At the onset of the 8th moon, two cotton-wool kimonos were worn one above the other. At the beginning of the 9th moon, it snowed. During the 10th and 11th moons, a snow cover of 3 to 4 *shaku*, or 90.9 to 121.2 centimeters, thick formed. With the onset of cold weather, the snow covered the roofs. The living quarters were dark even at noon. The mood was depressed and many people fell ill. From the 10th to the 3rd moon of the following year,

⁹ In the drawings, Matsuda provides sample images of 12 *inawo*.

¹⁰ The varieties of *inawo* and the bear festival were described in detail in the article: [Klimov 2024].

¹¹ Matsuda used the kanji binomial *doyō* 土用, which refers to the last eighteen days of each season. In our case, we are talking about the hottest days of summer. The expression “entering the first day of this eighteen-day period” (*doyō-no hairi* 土用の入り) refers to the first day of the said period.

it was difficult to go outside because of the snow. It was sad to sit indoors with artificial light. It was important to take care of one's health.

The Ainu wore their *atsushi* clothes, woven from tree bark, or insulated themselves with animal hides in cold weather. Their clothing, according to Matsuda, was very thin. Children of up to 12–13 years of age were naked on the street and only in cold weather did they put on dog hides. They would go out to the seashore, run there, and practice wrestling similar to Japanese sumo. Children also played with round rings 5 to 6 *sun* (15.15 to 18.18 centimeters) in diameter, rolling them on the ground, tossing them into the sky, and catching them by stringing them on a narrow pole. Matsuda even made a sketch of children engaged in this game for clarity. Adults even determined the punishment for children if they failed to catch a ring on a pole. The author of the *Tales* emphasizes that, by such training, children honed, in a playful way, the techniques they would need in hunting sea animals: harbor seals (*ottosei* オットセイ), sea lions (*todo* トド), earless seals (*azarashi* アザラシ).

One of the main tools used to hunt them is the *harena* (ハレナ), a type of harpoon. The length of the shaft is about 2–3 *ken*.¹² It has a spear-like shape. The Ainu hunt by hitting with a stabbing motion. These skills of hunting with a harpoon are practiced at a young age during gameplay. In the Ainu language in Japanese pronunciation, this game is called *shinotsu* (シノツ).

Hunting for Harbor Seals

Harbor seal hunting was allowed at six locations on the coastline from Oshamambe (オシヤマンベ)¹³ to Etomo

¹² One *ken* 間 is 1.818 meters. In other words, the length of the shaft in metric measures is 3.636 to 5.454 meters.

¹³ A settlement located in southwestern Hokkaido on the Oshima Peninsula (渡島半島) on the eastern coast. Today, this toponym, Oshamambe, is spelled with three characters, 長万部. It is etymologically derived from

(エトモ)¹⁴. Having acquired a certificate, the Ainu were granted the right to sea hunting (*kazei ryōken*, 課税猟権). There was a definite number of boats that could go hunting and the time it could be done, namely, from the winter solstice (*tōji* 冬至, from December 22 in the Gregorian calendar) up to and including the 2nd moon of the spring of the next year (that is, up to and including March; the luni-solar calendar, according to which the Japanese lived at that time, does not allow for a more precise definition). During this period of time, a day is chosen when there are no waves, the weather is clear, there is no wind, and there is peace and quiet. And the boats (*debafune* デバ舟) go out to sea. There are three strong Ainu on each boat. When they have reached a considerable distance from the shore, they stop rowing with oars (*rokai* 櫓), watch the surface of the water, do not smoke, do not talk, and stay quiet. If they are swept away by the wind or current, they paddle with their hands, trying not to move away from the hunting ground. Seals, not feeling any danger, appear on the surface, numbering 14, and even 24 animals, jumping and playing in the water. Finally, one or two seals in a state of relaxation are carried by the waves closer to the hunters.

The Ainu, watching them, continue to wait in complete silence. When the distance between them is reduced to 7–8 *ken*, one of the Ainu strikes

the Ainu word in Japanese pronunciation *O · shamambe* オ · シヤマンベ, meaning: a place where false halibut lives (*hirame* ヒラメ – in the published manuscript, the name of the area is written in katakana, the Latin name is *Paralichthys olivaceus Temm. et Schleg*).

¹⁴ During the Bunroku (文禄, 1592–1596) years, the Matsumae clan authorities in the Etomo-Misaki (絵鞆岬) peninsula established an office (*unjōya* 運上屋) there and began trading with the Ainu. Etymologically, the toponym Etomo is derived either from the Ainu word *etoku* (エトク) – a ledge, or from *enrumu* エンルム – a promontory. Now, this is one of the districts of the city of Muroran (室蘭), the town's name etymologically deriving from the Ainu words in the Japanese pronunciation *mo · ruerani* (モ · ルエラニ, “small mountainside”). Later the toponym, having undergone changes in pronunciation, became Muroran.

the animal with a harpoon and the others finish it off. Matsuda calls the first of the Ainu who hit the seal “the barbarian of the outcome of the battle” (*shōbu-no i*, 勝負の夷), the next “the second barbarian” (二の夷), and then “the third barbarian” (三の夷). The amount of reward (*hōbi* 褒美), goes downward in the sequence mentioned above: from the first, to the third.

Moon Fish and Inawo

Matsuda then moves on to another topic, in which he reveals the Ainu’s special relationship to the moon fish. In the vicinity of Horobetsu, Shiraoi (ホロベツ、シラオイ), in the waters around these lands, there is a “sea beast” (*kaijū* 海獣) called *Kinambō* (キナンボ).¹⁵ It is the moon fish. After catching it, the Ainu people extract the fat from it and send it to Japan. Matsuda writes: “In shape, the moon fish resembles a turtle, the large ones reach a size of three *jō*¹⁶ (about 4.5 m² – A. K.), the small ones – two *jō* (about 3 m² – A. K.). To get their fat, barbarians sit in two to three people in a boat, go out into the open sea. Having found a moon fish, they hit it with a harpoon, in their language *hanare* (ヤナレ), pull it

¹⁵ The author of this article is grateful to V. V. Shchepkin, who, when discussing my paper “Matsuda Denjuro’s Service in Akkeshi at the Turn of the 18th – 19th Centuries” at the conference “Ainu Between Russia and Japan” held on November 25, 2021 at the IOM RAS, drew attention to the fact that, earlier in 1739, Sakakura Genjirō (坂倉源次郎) in his work *Fugitive Notes on the Ainu* (*Ezo Zuihitsu*, 「蝦夷随筆」) also mentions the moon fish, calling it *kinaho* キナホ, as well as the rite of placing *inawo* in the opened belly of the said fish (see: Sakakura Genjirō 坂倉源次郎. *Ezo Zuihitsu* 蝦夷随筆 (*Fugitive notes on the Ainu*). *Hoppō mikōkai komonjo shūsei* 北方未公開古文書集成. Vol. 1. Tokyo, 1979. P. 57).

¹⁶ *Jō* (畳) is a unit of area. Even now in Japan, the area of a room is measured not in m², but in *jō*, a tatami of rice straw spread on the floor. One *jō* is equal to about 1.5 m².

up to the boat. Matsuda was told that the barbarians step onto the shell of the fish, open its belly, put all the entrails, intestines, and fat into the boat, and then, having carved the *inawo*, they place it into the abdomen of the fish and release it. As mentioned above, two to four specimens are said to be caught in a day and released into the sea. The barbarians say that, in this way, they preserve the life of the moon fish, and sometimes previously caught fish are caught again. But, without the guts and liver, it's impossible to survive. Jinsaburō did not believe these stories. If you listen to the barbarians, then the *inawo* that was placed in it the first time should have been found in the fish that was caught for the second time. Moreover, neither the operating officers nor the guards of the posts have heard that, even in a storm with great waves, a large quantity of their remains were thrown on the seashore, if we compare it to the quantity of the moon fish fat taken out. This is extremely strange, but [I am] writing down here [everything] that I have heard. In the coastal waters of Nuubutsu (ヌウブツ) barbarians are involved in catching one species of fish. They call it *ichinge* (イチンゲ). It also [looks like] a turtle. Barbarians make food out of it. The pattern of the shield resembles the hexagonal pattern of the shell. When it is polished, it looks like the shell of a turtle; it is called “white turtle shield” (*shirokame-no-kō* 白亀の甲).”

New Year's Eve and Wintering in Aputa

Matsuda goes on to describe his wintering in Hokkaido and welcoming the New Year at the village of Aputa in southern Hokkaido. “It was decided to winter in [the village of] Aputa. In [the 11th year of the Kansei era,] the 12th moon, 28th day (January 23, 1800, according to the Gregorian calendar – A. K.) an operating officer arrived at our place. It is not the custom in these parts to set up pine tree decorations for the New Year, but these lands became the property of the military government at the beginning of the passing year. And, since [the operating officer] said: “Since the gentlemen officials of the [military government] meet this year here, pine ornaments have been placed at the entrance to the dwellings,”

when we looked closely, we found that there were no *futaba-no matsu* (二葉の松) pine trees and no *sasadake* (笹竹) small-growing bamboo in these lands. [In their place] we installed a South Sakhalin fir (トド[マツ]) (the Latin name is *Abies sachalinensis*), unraveled a sack into straw ropes, fastened brown kelp seaweed [instead of strips of paper] on them, and hung dried herring roe. No more decorations. The present course of administration of these lands, which have come under the control of the military government, is to develop them by educating [barbarians].

And immediately Jinsaburō composed a poem:

教育の	Kyōiku no	For the sake of training [barbarians]
行トドひたる	Gyō todo hitaru	Installed a fir tree
門飾り	Kado kazari	Decorated the entrance to the house with it
よろ昆布蝦夷や	Yoro kobu ezo-ya	[Symbols of] treasure in the form of seaweed
数の子たから	Kazu-no ko takara	And dried herring roe hung out.

We met the New Year without any celebrations, and there were no New Year greetings or cards. There were no decorations made of the *Torreya* evergreen coniferous tree (カヤ, *Torreya nucigera* Sieb. et Zucc.) and New Year's treats made of roasted chestnut (*kachiguri* かし栗), but there was a lot of dried herring roe and kelp seaweed, the main local products. Three days passed, we welcomed the New Year and headed out of Aputa to supervise surrounding villages.

The trading areas that were inspected last year had been placed under the administration of the bakufu, and since the First Day of this year the whole population had become commoners, governed and taken care of

by the government. So we went to the villages, to summon the elders of the barbarians, and explain to them the points of the Law. It was early spring, and there was still a great deal of snow. It was extremely difficult to navigate the paths. But since I was guided by a sense of duty, the cold and the wind could not stop me.

Smallpox Epidemic

Matsuda then moves on to the next topic: the smallpox epidemic that suddenly broke out among the Ainu. "From the first ten-day period of the second moon,¹⁷ there was a smallpox infection in the area. There was commotion everywhere. It all began with one *ashigaru* (足軽) of the Matsumae family. He came to Usu in a seal hunting boat accompanied by one barbarian from Oshamambe (オシヤマンベ) and stayed at the barbarian's dwelling. There were three people living there, all of whom were elderly. However, the barbarian who had escorted [the Japanese] from Oshamambe fell ill with smallpox, and his wife raised a commotion. Since the elders announced this, they hurriedly returned the sick man to Oshamambe.

Two or three days later, people from the same house fell ill simultaneously, and commotion started among the barbarians. [I] posted guards and tried to provide medical care, but the smallpox cases continued. They died of high fever at the initial stage of the disease, even before the rash appeared. I cared about the sick in every possible way, supported them to the extent possible, but unfortunately there were no positive results. According to the custom of the barbarians, if the dead were burned together with the houses, relief came, and the disease receded. Although they burned the house in question, after ten days, smallpox broke out simultaneously in neighboring houses. Confusion swept through the village. Every single person fled to the mountains.

¹⁷ The first ten-day period of the second moon (*nigatsu jōjun* 二月上旬) begins, according to the Gregorian calendar, on February 24, 1800.

No one stayed in the village. They went to different places. But they were already infected. And immediately in the places they fled to, they fell and died. A truly sad sight.

Jinsaburō himself went to all the places, but there were so many sufferers that it was impossible to visit them all. Among them were some who, with fever, wandered about madly with arrows and bows or with kitchen knives in their hands. The guards of the posts, shocked by what they saw, were also in a confused state, unable to sleep, eat, or rest. The population of the Usu area – out of over 250 men and women – more than 40 people died.

The infection was stopped there, not a single person became ill after that, and the situation was brought under control. But we began to experience difficulties with the carriers of goods: none of the barbarians employed in the delivery of goods, so that gradually the communication between officials and their movement between sites could be established, came to work. I reported this to Hakodate in advance. People traveling to distant lands gradually arrived here and expressed concern. In the second ten-day period of the 2nd moon,¹⁸ there was a report of smallpox infection spreading to Aputa. The barbarians raised a commotion.

There was quite a large population in this place [Aputa]: over 500 people, including men and women. Everyone, starting with the barbarian elders, said: since the smallpox infection had broken out, it threatened life itself. Therefore, they declared that, in any case, it was necessary to run away. And when they were convinced of this idea that it was necessary to save themselves, they all scattered within a day.

There's still a lot of snow in the mountains. There would be a shortage of food. I made them take some tobacco and rice with them so they wouldn't starve. An interpreter named Kumajirō (熊次郎) reassured me that there is a large swamp in the mountains about one and a half *ri* from this place. If they run away there, of course they will survive because

¹⁸ The second ten-day period of the 2nd moon of the 12th year of the Kansei era begins on the 11th day, that is, March 6, 1800, in the Gregorian calendar, and ends on the 20th day, that is, March 15 of the same year.

they can eat small fish caught from the swamp lake. If they do that, there is nothing to worry about, the interpreter reassured me. I relied on his opinion.

On the direction to Abuda (アブダ) the disease visited only one hut of a barbarian named Kozakura (コザクラ). There were seven people living in his house. Everyone got infected, only one girl of five years of age survived. All the others died. Received a report that, at a distance of about 15 *ri* from this house, in a place called Riporobetsu (リポロベツ), smallpox broke out and the barbarians all scattered. So, we went there, and I ordered all possible measures to be taken, forced everyone to leave the place of contagion. But only two barbarians were infected in one house. That was the end of it. The disease had stopped in that area, had not reached the outlying lands.

Smallpox spread to the western lands of the barbarians. The infection was in all lands. The western lands of the barbarians were still under the control of the Matsumae clan, so there was no medical care there [by us]. There was a rumor that a lot of barbarians had scattered to the outlying lands: around Akkeshi, Nemoro. After that, all the western lands of the barbarians were transferred to the bakufu domain. And when Jinsaburō went to the western lands, he was told that, during the smallpox epidemic, the inhabitants of the three settlements left their homes and scattered. Only the ruins of the settlements remained. In all the other lease areas there were a lot of dead. Those who fled to the eastern lands, and there were many of them, remained there and did not return to their settlements. He was told this by the clerks and guards of the posts.

So, smallpox in the lands of the barbarians was a great trial for the barbarians. Of the ten who fell ill, ten could not be saved. And, in fact, the disease caused great confusion and unrest. As previously noted, if the parents fell ill, the children fled. If the children fell ill, the parents fled. The husband fell ill – the wife fled. The wife fell ill – the husband fled. This is a local custom [Arutiunov, Shcheben'kov 1992]. Since [everyone] was fleeing, as noted above, the residents of the neighboring transferred areas (*basho*) did not like it very much,

and their elders demanded that no one comes to them [in search of rescue]. And the Japanese officers of neighboring areas were always trying to stop them, but all this had no effect, everything ended up in an exchange of bickering in letters. It was very important to set up guards on the borders of the settlements and prevent the barbarians from moving uncontrollably, to make it impossible for them to visit neighboring settlements. This seems to be a custom of this country: one can avoid smallpox if a man or woman puts soot from a pot on his or her face and hides in the mountains, thus being able to escape from this disease [Taksami 1990]. We realized that when we began fighting this disease.

My fellow officer Ganjūrō (元十郎) left, having been assigned to the Yamukushinai (ヤムクシナイ) outpost. Jinsaburō was left alone. Whenever anyone [of the barbarians] fell ill with a cold or some other disease, a commotion was raised, assuming it was smallpox. Then I would go to the house of the sick person, look at the symptoms and, explaining to the elders, reassured them. When [I] arrived in Abuta (アブタ), there was a summon to Etomo (エトモ). When I arrived in Etomo, there was a summon to Usu. And when I arrived in Usu, they came for me from Mororan. When I arrived in Mororan, I was called to Horobetsu. I would come and go from outpost to outpost that was assigned to me. A lot of people came to see me. I was not a healer, I only looked at the symptoms of diseases and explained to the barbarians what to do. And I established a high authority among them. However, I had some medicine. And it was the first year of administration by the military government. So, they were not yet accustomed to the customs and manners of the Japanese (*wajin* 和人) and did not willingly accept medicine. From the second ten-day period of the 3rd moon¹⁹, rumors of illness disappeared and everything calmed down.

¹⁹ The first day of the second ten-day period of the third moon of the 13th year of the Kansei era is April 4, 1800, of the Gregorian calendar.

End of Official Duties

This year, officials from Edo arrived at the outposts and Jinsaburō began to hand over to them one by one the areas that he had been in control of since the last year. He received a written order with a seal, in which Bugyō gave orders to keep under his control only the Etomo lease area, which is a promontory protruding into the sea. There is no path to it by land. It is a place difficult to reach, and it takes two days to get there. So I went to Mororan, which is part of this area, and from there I crossed the sea area of the port. The sea route is one *ri* long and easy to traverse. The outpost to which he was assigned has a good harbor where ships can park. At the entrance to the port, there is a small island called Daikokujima (大黒島). It stretches out from the harbor entrance into the deep water. There is a bay called “Swan Harbor” (*Hakuchō-no-Minato* 白鳥の港). It is flat terrain. There are no winds from land. If you bring coaster ships deep into the harbor, it will be very difficult for the ship to leave the harbor. That is why ships are anchored off the back side of the Daikokujima Island. And there is no need to worry about them, no matter what kind of storm is brewing in the open sea [near the harbor]. A few years ago, a foreign ship that brought [Daikokuya] Kodayū [大黒屋]光太夫, who had been shipwrecked, was stationed in [the port of] Etomo. Locally produced goods include herring, cod, dried trepang (*iriko* イリコ), scallops, kombu seaweed, red seaweed (red algae) (*funori* フノリ), and shiitake mushrooms. There is a lot of small fish. In the cold season, they catch fish in the Swan Harbor. The barbarians have enough food. There is no construction timber here. The population of Etomo and Mororan combined is 100 men and women. It is colder in Etomo and warmer in Mororan.

When Jinsaburō was on duty in this area, a Mororan elder named Chikarawai/Chikarahai caught a crane alive and gave it to him as a gift. In return, the elder was given [high quality] purified sake. The crane was alive, cared for and fed. That year, inspecting the lands of the

barbarians, Togawa Tōjūrō (戸川藤十郎, 1762–1821),²⁰ who had the title of the “head of the shogun’s personal servants” (*konando tōdori* 御小納戸頭取),²¹ and Ōkouchi Zejūrō (大河内善十郎, ?–?) came to [Matsuda’s] area. They stopped at Etomo and saw the crane. Tōjūrō explained, “This crane belongs to a special species called *tanchō* (タンチョウ)²². Since it is a rare species of crane, it is best to bring it with you when Jinsaburō will be returning to Edo, to give it to the Edo Castle.”

Having completed his duties in the area, he left Etomo at the end of the 9th moon and set out on his return journey. He left Matsumae, then crossed [by sea] to Mimmaya, which is in the Tsugaru clan domain. The strait is said to be about 8 *ri* wide and consists of three streams: Shirakami (シラカミ), the Middle Stream (*Naka-no-shio* 中の潮), and Tatsuhi (*Tatsuhi-no-shio* タツヒの潮). It is easy to cross it when the sea is calm, but sometimes difficult when the weather becomes unpredictable.

²⁰ He is better known by his other name Yasutomo or, less commonly, Yasunobu. The two characters of the name 安論 can be read in two ways. In the *Tales*, Matsuda gives another name, Tōjūrō, consisting of three characters, 藤十郎.

²¹ Konando (小納戸) – personal servants of the shogun, who formed the inner circle of the ruler (*kinjishoku* 近侍職) and were responsible for the comfortable living of the military ruler and for the state of his health. For example, their duties included tasting his food (to check for the presence of poison), weighing the leftovers after the meal of the shogun, so that, at the request of his personal physician, the necessary data could be provided. Their salaries amounted to about 500 *koku* of rice. Meanwhile, their immediate superiors (*konando-tōdori*), numbering four men, received 1500 *koku* each. They were subordinate to the “junior elders” (*wakadoshiyori* 若年寄). While during the reign of the fourth shogun, Tokugawa Ietsuna (徳川家綱, 1641–1680, ruled in 1651–1680), their number was about 20, it reached 100 in the last years of the shogunate.

²² The name of the crane species is spelled out in the written characters of the katakana alphabet. Today it is usually written in two characters, 丹頂, with the same reading. This species is called the Japanese crane or, in Latin, *Crus japonensis* P.L.S. Muller.

And, from there, by highway, returned to Edo on the 17th day of the 11th moon.²³ Bugyō²⁴ was informed in advance [of the time and place] of the handing over of the Japanese crane as a gift. I was directed toward Senju (千住方面) and, in the Yunomijo premises of the financial office (*go-kanjōsho yunomijo* 御勘定湯呑所) handed it over to the prosecutor-officer (*ometsuke* 御目付) and a representative of the financial office. For the first time, a Japanese crane from the Ezo lands was brought to Edo as a gift. Thereafter, Togawa Tōjūrō received the [high] title of *Chikuzen-no kami* (築前守, “Lord of the Chikuzen Province” – A. K.) and was appointed governor of Hakodate (*Hakodate bugyō* 箱館奉行). The Japanese crane, recently gifted, is rumored to be circling the [Shogun's] Fukiagegyōen (吹上御庭) garden in the Edo Castle and is now said to be in good health.”

Conclusion

In contrast to the first half of the manuscript, which describes the sea crossing from Edo to Akkeshi in detail and is organized clearly in chronological order with the indication of dates, the second half is not characterized by a logically verified narrative, when the author passes from one topic to another, trying to link them into a single whole. There are repetitions, additions, which would be more logical to link with the previously considered material. There is virtually no dating.

The Bear Festival was apparently held in the second half of November 1799 in the village of Aputa (now pronounced Abuta) in southern Hokkaido. The author of the *Tales* noted the importance of this festival to the Ainu and its prevalence throughout their territory. Matsuda, while attending the bear festival, was not a professional ethnographer and did not set out to study it thoroughly. He himself

²³ The 17th day of the 11th moon of the 12th year of the Kansei era is January 1, 1801 of the Gregorian calendar.

²⁴ *Bugyō* – probably refers to the governor responsible for administering the lands inhabited by the Ainu.

said that, realizing the importance of this rite for the “barbarians,” he wrote down everything he saw and heard on paper, without analyzing the information he received, as Bronislav Pilsudski did much later. Nevertheless, the Japanese explorer managed to schematically define, without specifically stipulating it, the complex of rituals that formed the basis of the Ainu bear festival. Matsuda writes nothing in the text about the preparation of the place of the ritual killing of the bear: making and installing variously shaped *inawo*, decorating the back wall of the “frontal place” consisting of mats decorated with objects valuable to the Ainu (Japanese katana swords and other items). But, in the drawings, we can observe all this.

Matsuda, describing his journey through the Eastern Lands, centered on the port of Akkeshi and one of the important administrative centers of administrating the Ainu, showing an already established infrastructure. Roads had not yet been built for easy crossing on foot, but lodges or modest inns had already been built where people could stay for the night while traveling by day on foot along trails in difficult, rugged terrain. For clarity, the author of the *Tales* makes sketches of the most strategically important places.

It easy to see the relative unpreparedness of the Japanese for the harsh cold weather. They wrapped themselves in two warm kimonos while local children, who were used to the cold weather, were playing half-undressed. The author emphasizes the importance of children’s games as training for becoming a good seal hunter and how great the reward is in the case of successful hunting.

The example of the attitude to the moon fish clearly shows the special attitude of the Ainu to nature and their understanding of the necessity of harmonious existence in it. Meanwhile, the smallpox epidemic shows the harsh reality of nature’s cruelty faced by the Ainu.

The descriptions of wintering and the fight against smallpox not only allow us to see Matsuda only as a diligent official but also reveal his personal experiences. One can clearly trace how the locals increasingly trusted the author, which, in turn, strengthened the authority of the Japanese government in these lands.

References

- Arutiunov, S. A., Shcheben'kov, V. G. (1992). *Drevneishii narod Yaponii. Sud'by plemeni ainov* [The Most Ancient People of Japan. The Fate of the Ainu Tribe]. Moscow: Nauka, Vostochnaya literatura. (In Russian).
- Klimov, A. V. (2020). Torgovlya ainov Sakhalina s narodami Primor'ya do nachala XIX v. [Trade of the Ainu of Sakhalin With the Peoples of Primorye Until the Beginning of the 19th century]. In V. V. Shchepkin (ed.), *Ainy v istorii rossiisko-yaponskikh otnoshenii XVIII–XIX vv.* [Ainu in the History of Russian-Japanese Relations in the 18th – 19th Centuries] (pp. 214–254). Saint Petersburg: Lema. (In Russian).
- Klimov, A. V. (2021). Kabotazhnye perevozki v Yaponii kontsa XVIII – nachala XIX vv. i pervyi morskoi perekhod iz Edo v Akkesi (po “Rasskazam o severnykh varvarakh”) [Coastal Transportation in Japan in the Late 18th – Early 19th Centuries and the First Sea Passage From Edo to Akkeshi (according to the “Tales of the Northern Barbarians”)]. In V. V. Shchepkin (ed.), *Novye istochniki po istorii i kul'ture ainov* [New Sources on the History and Culture of the Ainu] (pp. 277–334). Saint Petersburg: Lema. (In Russian).
- Klimov, A. V. (2022). Pervaya zimovka yapontsev na ostrove Iturup v 1803–1804 gg. (po materialam “Rasskazov o severnykh varvarakh”) [The First Wintering of the Japanese on the Island of Iturup in 1803–1804 (Based on the “Tales of the Northern Barbarians”)]. In V. V. Shchepkin (ed.), *Chetyre veka ekspeditsii v zemli ainov* [Four Centuries of Expeditions to the Lands of the Ainu] (pp. 151–169). Saint Petersburg: Art-Express. (In Russian).
- Klimov, A. V. (2024). Medvezhii prazdnik i mir *inau* na Khokkaido v opisaniі Matsuda Dendzyuro 1799 – 1800 gg. (po materialam “Rasskazov o severnykh varvarakh”) [Bear Festival and the World of *Inau* in Hokkaido as Described by Matsuda Denjuro 1799–1800 (Based on the Materials of the “Tales of the Northern Barbarians”)]. *Yaponskie issledovaniya* [Japanese Studies in Russia], 1, 74–97. (In Russian).

- Klimov, V. Yu. (2021). "Zapisi o Svetonosnom pravlenii [zemlyami varvarov] dobrodetel'nogo Gosudarya" ("Kyu:mei ko:ki"). Pervaya i vtoraya tetradi ["Records of the Luminous Rule [of the Barbarian Lands] of the Virtuous Sovereign" ("Kyūmei kōki"). First and Second Manuscripts]. In V. V. Shchepkin (ed.), *Novye istochniki po istorii i kul'ture ainov* [New Sources on the History and Culture of the Ainu] (pp. 168–276). Saint Petersburg: Lema. (In Russian).
- Matsuda, Denjūrō. (1969). Hokuidan [Tales of the Northern Barbarians]. In *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei* [Collection of Historical Materials About the Life of Common People of Japan], in 10 volumes, Vol. 4 (pp. 77–175). Tokyo. (In Japanese).
- Pilsudskii, B. O. (1914). Na medvezh'em prazdnike ainov o. Sakhalina [At the Bear Festival of the Ainu of the Sakhalin Island]. In *Zhivaya starina. Osnovana V. I. Lamanskim. Periodicheskoe izdanie. Otdelenie etnografii Imperatorskogo Russkogo geograficheskogo Obschestva. God XXIII. Vyp. 1–2. Petrograd: Tipografiya V. L. Smirnova* [Living Antiquity. Founded by V. I. Lamansky. Periodical. Department of Ethnography of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Year XXIII. Issue 1–2. Petrograd: V. L. Smirnov publishing house] (pp. 69–162). (In Russian).
- Shchepkin, V. V. (2017). *Severnyi veter: Rossiya i ainy v Yaponii XVIII veka* [Northern Wind: Russia and the Ainu in 18th Century Japan]. Moscow: Krug. (In Russian).
- Sokolov, A. V. (2014). *Ainy: ot istokov do sovremennosti. Materialy k istorii stanovleniya ainskogo etnosa* [Ainu: From the Origins to the Present. Materials on the History of the Formation of the Ainu Ethnos]. Saint Petersburg: MAE of RAS. (In Russian).
- Taksami, Ch. M., Kosarev, V. D. (1990). *Kto vy, ainy? Ocherk istorii i kul'tury* [Who Are You, Ainu? Outline of History and Culture]. Moscow: Mysl'. (In Russian).

KLIMOV Artyom Vadimovich – Senior Lecturer, Department of Japanese Studies, Institute of Oriental and African Studies, National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (HSE University Saint-Petersburg): 123a, Griboyedov Canal Embankment, St.-Petersburg, 190068, Russian Federation.

ORCID: 0000-0002-3461-6677

E-mail: avklimov@hse.ru

This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is: Klimov A. V. (2025). Sluzhba Matsuda Dendzyuro v Khakodate i ego okrestnostyakh s 31 oktyabrya 1799 g. po 1 yanvarya 1801 g. (po materialam “Rasskazov o severnykh varvarakh”) [Matsuda Denjuro's service in Hakodate and the surrounding area from October 31, 1799, to January 1, 1801 (Based on the “Tales of the Northern Barbarians”)]. *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 2025, 1, 112–127. (In Russian). DOI: 10.55105/2500-2872-2025-1-112-127

Japanese in Harbin in the Early 20th Century. Russian-Japanese Relations During the Early History of the Chinese Eastern Railway

V. G. Datsyshen

Abstract

The article is devoted to the problems of Russian-Japanese relations on the Chinese Eastern Railway at the initial stage of its history. Workers from Japan were not invited to build the road, but the Japanese were already among the first settlers in the city of Harbin, founded in 1898 by the Chinese Eastern Railway Society. After a short break caused by the Russo-Japanese War, bilateral relations were quickly restored. In 1906, as the Russian troops withdrew from Manchuria, the Japanese began to return to the Chinese Eastern Railway. Since 1907, Japanese officials, entrepreneurs, cultural and sports figures from Japan began to take an active part in the socio-political, economic, and cultural life of the city of Harbin. It was here that the first “Russian-Japanese Society” was created. The Japanese in Harbin were mainly employed in such areas as trade, medicine, entertainment, and domestic service.

An important component of bilateral cooperation was cooperation in the railway sector. Due to the tradition and the inaccessibility of sources, the history of the Japanese population of Harbin is poorly studied in Russian historiography. The purpose of the research is to restore the historical picture and identify the problems of the Japanese presence in Harbin and the Russian-Japanese interaction on the Chinese Eastern Railway in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War. The study was carried out on the basis of materials from the periodicals of Harbin, with the involvement

of materials collected in the archives by the researcher of the Chinese Eastern Railway E. K. Nilus.

The information and analytical materials published in the newspapers *Harbinskii Vestnik* (*Harbin Bulletin*), *Harbin*, *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*), and *Man'chzhurskii Kur'er* (*Manchurian Courier*), especially advertising, allow one to get an idea of the composition of the Japanese community, the occupations of the Japanese and some problems of Russian-Japanese relations in 1906–1914. The study of development of the Chinese Eastern Railway by the Japanese, their coexistence and cooperation with the Russians in Harbin will expand knowledge of the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway and achieve a more complete and objective picture of the history of Russian-Japanese relations in the 20th century.

Keywords: Japanese in Harbin, history of the CER, history of Russian-Japanese relations, Harbin newspapers about Russian-Japanese cooperation.

Acknowledgements: This research was supported by the Russian Science Foundation grant No. 23-48-00004 “Chinese Eastern Railway as a trans-border socio-cultural system: studying its history, reconstructing and modeling mechanisms of cultural heritage protection” <https://rscf.ru/en/project/23-48-00004/>

For half a century, from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries, international and interethnic relations in the Far East were to a large extent defined by the construction and operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway and its legacy. Throughout the 20th century, Russian-Japanese relations were characterized by instability, drastic changes from friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation to confrontation and bloody military conflicts. Mutual interest and respect were formed due to the fact that, since the end of the 19th century, representatives of the two nations interacted with each other a lot, had the opportunity to get to know each other closely, gain experience of cohabitation and cooperation.

The Chinese-Eastern Railway was a major contact zone of Russian-Japanese cooperation. The first Japanese settled in Harbin almost immediately after the founding of the city at the end of the 19th century, and, after the end of the Russo-Japanese War, they gradually became one of the largest and most active ethnic communities on the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Japanese lived and worked side by side with the Russian and Chinese population, becoming an organic part of Russian Harbin in Northeast China. But the negative consequences of Japanese aggression against China and the 1945 Soviet-Japanese war led to a loss of interest in the historical experience of Russian-Japanese cooperation in Harbin. Nevertheless, the history of Russian-Japanese relations, as well as the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway proper, cannot be at all complete without such an important theme as the Japanese population of Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century.

The problems of the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway at the initial stage of the history of the railway are mentioned in general works on the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway and Russian Harbin. In the 1920s, a generalizing study *Historical Review of the Chinese Eastern Railway. 1896–1923* was published. However, this work does not raise the problem of the Japanese presence in Harbin, although some facts are indicated. For example, E. K. Nilus writes that the “Yaponskaya [Japanese] Street” received such a name because “some Japanese enterprises appeared here for the first time” [Nilus 1923, p. 138]. In addition, this study presents statistical data, according to which the total population of the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1907 was 48,870 people, including 160 Japanese [Nilus 1923, p. 621].

The modern historiography of the Japanese presence on the Chinese Eastern Railway begins with the publication in 1991 of the generalizing work of G.V. Melikhov, a native of Harbin, *Manchuria Far and Near*, which indicates the number of Japanese subjects recorded by the first census in the Harbin Exclusion Zone as 462 people [Melikhov 1991, p. 140]. However, the study contains inaccuracies and contradictory statements, for example, it says: “The first Japanese merchants appeared

in Harbin after the events of 1900” [Melikhov 1991, p. 190]. The work first indicates that the first Japanese temple in Harbin, built in 1901, was a Buddhist one and, later, that it belonged to Shinto.

In the studies on the history of Russian-Japanese relations, the issues of the Japanese presence on the Chinese Eastern Railway, as a rule, were not raised. For example, in the work of V. Molodyakov, devoted to the problem of railways in Russian-Japanese relations, much attention is paid to the history of Harbin, but the researcher does not raise the problem of the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway, indicating only the number of Japanese subjects in the Exclusion Zone of Harbin according to the 1903 census [Molodyakov 2006, p. 148]. In the study by A. N. Khokhlov, which is devoted to the problems of the Japanese population of the Russian Far East, there are examples of sending the Japanese from Harbin to the European part of Russia after the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War [Khokhlov 2010, p. 82].

In recent years, Russian historiography has seen works about the problems of Russian-Japanese cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway. However, the main focus of attention is on the post-revolutionary period of history [Yakimenko 2015, pp. 45–57]. But there are exceptions, for example, the work of the Moscow Japanese studies scholar A. M. Gorbylev speaks about the activities of a Japanese wrestling coach in Harbin [Gorbylev 2022, pp. 29–40]. Researchers from Khabarovsk, V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky, are studying the presence of Japanese medics in the Far East [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, 2023b]. They write that there were eight Japanese on the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1898, but, in 1904, their number increased to one thousand people [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. The researchers claim that, on November 5, 1901, an organization of Japanese residents was created in Harbin, known as “Shōka kurabu, Shōkakai – Sungari Club” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. Some statements require special explanation, for example: “Japanese sources note that the first Japanese settlers arrived in Harbin in May 1897” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. But, as is known, Harbin was founded only in 1898 and, before that, there were no significant settlements in the Harbin area where the

Japanese could live. In addition, in the works of the Khabarovsk scholars, written on the basis of Japanese sources, the history of the first Japanese in Harbin is well shown, but the history of the return of the Japanese to the Chinese Eastern Railway after the end of the Russo-Japanese War is practically not touched upon.

Thus, the history of the Japanese in Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century remains almost unstudied. In the works on the history of Russian-Japanese relations, this problem is not raised. In modern historiography, articles have appeared that present only certain aspects of the life and activities of the Japanese in Harbin.

The poor study of the problem of the Japanese presence in Harbin at the initial stage of the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway is due to the limited and inaccessible source base. The most accessible and quite informative source on this topic is the periodicals. The introduction of the materials of the first Russian newspapers on the Chinese Eastern Railway into the scientific circulation will help to restore the historical picture of the appearance of the Japanese in Harbin and identify the problems associated with the Japanese presence in the capital of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

One of the first periodicals in Harbin was the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* (*Harbin Bulletin*). The newspaper was published in Russian by the commercial section of the Administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway since 1903. In an early 1907 issue of this newspaper, one can find such articles as “The Numbers of Japanese in Harbin”.¹ Another newspaper used as a source in our study is *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*). Its history begins with the founding of the newspaper *Vestnik Vostoka* (*Bulletin of the East*) in 1907 by the editorial staff of the newspaper *Novy Krai* (*New Land*). But soon *Vestnik Vostoka* under the editorship of L. O. Leventzigler was transformed into a daily newspaper *Novaya Zhizn'*, which was published until 1914. We also used as a source the “progressive, literary, illustrated newspaper” *Man'chzhurskii Kur'er* (*Manchurian Courier*), as well as the newspaper *Harbin*. As an additional source, we

¹ *Harbin Bulletin*, January 5, 1907, p. 2.

have drawn on the draft typewritten materials prepared by the former staff officer for assignments under Horvat, E. K. Nilus, for the second volume of the *History of the Chinese Eastern Railway*, which are stored at Stanford University. The photographs taken in Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century are an interesting source as well. Today, these photographs can be found both in various funds and collections, as well as on the pages of modern publications [Abelentsev 2022, p. 19].

The first Japanese came to the city of Harbin, founded by the Russians in 1898 in Northeast China, at the end of the 19th century. However, there were no Japanese among the first builders of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway did not attract Japanese workers for construction work in Northeast China. This was done on the basis of the experience of using the Japanese in the construction of the Ussuri railway and for political reasons. According to a report, “the most important inconvenience of the Japanese workers is that this energetic people, who have clearly expressed hostility to us, under the guise of workers, will send to us the most educated and trained representatives of their own, who will comprehensively study our land, its means, ways in it, get acquainted with our armed forces and will be well aware of our weaknesses” [Zavetnaya mehta imperatora 2011, pp. 106–117].

The Japanese appeared in Harbin even before the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. Far Eastern researchers V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky, referring to later sources, claim that eight Japanese lived on the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1898 [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. In addition, these researchers cite examples when the Japanese received permission to practice medicine in Harbin in 1899–1900. According to G. V. Melikhov: “In July 1901, the first Japanese Buddhist temple in Harbin was built on the 7th Staropristanskaya Street, which thus predetermined the future name of this street – Yaponskaya [Japanese]” [Melikhov 1991, p. 147]. However, the reference books published in the 1920s do not list a single Japanese temple on Yaponskaya Street [Ves’ Kharbin... 1926, p. 111]. In November 1901, in Harbin, as the researchers point out, an organization of Japanese residents was created, known as

“Shōka kurabu, Shōkakai – Sungari Club, Sungari Society”, according to which, in 1902, 506 Japanese lived in Harbin [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 117].

The development of Japanese migration in Harbin was interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. G. V. Melikhov writes: “Just before the beginning of the war, Japanese entrepreneurs, abandoning their property, hastily left Harbin” [Melikhov 1991, p. 190]. The Japanese who remained on the Chinese Eastern Railway were sent to Vladivostok or deported to Siberia and European Russia.

The Russo-Japanese War ended with the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty on August 23 (September 5), 1905. According to the Agreement on Manchuria signed in December 1905 between Japan and China, 16 cities of Northeast China, including Harbin, were to be opened to international trade. In 1906, work was carried out to open the Consulate General of Japan in Harbin, and, at the end of the year, the Russian Tsar approved the staff of the Japanese mission [Nesterova 2023, pp. 67–79]. After the withdrawal of Russian troops in early 1907, Harbin became a city open to foreigners, including the Japanese. Thus, neither from Russia nor from China there was no longer any obstacle to the return of the Japanese to the Chinese Eastern Railway passing through Manchuria.

Immediately after the end of the war, as the Russian troops withdrew, Japanese representatives launched their activities in Northern Manchuria. An article published in early 1907 in the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik*, titled “Japanese Quartermasters in North Manchuria,” says that the Japanese who came to the vicinity of Harbin “buy up huge batches of wheat, oilcake, and beans».² The newspaper indicated that four Japanese lived in the town of Beilingzi, and six Japanese lived in Hulancheng.

The newspaper cited eyewitness accounts: “They walk around in full brand-new uniforms, despite the frost. They treat the Chinese with exquisite politeness. The entire population is delighted with them...

² *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 26, p. 3.

All of them speak quite fluent Russian and Chinese, and some have excellent command of English, German, and French”.³ The Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway became a transit territory for the Japanese going west. In February 1907, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported about the “geisha actresses”: “They are traveling by invitation from Russia to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where they will perform in the operettas “Tea Flower,” “Geisha,” and others.⁴ In the cities along the way, including Harbin, they gave performances.

In late 1906, the Japanese began to return to the city of Harbin itself. In early January 1907, the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “According to the statistics of the Harbin Diplomatic Bureau, within two months from the moment the Japanese were allowed to enter Harbin, 51 people arrived in the city with Japanese passports”.⁵ In the early spring of 1907, the newspapers reported: “The number of Japanese arriving in Harbin is increasing every day. Little by little, they begin to take over various crafts, becoming serious competitors to the Russians and the Chinese. In particular, there are many Japanese signs saying “hairstylist,” “watchmaker,” etc. However, one cannot see an abundance of Japanese shops, the number of which was much greater before the war than now”.⁶

Indeed, in advertisements from the beginning of 1907, one can find indications of the presence in the city of various Japanese workshops and consumer service enterprises, for example, a “Japanese laundry.” In the early January, the following advertisement was placed in a newspaper: “Japanese watchmaker, located in 10th Market Street, shop No. 247, accepting watches for repair. Hadate”.⁷ From the first days of their residence in Harbin, the doctors and the medical personnel of the hospitals opened by the Japanese were the most prominent part

³ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 26, p. 3.

⁴ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, February 14, p. 3.

⁵ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 5, p. 2.

⁶ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, March 27, p. 2.

⁷ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 6, p. 4.

of the Japanese community. In early 1907, the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* wrote: “We hear complaints about the dirt and uncleanness of Japanese doctors practicing in Harbin. In particular, the two medicine men residing in the Market Street are distinguished by these qualities... They charge no less than a ruble for their advice”.⁸

In February 1907, the Consul General of the Empire of Japan, Kawakami Toshitsune (川上俊彦), began his work in Harbin. The Japanese representative demonstrated recognition of the Russian authorities in the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway. E. K. Nilus noted that foreign consuls tried to ignore the Russian authorities in Harbin by all available means, and “only with the Japanese Consul General Mr. Kawakami did the Head of the Road immediately establish normal and friendly relations”.⁹ Perhaps this situation was due to the fact that the Consul General was a former secretary of the embassy in Saint Petersburg and a commercial agent in Vladivostok, with extensive experience in interacting with Russian authorities and business people. Siberian researchers cite the description of the Japanese Consul General presented in a Japanese magazine: “Although he is not very tall, he is a very resolute and active man; he speaks Russian and is very knowledgeable about all Russian affairs. He is very accessible in any relations one has with him. He is hard-working, has a bright mind and the gift of speech. He is able to charm his interlocutor and completely take possession of him. He is a revelry hero; he is successful with women and, in turn, has a soft spot for them. We believe Kawakami to be one of our outstanding diplomats” [Ivanov, Kuznetsov 2022, pp. 23–24]. Indeed, Kawakami Toshitsune was fluent in Russian, French, and English, and, in Harbin, he began to study Chinese. Kawakami Toshitsune worked in Harbin for several years, the Chinese Eastern Railway becoming a stepping stone for his

⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, February 7, p. 4.

⁹ *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Khristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:3. *Russkie konsul'stva v Man'chzhurii* [Russian Consulates in Manchuria] (In Russian).

career growth. In the summer of 1910, Harbin newspapers wrote: “The Japanese Consul General in Harbin, Kawakami, is rumored to not stay here long. He was appointed Consul General in Moscow.”¹⁰ Later, he would also become the first Japanese ambassador to Poland.

The assistant to the Consul General was the Vice-Consul, and all the staff of the Consulate General were carefully selected. The Russian language was spoken by the secretary of the consulate Sugino Hotaro, the assistant secretary and the Chinese-language interpreter Furusawa Kokichi, the Russian-language interpreter Naito Kyuichi, and a student of the Orthodox seminary in Tokyo Igawa Julian, who worked as interpreter for the head of the police guard Hatsumi Okajima [Ivanov, Kuznetsov 2022, p. 24].

The rapid stabilization of Russian-Japanese relations in Manchuria was largely due to the interest of the Japanese in cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway. On the other hand, the emergence of a significant Japanese community in Harbin contributed to the development of Russian-Japanese relations. According to the research of E. K. Nilus, 160 Japanese lived in the Eastern Line of the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway, where Harbin was located, according to the Land Committee of the Railway in 1907 [Nilus 1923, p. 621]. Khabarovsk researchers V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky claim that “the number of residents in Harbin” in 1907 was 627 people [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 122].

In February 1908, elections were held to the Assembly of Plenipotentiaries of the Harbin Public Administration. In addition to Russian subjects, only the Japanese participated in the elections, since only the Japanese consul supported this project. Researcher G. V. Melikhov claims that as early as in 1908 one Japanese person was elected to the Assembly of Plenipotentiaries of the Harbin Public Administration [Melikhov 1991, p. 201].

Medical workers were seemingly the most visible and active part of the Japanese diaspora. On the front pages of Harbin newspapers,

¹⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 9, p. 2.

there were always advertisements of Japanese doctors and hospitals. In the spring of 1908, the newspaper *Harbin* published the following advertisement: “The Japanese Hospital of I. Osafune. New City... The apartment has comfortable beds...” and “Dr. S. Kubo’s Japanese Hospital. With permanent beds... New City”¹¹. In the Wharf area, there worked “Japanese Doctor S. Kaneda” and “Japanese surgeon Doctor Nakamura”.¹² In the spring of 1909, the following advertisement was presented on the pages of the newspaper *Harbin*: “Japanese Hospital of Dr. S. Murai. Daily reception at any time for internal, surgical, female, venereal, and other diseases. Specially cures ear, eye, nose, throat, and trachoma,” “Japanese Hospital of Dr. T. Mori,” “Doctors at the Imperial Japanese Consulate General in Harbin and Dr. Osafune, apt. No. 2, building of the Society of the South Manchurian Railway... New City,” “The Japanese Hospital of Dr. J. Narita. New City... Children’s, tuberculosis (consumption). Male impotence, Hemorrhoids... Venereal and other diseases”.¹³ Soon they were joined by “Dentist H. Matsuura...”¹⁴

On the pages of the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn’* (*New Life*) in 1909, in addition to the above-mentioned doctors and hospitals, “Dentist Ito Pan,” “Japanese Hospital of Dr. T. Shikata” featured as well.¹⁵ In addition to regular advertising, the following one-time ads appeared in the newspapers: “In the Japanese apothecary store of H. Umeda and Co. a medicine was received... the invention of the Japanese professor Fujimoto...”¹⁶ The Far Eastern researchers write: “In the report of the Japanese Consul General in Harbin, Kawakami Toshitsune, dated January 12, 1910, it was stated that 5 households of Japanese general practitioners resided in Harbin, represented by five men and two women. In addition, eight hired employees were involved in the

¹¹ *Harbin*, 1908, March 5, p. 1.

¹² *Harbin*, 1908, March 5, p. 1.

¹³ *Harbin*, 1909, April 9, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Harbin*, 1909, September 29, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Novaya Zhizn’*, 1909, January 1, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 2, p. 1.

Japanese medical institutions of Harbin, and one dentist also worked there” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023, p. 117].

One can also find advertisements of local Japanese stores on the pages of Harbin newspapers. For example, the Japanese store “Rising Sun” on Mostovaya Street, on the Wharf, advertised: “cloths for shirts, screens, albums, frames, and elegant metal products; napkins, mirrors, silk goods, and various Japanese items”.¹⁷ In 1910, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “This year, several new Japanese companies have appeared on the Wharf, opening wholesale warehouses of apothecary goods, tea, and various Japanese products, as well as beginning their retail sale”.¹⁸

Immediately after the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese women returned to Harbin and began to work as nannies in Russian families. The photograph of the family of the head of the Harbin railway station, A. K. Krapivnitsky, taken in Harbin in 1908, depicts, according to the caption under the photo, “nanny Esi, a Japanese” [Abelentsev 2022, p. 19].

Japanese entertainers constantly worked in or visited Harbin. Newspapers placed the following advertisement: “On Friday (May 14) and Saturday (May 15), on their way to the Odessa exhibition, stopping in Harbin for only two performances, a Troupe of Japanese geishas. Japanese ballet. Under M-me Kikuyakko, with the participation of famous actresses of Japanese theaters”.¹⁹ The performances of the Japanese were not always successful. This is indicated by the following newspaper report: “The Japanese cinema on the Wharf, which at first attracted a lot of the Russian public with its films of exclusively Chinese and Japanese taste, is now empty. The Chinese are more interested in European cinema, and lately one can always see a few Chinese people in such theaters, visiting them with their whole families”.²⁰

¹⁷ *Novaya Zhizn'*, 1909, March 20, insertion sheet.

¹⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 15, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, May 14, p. 1.

²⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, January 16, p. 2.

Immediately after the Russo-Japanese War, Harbin became the most important place for Russian-Japanese cooperation. At the beginning of 1909, the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*) reported: "The head of the educational department of the Kwantung Governorate General, Takahashi, who inspected in detail the Harbin commercial schools, the trade school, and... elementary railway and city schools, as well as familiarized himself with the reports on the railway schools published by the educational department, stated in his written reviews that the educational institutions of the territory of the Chinese Eastern Railway are distinguished by the exemplary organization of their activities, and that, during the inspection, he learned a lot of new useful information".²¹ In the autumn of 1909, one of the most famous and high-ranking Japanese statesmen, Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), went on a "private trip to get acquainted with Manchuria" in order to "clarify the situation of Japanese interests in Manchuria".²²

Russian-Japanese relations were complicated by the assassination of Itō Hirobumi on the platform of the Harbin railway station in October 1909. Although the terrorist act was committed by a Korean and, obviously, was not directly related to Russian-Japanese relations, the event took place in Harbin, a place of active development of Russian-Japanese interaction and cooperation. However, E. K. Nilus asserted: "The true purpose of Ito's arrival in Harbin does not seem to be precisely established so far, apparently this meeting was supposed to be somewhat unexpected... It is very likely that the emerging friendly trend in mutual relations... would find its external expression through this meeting in the form of some special agreement...".²³ Thus, there is a high probability that the purpose of this assassination was to

²¹ *Novaya Zhizn'*, 1909, March 20, p. 2.

²² *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Kristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:2. *Yaponiya i KVZhD* [Japan and the Chinese Eastern Railway]. P. 19. (In Russian).

²³ *Ibid.* P. 14–15.

prevent the development of Russian-Japanese cooperation. E. K. Nilus described the farewell of the body of the assassinated Itō Hirobumi by the Japanese population of Harbin: "Before the departure of the train, a dense crowd of Japanese, calm, impassive, solemnly silent, gathered in front of the car where the body of the deceased lay".²⁴

During the terrorist attack in Harbin, not a single Russian was injured, but in addition to the mortally wounded Itō Hirobumi, several other high-ranking Japanese were wounded, including Consul General Kawakami Toshitsune. The Consul General was treated at the Central Railway Hospital of the Chinese Eastern Railway.²⁵

The Harbin "incident" did not lead to a deterioration of Russian-Japanese relations, including on the Chinese Eastern Railway. E. K. Nilus writes: "The favorable trend in relations with Japan was quickly restored, which, incidentally, found its expression in the formation of a special Russian-Japanese society in Harbin, which began its activities on May 2, 1910".²⁶ It was a public organization of the following sort. In an appeal to the population of Harbin, the initiators of the creation of the Society pointed out during the preparation for the opening of this organization: "Proceeding from these provisions, we, the undersigned, have decided to take the initiative to create a corresponding public organization in Harbin. Recognizing that one of the immediate and necessary ways to achieve the intended goal is the study of the Japanese language by Russians and the study of the Russian language by the Japanese, we consider the establishment of training courses and lectures in Harbin to be the first action of the planned organization, without prejudging its further program, which will be indicated by life itself".²⁷

Soon the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: "On Monday, April 26, the Japanese club in Harbin was visited for the first time by Russian guests, represented by the Presidium of the Russian-Japanese

²⁴ Ibid. P. 17.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 16.

²⁶ Ibid. P. 23.

²⁷ Ibid. P. 24.

Society. The club occupies an extensive space consisting of several halls. One of them is reserved for a school for Japanese children. The founders and members of the club consist of 30 persons in total, who are the elite of the Japanese colony in Harbin”.²⁸

Harbin newspapers described the opening of the Society as follows: “By 2 p.m. sharp, the halls of the stock exchange are filled with a large Russian audience. Prominent figures from the railway circles appear... A small hitch – there is not a single Japanese. The Japanese have been warned by their Russian friends that it is customary to be half an hour late to Russian meetings. The embarrassed Mr. Fuse is running through the halls and telephoning his fellows that the Russians are assembled and waiting. A quarter of an hour later, the Japanese arrived, all at once, more than fifty people”.²⁹ The draft charter of the Russian-Japanese Society was drawn up by the chairman of the City Council P. S. Tishenko and a well-known Japanese entrepreneur and public figure K. Fuse. The document said: “The Russian-Japanese Society in Harbin has as its goal the mutual rapprochement of the Russian and the Japanese peoples”.³⁰ Seven members each, from the Russian and the Japanese populations of the city, were elected to the Council of the Society. Natsuaki, Fuse, Gunji, Furusawa, Tsuji, and Takachi became members of the Council. The seat of the secretary of the Consulate General Sugino, who declined it, was taken by Kowayagi. The charter of the “Russian-Japanese Society in Harbin” was approved by the authorities of the Chinese Eastern Railway on May 31, 1910, simultaneously with the charters of the “Society of the Russian-Chinese Trade and Industrial Museum” and the “Society of Russian Orientalists”.³¹

In 1910, the first attempts by the Japanese to publish newspapers and magazines in Harbin were made. In the January issue of the *Harbinskii Vestnik*, there was a mention of “the journal *Northern*

²⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 28, p. 3.

²⁹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 13, p. 2.

³⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 13, p. 2.

³¹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 10, p. 1.

Manchuria, edited by Mr. Fuse”.³² In the handwritten work of E. K. Nilus on the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway, it is said: “From March 15, 1912, the newspaper *Vostok* began to be published. Its publisher was a Japanese Fuse, the editor was, first, P. M. Fedorov, and then Mr. Poletika. The newspaper did not last long and was closed by order of the authorities in 1915”.³³

Harbin remained attractive for various forms of cooperation. In particular, Russian railway workers exchanged experience with colleagues who came to the Southern branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which had been ceded to Japan and was called the South Manchurian Railway. Japanese railway workers came to Harbin for an internship. Some facts can be learned “thanks to” incidents and events that were covered in the local press. In February 1910, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “Yesterday in Old Harin, at the mill of Mr. Lobachev... a catastrophe occurred... Two people were killed by the explosion of a cauldron: a Japanese and a Chinese, and four were seriously wounded: a Japanese, a Chinese, and two Russians”.³⁴ Later, the newspaper gave more details: “At the time of the explosion, there were two Japanese from the South Manchurian Railway in the compartment, testing coal heating”.³⁵ Thus, after the Russo-Japanese War, close cooperation and exchange of experience was established between Japanese and Russian railway workers in Manchuria.

On the eve of the First World War, Japanese doctors continued to live and work in Harbin. In 1914, the following Japanese medical institutions were advertised in Harbin newspapers: “Experienced Japanese Masseur Takeda”, “Japanese Dentist Jen-tun-ya-sha”, “Japanese Dr. J. Narita”, “Japanese Dentist H. Matsuura”.³⁶ At that time, the network of Japanese

³² *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, January 5, p. 2.

³³ *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Kristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:2. *Pressa* [Press]. P. 10. (In Russian).

³⁴ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 5, p. 3.

³⁵ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 6, p. 2.

³⁶ *Manchurian Courier*, 1914, November 8, p. 1.

ateliers and shops in Harbin expanded: “Japanese Ladies’ Workshop Kizuki,” “Japanese Tailor and Bamboo Workshop,” “Men’s Japanese Tailor Saki-take,” “Civilian Japanese Tailor Kioritsu,” “Japanese Banzai Store, Artificial Flowers, Postcards, and Other Japanese Goods”.³⁷

The appearance of Japanese martial arts masters in Harbin dates back to the pre-war period. Moscow Japanese studies scholar A. M. Gorbylev mentions “the teacher of Jiu-Jitsu Mr. Sigiura” and states: “In the Harbin police school, judo training was carried out in the interval from at least 1912 to 1916... During this time, it was not only a whole team of judo teachers which was formed here” [Gorbylev 2022, p. 35].

After the outbreak of the war in Europe, Russia and Japan finally became allies, and China later joined their alliance. Almost immediately after the outbreak of the war, Japan issued an ultimatum to Germany demanding the transfer of its colonies in China. The ultimatum was supported by the Japanese public. And in Harbin, even before Japan declared war on Germany, a mass demonstration of the Japanese took place in support of Russia and other Entente countries in their war against Germany. With the beginning of the First World War, a new stage in the Japanese development of the Chinese Eastern Railway began. It was characterized by the strengthening of the position of Japanese business in Northeast China, the growth of the number of Japanese enterprises and the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway, including in Harbin. The experience of the Japanese living and working in Harbin accumulated in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War allowed the Japanese community to successfully develop under the new historical conditions.

Thus, the Japanese presence in Harbin became an important factor in the socio-political, trade, economic, and cultural life of the Chinese Eastern Railway in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War. The Japanese in Harbin were engaged in such areas as trade, medicine, entertainment, domestic service, etc. Harbin became a place for the development of cooperation in the field

³⁷ *Manchurian Courier*, November 8, 1914, p. 4.

of public education. An important component of bilateral cooperation was cooperation in the railway sector. It is no coincidence that it was in Harbin that the first “Russian-Japanese Society” was created. It was the Japanese who, compared to the representatives of other countries, most consistently supported the initiatives and undertakings of the Russian authorities on the Chinese Eastern Railway. The experience of Russian-Japanese cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway contributed to the development of bilateral cooperation in all spheres and to the formation of allied relations between Russia, Japan, and China during the First World War.

References

- Abelentsev, V. N. (2022). Legenda stantsii Kharbin-Tsentral'naya – A. K. Krapivnitskii [Legend of the Harbin-Central Station – A. K. Krapivnitsky]. In A. P. Zabiako (ed.), *Legendy starogo Kharbina. Istoricheskii putevoditel'* [Legends of Old Harbin. Historical Guidebook] (pp. 16–20). Blagoveshchensk: Amur State University. (In Russian).
- Gonchar, V. V., Povolotsky, V. D. (2023a). Yaponskoe meditsinskoe prisutstvie na territorii stroitel'stva i ekspluatatsii KVZhD (1897–1922 gg.) [Japanese Medical Presence in the Territory of Construction and Operation of the CER (1897–1922)]. *Zhurnal Frontirnykh Issledovaniy* [Journal of Frontier Studies], 2, 115–132. (In Russian).
- Gonchar, V. V., Povolotsky, V. D. (2023b). Yaponskoe zubovrachevanie i ego predstaviteli na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii (konets XIX – nachalo XX v.) [Japanese Dentistry and Its Representatives in the Russian Far East (Late 19th – Early 20th Centuries)]. *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 2, 6–17. (In Russian).
- Gorbylev, A. M. (2022). Dzyudo v shkole politseiskogo nadzora goroda Kharbin: Neizvestnaya stranitsa istorii proniknoveniya yaponskoi bor'by v Rossiyu [Judo in the Harbin Police Supervision School: An Unknown Page in the History of the Penetration of Japanese Wrestling Into Russia]. In S. E. Tabakov (ed.), *Integratsiya nauki i sportivnoi praktiki*

- v edinoborstvakh: Materialy XXI Vserossiiskoi s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii molodykh uchenykh, posvyashchennoi pamyati... Evgeniya Mikhailovicha Chumakova (Rossiya, Moskva, 16 fevralya 2022 goda)* [Integration of Science and Sports Practice in Martial Arts: Proceedings of the 21st All-Russian Scientific-Practical Young Scholars' Conference With International Participation Dedicated to the Memory of... E. M. Chumakov (Russia, Moscow, February 16, 2022)]. Moscow: Lika. (In Russian).
- Ivanov A. A., Kuznetsov S. I. (2022). Deyatel'nost' politicheskoi politicii sredi yapontsev na territorii irkutskoi gubernii v kontse XIX – nachale XX veka. Ch. II. Razvedyvatel'naya deyatel'nost' na Dal'nem Vostoke i sotrudnichestvo s Yaponiei [Activities of the Political Police Among the Japanese in the Irkutsk Province in the Late 19th – Early 20th Century. Part II. Intelligence Activities in the Far East and Cooperation with Japan]. *Vestnik Buryatskogo nauchnogo centra SO RAN*, 3(47), 22–28. (In Russian).
- Khokhlov, A. N. (2010). Polozhenie yapontsev na russkom Dal'nem Vostoke. 1904–1905 gg. [The Situation of the Japanese in the Russian Far East. 1904–1905]. *Voprosy istorii*, 4, 78–87. (In Russian).
- Melikhov, G. V. (1991). *Man'chzhuriya dalekaya i blizkaya* [Manchuria Far and Near]. Moscow: Nauka. (In Russian).
- Molodyakov, V. E. (2006). *Rossiya i Yaponiya: rel'sy gudyat. Zheleznodorozhnyi uzul rossiisko-yaponskikh otnoshenii (1891–1945)* [Russia and Japan: The Rails Are Humming. The Railway Junction of Russian-Japanese Relations (1891–1945)]. Moscow: AST. (In Russian).
- Nesterova, E. I. (2023). Otkrytie Rossiiskogo general'nogo konsul'stva v Kharbine: predystoriya (1906–1907) [Opening of the Russian Consulate General in Harbin: Prehistory (1906–1907)]. *Istoricheskii kur'er*, 3 (29), 67–79. (In Russian).
- Nilus, E. K. (1923). *Istoricheskii obzor Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi. 1896–1923 g.g.* [Historical Review of the Chinese Eastern Railway. 1896–1923]. Vol. 1. Harbin. (In Russian).
- Ves' Kharbin na 1926 g. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga. (1926). [All of Harbin in 1926. Address and Reference Book]. Harbin: Tipografiya KVZhD. (In Russian).

Yakimenko, R. N. (2015). Osobennosti kontaktov yaponsev i russkikh, prozhivavshikh v Man'chzhurii v 1920–1940 gg. Po materialam yaponskikh memuarov [Features of Contacts Between the Japanese and Russians Living in Manchuria in the 1920–1940s. Based on Japanese Memoirs]. *Izvestiya Vostochnogo Instituta*, 4 (28), 45–57. (In Russian).

Zavetnaya mechta imperatora. K 120-letiyu nachala stroitel'stva Ussuriiskoi zheleznoi dorogi. Dokumenty i materialy. (2011). [The Emperor's Cherished Dream. On the 120th Anniversary of the Beginning of Construction of the Ussuri Railway. Documents and Materials]. Vladivostok: Dal'nauka. (In Russian).

DATSYSHEN Vladimir Grigorievich – Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Siberian Federal University, St. Petersburg State University.

E-mail: dazishen@mail.ru.

ORCID: 0000-0001-6471-8327

This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is: Datsyshen V. G. (2025). Yapontsy v Kharbine v nachale XX veka. K probleme rossiysko-yaponskikh otnosheniy na nachal'nom etape istorii KVZhD [Japanese in Harbin in the Early 20th Century. Russian-Japanese Relations During the Early History of the Chinese Eastern Railway] *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 2025, 2, 36–50. (In Russian). DOI: 10.55105/2500-2872-2025-2-36-50

Rewarding Japanese Servicemen With Russian Awards During World War I and the Russian Civil War (1914–1922)

S. V. Grishachev, Z. A. Shmakotina

Abstract

The period from the end of the Russo-Japanese War to the 1917 October Revolution was a time of political, economic, and cultural rapprochement between Russia and Japan. Moreover, this rapprochement was observed after the events of 1917 for several more years, since, during the Russian Civil War, Japan supported the anti-Bolshevik forces in the Far East.

The two countries entered the First World War as de facto allies; this alliance culminated in the Treaty of 1916. Its reflection in symbolic actions was also an element of this cooperation. In the years before the First World War, and, actually, during the war, hundreds of Japanese servicemen were given Russian awards. The article analyzes the composition of military personnel, what awards and for what merits were presented to the members of the Imperial House who did military service, diplomats, generals, as well as fleet admirals and naval officers, engineers, and divers.

After October 1917, Japan supported members of the White Movement and Admiral A. V. Kolchak for several more years. In addition, even more active support was provided to Ataman G. M. Semenov. For example, Japanese garrisons were stationed in Transbaikalia starting from the autumn of 1918, when he came to power there. Paradoxically, many Japanese officers and enlisted men were presented with Russian awards during the years of the Civil War, which fact is also confirmed in archival documents.

Keywords: Russia and Japan in the early 20th century, Orders of the Russian Empire, Order of Saint Stanislaus, Order of Saint Anna, Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle the First-Called, Order of Alexander Nevsky, battleship *Peresvet* (*Sagami*), dreadnought *Imperatritsa Maria*, Tanaka Kotarō, Prince Kan'in Kotohito, Special Manchurian Detachment.

Recent years have seen a substantial number of studies on the history of Russian-Japanese relations in the 20th century, proving that, after the war of 1904–1905, there was a fundamental geopolitical rapprochement between the two countries, and, during the First World War, the two countries were de facto allies. This strongly corrects the simplified idea, rooted in Russian academic literature and in public consciousness, that, in the 1st half of the 20th century, the two countries were in a state of constant confrontation. Obviously, one cannot deny the fact that there were regular moments of tension and even armed conflicts between the two countries during that period, but it was not a case of a systemic confrontation that lasted four decades [Grishachev 2020]. Periods of aggravation of relations were followed by periods of de-escalation, and sometimes even rapprochement. Moreover, the dynamics of bilateral relations during that period cannot be reduced to a simplified formula of “confrontation–rapprochement.” In reality, the process was much more complex and had several layers.

The following description of the situations and reasons for presenting awards to Japanese diplomats and military personnel shows the multifaceted nature of the interaction between the two states in the circumstances of cooperation during the First World War and in the context of a deep internal split in Russia during the Civil War. And, behind the awards given in those years, the political, diplomatic, and practical motivation of the sides is visible quite clearly, which highlights in a more textured way the subjects and issues that are truly relevant to the bilateral relations during the period described.

Restoration of Relations Between Russia and Japan After 1905 and Memory of the War

After the war, dialogue between Russia and Japan was established relatively quickly. The countries re-established diplomatic relations, now at the ambassadorial level. Spheres of influence were being gradually divided in the northeast of Qing China – in Manchuria and Mongolia, where the sides tried to prevent the penetration of other major powers. The two countries intensified their economic cooperation and established trade along the railways of Manchuria, which, not so long ago, had been an object of bitter fighting.

The rapprochement was also accompanied by symbolic events, in particular, visits by members of the Japanese Imperial House. This practice was interrupted during the war, but now it was resumed, and, most often, these were short visits that were part of a trip to Europe. For instance, in April 1909, in Tsarskoye Selo, Nicholas II met with Prince Kuni Kuniyoshi,¹ who was accompanied by representatives of the Japanese Embassy. In May 1909, there was a similar meeting with Prince Nashimoto Morimasa and his wife, and, in the spring of 1910, with Prince Fushimi Sadanaru and his wife.² The most famous visit, that of Prince Kan'in Kotohito, made in 1916, was the longest; it was specifically made to Russia (already an ally country) and was widely covered in the press.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned members of the Japanese Imperial House once chose military education and career,

¹ Prince Kuni-no-miya Kuniyoshi 久邇宮邦彦王 (1873–1929) – a member of the Japanese imperial family, a participant of the Russo-Japanese War and later a field marshal. Prince Nashimoto-no-miya Morimasa (1874–1951) – a military officer, with the rank of captain participated in the war of 1904–1905, later a field marshal. Prince Fushimi-no-miya Sadanaru 伏見宮貞愛 (1858–1923) participated in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars and later became a field marshal.

² Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), Fund 473, Series 2, File 1951, Sheets 4–11.

and subsequently all of them took part in the Russo-Japanese War in one way or another, for which they were given awards in their home country. In the light of the above, it is particularly interesting that some of them were presented with the highest Russian awards during their visits to Russia after 1905.

For example, Princes Kuni Kuniyoshi and Nashimoto Morimasa were awarded the Orders of St. Andrew the First-Called, while Fushimi Sadanaru was given not only the highest order of the Russian Empire, but also the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky [Levin 2003, p. 38; Ponomarev, Shabanov 2009, p. 870]. Participants of the war against Russia were now being rewarded in the capital of the recent enemy.

In those years, cooperation was quickly established to perpetuate the memory of those who died during the war of 1904–1905, on both sides. The memory quickly acquired a conciliatory, sometimes demonstratively conciliatory character.

The sides applied much effort to bury the remains and arrange the graves of those who were killed in Manchuria, as well as of those who died in captivity during the war in Japan. Events to perpetuate the memory of the fallen were held in a solemn atmosphere, with the participation of diplomats and the military. In the summer of 1908, Vice-Admiral Nikolai Matusevich (1852–1912) visited Port Arthur (Ryojun in Japanese). During the Russo-Japanese war, he took part in combat operations, in particular, in the battle of the Yellow Sea. By 1908, he had risen to the position of head of the Vladivostok port. Accompanied by Japanese military men, he attended the opening ceremony of the monument to the Russian defenders of Port Arthur. After this visit, he suggested rewarding the two Japanese men who accompanied him: he recommended awarding First Lieutenant Machida Bun'ichi the Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class and translator Hino Bumpei the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class.³

³ Russian State Archive of the Navy (RGAVMF), Fund 417, Series 5, File 3110, Sheets 1–2. However, later, for unknown reasons, the Japanese side excluded Bumpei from the award list. Ibid.: RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 5, File 3110, Sheets 4–5.

In addition, Saint Petersburg discussed the issue of awarding badges of distinction to members of the Japanese commission for the construction of a monument to the Russian defenders of Port Arthur, as well as to those who hosted the Russian delegation at the unveiling of this monument.

In response, in September 1908, Matusevich sent the Russian Consul General in Dalny (Dairen in Japanese), N. A. Raspopov, a silver wreath with a request to lay it on the mass grave of the Japanese sailors who perished near Port Arthur. Raspopov wrote in a report dated September 16, 1908, "The Japanese authorities, notified of this fact by our admiral, took this opportunity to re-emphasize their friendly feelings towards us."⁴ Therefore, the wreath-laying ceremony was grand and solemn. N. A. Raspopov was greeted by Admiral Egashira Yasutaro. Together they went up Mount Perepelinaya, where a guard of honour and an orchestra were lined up. N. A. Raspopov laid the wreath sent by Admiral Matusevich to the sounds of Japanese traditional music. The ceremony was followed by a joint breakfast.⁵ Events to perpetuate the memory of Russian soldiers and sailors were just as ceremoniously held in other places.⁶

The Japanese side kept up with its attempts to thank the Russian side. An interesting incident occurred in the summer of 1910, when a military delegation led by Major General Hoshino visited Harbin in order to personally present awards on behalf of Emperor Meiji to Russian officers who were present in Port Arthur at the opening of a monument to the fallen Russian soldiers. The awards were accepted; however,

⁴ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 2, File 1099, Sheets 319–320.

⁵ Ibid.: RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 2, File 1099, Sheets 319–320.

⁶ In 1908, on Oki Island (Shimane Prefecture), a mass grave was set up to bury the bodies of the Russian sailors that were washed ashore after the Battle of Tsushima. A monument was erected over the grave by efforts of the local Japanese military society and the local administration, and about 500 people attended the opening ceremony. The Russian Embassy funded the installation of a fence around this monument.

in response to a request from Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsov about what to do in this situation, Minister of War Vladimir Sukhomlinov conveyed the will of the Tsar. Although Nicholas II considered this event to be a gesture of exceptional international courtesy, which had no precedent yet, he recommended to leave it for the time being “without an appropriate retaliatory act and postpone it until the first appropriate opportunity when it becomes possible to give the Japanese government the same attention from our side.”⁷ Thus, the Tsar apparently believed that there should be some justification and reason for a reciprocal diplomatic gesture.

Therefore, all these actions indicate that the former rivals quickly began to show official sympathy towards each other. Of course, this was not an expression of some kind of friendship between the peoples, but a symbolic formalization of the geopolitical rapprochement that was so necessary at that time, as well as a sign to the elites of both empires.

Military Cooperation in 1914–1917 and Symbolic Awards to August Personages and Senior Military Officials

As is known, Russia and Japan entered the First World War as allies. And although Japanese soldiers did not end up in the trenches in the European theatre of operations, nevertheless, military and military-economic cooperation between the two empires was quite noticeable. Russia placed huge orders in Japan for the manufacture and supply of weapons for the army – rifles, cartridges, infantry sapper tools, etc. Japanese military observers were sent to various branches of the Russian army – infantry, navy, artillery, etc.⁸ A Japanese Red Cross hospital

⁷ RGIA, Fund 560, Series 45, File 70, Sheet 153.

⁸ The issue of sending Japanese volunteers to the front was heatedly discussed for a long time; however, despite the willingness of a large

arrived in Petrograd on a humanitarian mission and operated there for two years (from 1914 to 1916) [Pestushko 2008].

Even military cooperation at sea was an element of this cooperation. After the German cruiser-raider “Emden” captured steamship “Ryazan” on the way from Nagasaki to Vladivostok in August 1914, at the request of Petrograd, the Japanese naval command sent two destroyers to protect Russian merchant ships in its territorial waters [Pavlov 2014, p. 14].

As before, during the First World War, show awards of high-born and high-ranking officials became a symbolic confirmation of the Russian-Japanese rapprochement. The most striking episode was the visit of Grand Duke George Mikhailovich to the Japanese Empire in January 1916. This visit had an important political significance – in addition to expressing respect and friendly feelings for the allied country, it was necessary to impress upon the Japanese government, businessmen, and financiers the need to establish and increase the production of weapons for the Russian army as soon as possible. The visit was very ceremoniously arranged, and the programme of meetings of the Grand Duke included almost the entire establishment of Japan, starting with Emperor Taisho.

During a personal meeting with the Japanese emperor, the Grand Duke expressed gratitude for the allied assistance already provided. After that, as a sign of gratitude on behalf of Nicholas II, the Japanese royal couple was presented with awards – the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called to Emperor Taisho, and the Order of St. Catherine to his wife. The next day, Emperor Taisho sent a telegram to Emperor Nicholas II, in which he expressed gratitude for the awards [Baryshev 2009, pp. 62–63].

On the same day, Grand Duke George Mikhailovich paid a visit to one of the most influential Japanese politicians, Genro and Field Marshal Yamagata Aritomo at his own residence and presented the diamond-studded Order of St. Alexander Nevsky on behalf of the Russian emperor with words of appreciation for the contribution to the development of

number of volunteers, this fact still has very little documentary evidence. For further details, see [Pestushko 2008, p. 215].

good-neighborly relations between Russia and Japan. He said he was confident that the allied countries would soon win a decisive victory over the enemy [Baryshev 2009, p. 64]. Field Marshal Yamagata, head of the General Staff during the Russo-Japanese War, promised in response to make every effort to ensure that arms deliveries to Russia were carried out without delay.

Russian awards were also given to other high-ranking military officials and diplomats. Governor of Korea Terauchi Masatake, who was Minister of the Army in 1905, as well as Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu and Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujiro were awarded the Orders of St. Alexander Nevsky. The Order of St. Vladimir was awarded to Lieutenant General Mitsuomi Kamio and Vice Admiral Kato Sadakichi in memory of the capture of the German fortress of Qingdao [Baryshev 2009, p. 64].

The Grand Duke handed out lesser awards during his visit to the Tokyo artillery arsenal. There, he met with the gunsmiths who made rifles for the Russian army and presented them with gold and silver medals. Since a large number of badges of merit were handed over, it is logical to assume that they were brought for this trip in sufficient quantities, as the saying goes, in case of need.

Symbolic awards of the same orders were made to the military diplomats sent to Russia. As part of several missions, Japanese representatives from both the army and the navy visited Petrograd, Moscow, and some other major cities, as well as the war fronts directly. In the first half of 1916 alone, eight Japanese delegations visited Russian defense enterprises, and five visited the active army [Pavlov 2014, p. 118].

Their presence was so frequent and ubiquitous that it often suggested data collection for the military leadership in Tokyo. Russian officers even questioned the expediency of these missions. For example, in the autumn of 1915, a group of representatives of the Japanese General Staff visited Russia, and eventually they were dispatched to the artillery depot in Revel (Tallinn). The mission was of introductory nature, and no specific tasks were assigned to it. Following its stay in Russia, the

head of the delegation, Captain 1st rank Osumi, was awarded the Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class [Pestushko 2008, pp. 113–114].

Yet, there were those who visited not only warehouses and factories, but also the headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the theatre of operations. For instance, Major General Oba Jiro was dispatched to the headquarters for quite a long time from the very beginning of the war. And while, ten years before, he had participated in the assault of Port Arthur, in the current war, he was given Russian awards several times.

As for short-term visits, the most famous was the arrival in the summer of 1916 of a group led by Lieutenant General Fukuda Masataro and the military attaché, Colonel Odagiri Masazumi. They were honored with an audience with the Emperor at the headquarters, and then an audience with Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna in Kiev, after which, for two weeks, they toured and inspected Russian positions in the frontline, becoming acquainted with the unit commanders who carried out actions later called the “Brusilov Offensive.” During the tour, the Japanese came under fire several times in the area of Rozhishche outside Lutsk when German airplanes began dropping bombs and firing machine guns [Pavlov 2014, pp. 53, 239–241].

The diary of journalist M. K. Lemke, who was at the headquarters of the Supreme Commander in 1916, has the following entry: “The Japanese and Montenegrin military representatives, both generals, who had just returned from the front, according to Count Zamoysky who accompanied them, went on the attack together with our troops and generally behaved very bravely, for which each of them received the order of St. Vladimir” [Lemke 2003, pp. 203–204].

There is no evidence that the members of the Fukuda mission were indeed awarded the Order of St. Vladimir for their participation in the attack. Count A. S. Zamoysky did accompany Fukuda’s group, but, in his report, he said that, after returning from the front line, only a general certificate of being under fire was issued to the entire mission staff from the headquarters of the 12th Infantry Division [Pavlov 2014, pp. 243–244]. It was obvious that military personnel of this level,

by their very status, were to be rewarded. Therefore, at least one of the participants of the mission, Fukuda himself, was awarded the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class in addition to the Order of St. Stanislaus that he already had.⁹

Awards for Providing Logistical Assistance

In addition to the etiquette and diplomatic awards discussed above, it is necessary to focus in more detail on awards for the provision of specific assistance – military, logistical, or repair and technical. The practice of rewarding allies in such cases existed not only in relation to the military and not only in relation to the Japanese. For example, there are documents according to which awards were presented to the sailors of the British submarines for sinking the German cruiser *Undine* and to the French nationals who built ships for Russia. Similar awards were given to the Norwegian members of the crews of the *Eclipse* and *Kit* hydrographic expeditions.¹⁰ Russian sailors and officers often received similar awards from the governments of the allied countries.

As for the Japanese sailors, their assistance during the war years included transportation of especially valuable goods, inspection and repair of ships, provision of equipment by the Navy Ministry, and assistance from the Ministry in purchasing the necessary equipment.

Transportation of especially valuable goods was associated with the payment for military orders. The fact is that, for a long time, Japanese business, not believing in the sufficient credit solvency of the Russian government, expected guarantees of future payments; therefore, the supply of weapons in the required amount could not be arranged.

⁹ *Medals of Asia*. <https://asiamedals.info/threads/1st-class-st-stanislaus-and-st-anna-orders-for-non-christians-awarded-to-general-masataro-fukuda.25920/>

¹⁰ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, Files 3574–84.

As a result, Petrograd had to agree to the following proposal from the Japanese business: a loan was opened to Russia from Japanese banks, and to guarantee this loan, a large shipment of gold was exported to Japan and the United States.

The transportation had to be carried out as soon as possible, which was done by Japanese warships commanded by Rear Admiral Ide Kenji. Eventually, the commander of the Siberian Flotilla, Vice Admiral Maximilian Schulz, presented a petition to the Navy Minister, Ivan K. Grigorovich, to reward the Japanese admiral and his staff “for highly useful work, coupled with great responsibility for the double acceptance and delivery of gold currency to Japan and America.” Ide was supposed to be awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 1st Class, Flag Captain Takahashi Sankichi – Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class, and Flag Officers Toyoda Teijiro and Tsutsumi Masao – the Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class and the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class, respectively.

In the same report, M. F. Schultz wrote: “I have the honor to add that, thanks to the personal qualities of Rear Admiral Ide, I established very friendly relations with him, expressed in the exchange of a number of signs of sympathy, both between us and between our staffs and other officers. I believe that, in the person of young, energetic, and cultured Rear Admiral Ide, who certainly has a great future, we are gaining a supporter who is well disposed to our interests.”¹¹ It is interesting to note the fact of personal friendship at the level of the two headquarters in a situation where only ten years had passed since the Russo-Japanese War, and, in this case, we are talking about officers who took part in the 1904–1905 fighting on opposing sides.

Japan also presented Russian officers with its awards. Of the many cases, here are just a few examples. In the summer of 1916, the Order of the Rising Sun of the 3rd Class was awarded to the military and naval attaché, Second Captain A. N. Voskresensky, and the commander of the Vladivostok port, Rear Admiral P. V. Rimsky-Korsakov, received

¹¹ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 1, File 38964, Sheets 1– 3.

the same order of the 2nd Class. Other naval officers were also presented with the same awards.¹²

The exchange of awards between the two navy departments during that period had a noticeable scale and specific features. The above-mentioned naval agent in Japan, A. N. Voskresensky, who already had Japanese awards, wrote in a letter dated August 14/27, 1916, shortly before Prince Kan'in's visit:

“Today I am writing to you mainly because of the orders. The Japanese orders for the people in our naval department, which were started by Akiyama, will now finally be issued with the upcoming trip of Prince Kan'in, and everything must be decided before September 10, Kan'in's departure from Petrograd... In addition, Prince Kan'in is also supposed to issue orders to the commanders of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets. However, we will have to equal them with those issued to us; missed at the Navy Ministry were the Assistant Chief of the Naval General Staff, Vice Admiral Yamaya, the head of the Main Technical Directorate, Vice Admiral Tochinai, and the adjutant of the Naval General Staff, Captain 1st rank Yamaoka. Engineer Muto makes up all our drawings, and he, in fact, should be awarded more than anyone else – he has been handling our orders from the very beginning.”¹³

From the above paragraph, it can be seen that the awarding had, firstly, a practical meaning: officers who performed specific technical work were presented with awards: the adjutant of the Naval General Staff Yamaoka Tomokazu – with the Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class, and the design engineer of the main technical department Muto Inotaro – with the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class.

Secondly, there were awards with a purely diplomatic meaning, when it was impossible to respond with fewer awards to awards from the opposite side. As a result, to level the score, the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class was presented to the Assistant Chief of the Naval General Staff, Vice Admiral Yamaya Tanin. Here again, it is appropriate to recall

¹² RGAVMF Fund 418, Series 1–3, File 4538, Sheets 78–79.

¹³ RGAVMF Fund 418, Series 1–3, File 4538, Sheet 111.

that, in 1904, he commanded the armored cruiser *Akitsushima*, which participated in the Battle of the Yellow Sea on August 10.¹⁴ In addition, the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class was presented to the head of the Main Technical Directorate, Vice Admiral Tochintai Sojiro, who commanded the armored cruiser *Suma* in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905.¹⁵

Thus, a considerable number of senior officers of the Japanese Navy who distinguished themselves in the naval battles of the Russo-Japanese War were presented with awards of the Russian Empire during the First World War. It should be emphasized again that this became possible precisely because of the change in the foreign policy courses of the two empires, which had become incredibly close over the years, and, therefore, the perception of the previous conflict became less acute. And based on the above petitions, it can be stated that, in some situations, personal trust arose in the relationships between the highest ranks of the Russian and Japanese navies.

Awards to Japanese Divers for Their Assistance in Bringing Afloat the Battleship *Peresvet*

The most significant practical assistance during the First World War was provided by Japanese seamen in the repair of Russian ships and their transfer to the port of Vladivostok. In 1916, the Russian government bought the cruiser *Varyag* (*Soya*), the battleships *Peresvet* (*Sagami*) and *Chesma* (*Tango*), which had become Japanese trophies ten years earlier.¹⁶ According to the plan, they were supposed to move north to

¹⁴ Recall that, in the same battle, but, of course, on the other side, the aforementioned N. A. Matusевич served on the battleship *Tsesarevich*, later rising to the rank of vice admiral. As head of the port of Vladivostok, he sent a wreath to the graves of Japanese soldiers in Port Arthur in 1908.

¹⁵ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 5, File 4576, Sheets 1–2.

¹⁶ Initially, the ship was called *Poltava*; in the Japanese navy, it was named *Tango*. However, at the time of its return to Russia, in the Black Sea Fleet,

the port of Romanov-on-Murman (now Murmansk) in order to join the flotilla being formed on the Kola Peninsula.

The Russian vessels purchased in Japan in 1916 had exhausted their performance potential and, in addition, required serious re-equipment – from high-explosive shells and cables to canvas, dishes, mattresses, shirts and bandages for the infirmary. In matters of supply, the Japanese Navy Ministry acted as an intermediary in the procurement of necessary items.¹⁷

The ships were transferred to Vladivostok by Japanese crews and placed under Russian command in April 1916. The officers of the crews of the three ships, as well as the cruiser *Ibuki*, which accompanied this detachment, were awarded the badges of the Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus of various degrees established for non-Christians. More than thirty warrant officers and seamen of lower ranks were awarded gold and silver medals with the inscription “For diligence.”¹⁸

However, the need for Japanese help did not end there. It came in handy very soon, when the battleship *Peresvet* had an accident. After arriving in Vladivostok from Japan, the ship underwent initial repairs and went on its first sea trials with a Russian crew. Upon returning to the port, it ran aground near the Skryplev Island. The ship could not be removed from the shoal with the use of available improvised means. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, on the orders of Rear Admiral A. I. Bestuzhev-Ryumin,¹⁹ several attempts were made to pull the ship off the rocks by tug boats, as a result of which the inner bottom was seriously damaged. It was virtually impossible to repair such damage with the means available in the port of Vladivostok.

there was a new ship under the name *Poltava*; so, *Tango* was renamed *Chesma*.

¹⁷ RGAVMF, Fund 418, Series 1, File 4539, Sheets 39–42.

¹⁸ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, File 3583, Sheets 57–59.

¹⁹ A. I. Bestuzhev-Ryumin was appointed commander of a detachment of three ships purchased in Japan.

For these reasons, Japanese experts were called to help; in total, about 180 people participated in the works. They removed the conning tower and armor and lightened the ship. After that, the works were continued by 14 divers. P. V. Rimsky-Korsakov's report emphasized their accuracy in determining the position of the ship on the rocks, as well as in running under-keel conductors to secure the lashings. The holes were filled with cement, after which pontoons were brought in, and the water was pumped out. The ship was removed and towed to Vladivostok.

The work of Captain 2nd rank Fukushima Kumataro, who supervised all the work, and of Captain 2nd rank Kokuma Suwa, who did all the calculations, was honored with awards. Special mention was made of the work of Lieutenant Hashiguchi Yasutaka who was directly involved in the diving operations. He went down into the flooded compartments, examined the hole, and filled it with cement to pump out the water.

According to the established tradition, all of them were presented to the relevant classes of the Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus for non-Christians. About thirty lower ranks and handworkers who serviced these works were awarded silver medals with the inscription "For diligence."²⁰

According to the information available, the awards were agreed, approved, and presented. The ship was sent back to Japan for repairs at the port of Maizuru. However, all efforts to repair the cruiser *Peresvet* were in vain – after repairs and passage from Japan to Port Said in December 1916, the ship was blown up by German mines; more than 250 members of the crew were killed.

Awards to Japanese Seamen for Diving Operations and Drafting a Project to Raise the Battleship *Empress Maria*

The next reason for requesting the help of Japanese divers was the tragic incident in Sevastopol on October 20, 1916, when a terrible

²⁰ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, File 3584, Sheets 4–8, 9–10.

explosion occurred on board the battleship *Empress Maria*, killing several hundred people. The ship overturned after the explosion and sank at a depth of 20 meters, half a mile from the shore. Before lifting the ship, it was necessary to clarify its condition and exact position. In Russia, works on the inspection and lifting of ships of this class had not been carried out before. Therefore, at one of the meetings of the Technical Council of the General Directorate of Shipbuilding, Lieutenant General V. P. Vedernikov suggested asking for help and advice of foreign experts from Italy, the United States, and Japan, who had experience in such operations.

For instance, Japanese sailors and divers had considerable experience in lifting the Russian ships in Port Arthur, as well as the cruiser *Mikasa*, which sank in the autumn of 1905 on the Sasebo roadstead after an explosion in one of the ammunition stores. Italian experts tried to raise the battleship *Leonardo da Vinci* comparable to *Empress Maria*; it also sank after an internal explosion in the summer of 1916.

None of the US, British, and Italian companies gave a direct answer. Only the Japanese acceded to the request and sent a 12-member commission to Sevastopol. It included divers, shipboard engineers, mechanical engineers, technicians, carpenters, and other specialists. It was headed by military attaché Tanaka Kotaro. The group arrived in Sevastopol as early as December 1916.

After the diving work, Lieutenant Colonel Fukui Junmei and mechanical engineer Kuroda Takuma developed a multi-stage project to raise the vessel, which had much in common with one of the Russian projects. All work was supposed to be completed within eight months, for which it was planned to hire at least two hundred (!) Japanese workers and experts. The project was approved by the General Directorate of Shipbuilding, and it was decided to ask the Japanese command to begin its implementation. However, in March 1917, the Japanese mission had to return home. The reason was that, on January 14 in Yokosuka, the armored cruiser *Tsukuba* sank from an internal explosion, resulting in the death of over 350 people. And the Japanese divers were needed for cleaning up the incident.

The participants of the mission, which lasted several months, were presented with awards for their diving work and efforts to draft the ship's salvage. During the presentation, it was found out that at least two of its participants had already been awarded Russian orders. Actually, Captain K. Tanaka had the Orders of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class with a star and of St. Anna of the 2nd Class. And the ship's engineer, Captain Hashiguchi Yasutaka, had already been awarded the Order of Stanislaus of the 3rd Class.²¹ Captain Hashiguchi received his award, as mentioned above, for diving work on the battleship *Peresvet*, that had been carried out six months before.²²

Thus, the orders for the works on the battleship *Peresvet* and the battleship *Empress Maria* were a reward for the most difficult and necessary operations for the Russian navy. An additional confirmation of the quality of this work is the fact that some Japanese seamen were repeatedly awarded.

The Civil War and Awards to the Japanese Military

The events of 1917 – the two revolutions and the outbreak of the Russian Civil War – radically changed the country's foreign policy situation in general and relations with Japan in particular. Russia's participation in the war and relations with the Entente countries, of course, were interpreted in different ways by different political forces in the new historical reality. While the Bolsheviks denied any legitimate connection with the previous government, the leaders of the White Movement (in particular, the government of Alexander Kolchak) relied on the fact that they were the legitimate representatives and legitimate successors of the Provisional and Tsarist governments, guarantors of previously issued military, political, and financial obligations.

²¹ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 2, File 2320, Sheet 63.

²² Hashiguchi Yasutaka (1895–1948), a naval engineer, rose to the rank of rear admiral.

Thus, Japan continued to provide allied assistance to the White Movement, considering the government of Alexander Kolchak legitimate. Moreover, Tokyo's representatives were often exactly the same people who had worked in Russia in previous years. It would be enough to say that, at the end of 1918, the head of the Japanese military mission under the government of Alexander Kolchak in Omsk was the above-mentioned Tanaka Kotaro, formerly a military attaché in Russia, and now an admiral. Both the press and people from Kolchak's entourage mentioned the admiral's excellent knowledge of the Russian language and Russian realities, as well as his particularly friendly relations with the Supreme Ruler of Russia. It is clear that these relations arose back in 1916–1917, when A. V. Kolchak commanded the Black Sea Fleet, and Tanaka Kotaro headed the mission of Japanese experts in Sevastopol, who examined the sunken battleship *Empress Maria*.²³

The Japanese military also supported Ataman Grigory Semenov, who coordinated his actions with A. V. Kolchak to a certain extent. As early as the autumn of 1917, Semenov went to the Far East and tried to lead the anti-Bolshevik forces in Manchuria and Transbaikalia. He was engaged in the creation of military units, and, in the spring of 1918, his forces already numbered several thousand people.

On the Japanese side, contacts with the ataman (if not patronage over him) were carried out by the head of the military station in Harbin, Colonel Kurosawa Hitoshi, who later became the head of the Japanese military mission in Chita. It should also be noted here that, back in 1916, Kurosawa Hitoshi accompanied Prince Kan'in on his trip to Petrograd, Moscow, and the headquarters of the Supreme Commander.²⁴ Most likely, it was on this trip that he was awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus

²³ At the end of his life, the admiral wrote memories of his stay in Omsk and his relationship with Alexander Kolchak: *Kokuritsu kōbun shokan. Ajia Rekishi Siryō Sentā*. <https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=default&BID=F2012081317121190329&ID=M2012081317121290342&REFC ODE=B12080958900>

²⁴ RGIA, Fund 473, Series 2–261, File 1951, Sheet 85.

of the 1st Class as an accompanying person²⁵ – this is another proof that the people who worked in the Russian direction continued their activities after 1917. Semenov continued to honor him: as a sign of gratitude for his comprehensive assistance, Colonel Kurosawa was appointed honorary commander of one of the regiments on November 21, 1919, “with lifelong enrollment in the lists of the regiment and the 1st *sotnya* with the right to wear the uniform assigned to the regiment as a reward for the labors incurred in restoring Russian statehood and restoring order within the district entrusted to Semenov.”²⁶

Semenov’s Special Manchurian Detachment (O.M.O.) included, among other units, a volunteer battalion consisting of the Japanese. It should be particularly noted that the Japanese serving in this battalion were not regular military personnel stationed in the Russian Far East. Formally, they did not serve in the Japanese army and operated separately.²⁷ At the same time, members of the Japanese military station were also recruiting volunteers, and, by April 1918, they numbered 346 already. They were mostly reserve servicemen, both officers and enlisted men [Polutov 2012, p. 76].

The surviving orders on the awards of the Japanese who served in the O.M.O. indicate that there were about 300 people awarded, both officers and enlisted men:

Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class – 2 people;

Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class – 61 people;

Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class – 119 people;

²⁵ *Kokuritsu kōbun shokan. Ajia Rekishi Siryō Sentā*. <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/image/M000000000000045391>

²⁶ GAZK, Fund 329, Series 1, File 46.

²⁷ In parallel, we should mention the important fact that, back in 1918, the Japanese command refused to send troops west of Omsk to Alexander Kolchak. Subsequently, throughout the years of their presence in the region, regular Japanese units avoided direct military clashes with regular units of the Red Army and the Army of the Far Eastern Republic [Datsyshen 2021, p. 123].

Order of St. Vladimir of the 1^{3rd} Class – 5 people;
Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class – 19 people;
Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class – 35 people;
St. George's Cross of the 4th Class – 18 people.²⁸

The Japanese O.M.O. officers received their first awards in the spring of 1918, when Semenov's units launched an offensive from Manchuria. On May 27, 1918, the commander of the Japanese volunteer battalion, Okumura Hiroshi, in the battle for the Onon River crossing site 12 *versts* south of the station Olovyannaya took up a position in the rear guard and repelled the attacks of the Red cavalry, which broke through from the rear, which made it possible to withdraw the O.M.O. units and save them from total destruction. In another battle, on July 28 of the same year, Major Takeda Motoharu, near Manchuria Station (now Otpor), managed to recapture the Atamanovskaya hill seized by the Red Army units. During the battle, the major personally assumed command of the battalion and managed to capture prisoners and several machine guns. In both cases, the Japanese officers were awarded the Order of St. George the Great Martyr and Victory-bearer, 4th Class, the standard established for the O.M.O. ranks. [Selivanov 2017, pp. 29, 192].

Regular units of the Japanese expeditionary force – the 3rd, 7th, and 12th Infantry Divisions, as well as individual units and subunits – actively cooperated with Ataman Semenov's troops, especially after his forces entered Chita. Japanese officers received a number of awards for their participation in the Battle of Bogdat in 1919. However, most of the awards made outside the O.M.O. indicate that the assistance was not so much military as economic, logistical, and technical. Japanese servicemen helped with the office work of the O.M.O., worked in the hospitals of Transbaikalia, and provided food delivery. Also awarded were the Japanese commandants of railway stations on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

The O.M.O. had a special version of orders for non-Christians, which were also awarded to the Japanese seconded to Semenov. It was

²⁸ GAZK, Fund 329. Series 1. Files 10, 46, 82.

the Order of St. George the Great Martyr and Victory-bearer, 4th Class. It had a distinctive engraving – the letters O, M, and O on three of the four ends of the cross. The Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus were also produced. While the headquarters of the Detachment was in Chita, the orders were made with the use of ivory instead of enamel at the Art and Industrial School, formed as a result of the merger of the Art and Industrial School evacuated from Yekaterinburg in 1919 and the Chita Art School [Alekseev 2019, pp. 139–145]. The Chita printing shop produced artistic certificates for awarding the Order of St. George of the 4th Class [Selivanov 2017, p. 45]. After the defeat of the White Movement in Transbaikalia and the retreat of Semenov's units to Manchuria, starting from November 1920, the Orders of St. George, St. Anna, and St. Stanislaus were made in Harbin [Selivanov 2017, p. 62].

An episode that occurred after the defeat of the White Movement and the withdrawal of the Japanese troops from the Russian Far East can serve as a peculiar epilogue to the interaction of the Japanese command and Ataman Semenov. Semenov left Russia via Primorye, from where he first moved to Seoul, where he met with General Oba Jiro, former commander of the 3rd Division stationed in Chita. The meeting took place at the palace of the Governor-General of Korea, where a dinner was held in honor of the Russian guest, at which General Oba was wearing all the Russian orders he had. In his memoirs, Semenov wrote about this that the kind attitude towards him in the Japanese military environment had clearly not changed [Semenov 2007, p. 290]. Semenov's cooperation with the Japanese military continued after 1922; however, it was of a fundamentally different nature and did not radically affect the actual relations between Japan and Russia, where a different government was established.

As for the biography of General Oba Jiro, once again, it is important to point out many similarities with the biographies of the other military personnel listed above. During the Russo-Japanese War, he participated in the siege of Port Arthur, and, during the First World War, he was the military representative of Japan at the headquarters of the Supreme Commander in Russia. With the outbreak of the Civil War, in 1918, he

was appointed commander of the 3rd Division stationed in Chita, which guarded the railway from Nerchinsk to Verkhneudinsk.

Thus, the biography of Oba Jiro shows the main stages that recur in the lives of many Japanese servicemen of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who were related to Russia – the war in 1904–1905, award-marked cooperation during the First World War, as well as assistance to those political and military forces that fought the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Conclusion

The above review of the events and circumstances in which Japanese servicemen received Russian awards in the course of 15 years shows how complex and multifaceted the interaction between Russia and Japan was in the early 20th century. It was a period of bilateral rapprochement marked by mutual colonial and geopolitical interests. Quickly enough, the memory of the war of 1904–1905 became the reason for the appearance of rituals of reconciliation: The military from both sides tried to reward each other or celebrate the courage of yesterday's rivals.

Presented at the high state level were several dozen symbolic awards, including Russian awards to the Japanese Imperial couple and princes, and members of the ruling family. High-ranking military officers, admirals, and generals were often awarded. At the same time, in many cases, Russian awards were given to those military personnel who had shown their worth in the battles of the 1904–1905 war a few years earlier.

During the First World War, in addition to the etiquette and diplomatic awards in accordance with their intended purpose, there were many awards for providing specific assistance, especially in the field of naval cooperation, i.e., cargo transportation, equipping of Russian ships, rectification of the consequences of accidents on the ships *Peresvet* and *Empress Maria*.

After 1917, during the Civil War, Japan supported those political forces that confirmed the continuity of the military and financial obligations of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments. It is not surprising, therefore, that diplomatic contacts with the government of Admiral Kolchak and comprehensive assistance to the forces of Ataman Semenov were carried out precisely by those Japanese senior officers – admirals and generals – who had worked in Russia before 1917 and had already been awarded Russian orders.

The end of the Civil War and the establishment of the Soviet government in Russia ushered in a new period of bilateral relations filled with new content. However, even in the moments of rare thaws between Japan and the USSR, awarding orders and medals to military personnel of the opposite side in such great numbers as it had been before would have been impossible.

References

- Alekseev, E. P. (2019). Ekaterinburgskaya khudozhestvenno-promyshlennaya shkola v Chite. Iyul' 1919 – Yanvar' 1921 gg. [Yekaterinburg School of Industrial Art in Chita. July 1919–January 1921]. *Regional'nye arkhitekturno-khudozhestvennye shkoly* [Regional Schools of Art and Architecture], 1, 139–145. (In Russian).
- Baryshev, E. A. (2009). Yaponskaya missiya Velikogo knyazya Georgiya Mikhaylovicha [Japanese Mission of the Great Prince George Mikhaylovich]. *Znakom'tes' – Yaponiya* [Meet Japan], 50, 58–72. (In Russian).
- Datsyshen, V. G. (2021). Yaponiya i rossiiskoye pravitel'stvo A. V. Kolchaka. K probleme sovremennogo otnosheniya k yaponskoi interventsii v Sibiri [Japan and the Russian Government of A. V. Kolchak. On the Issue of the Contemporary Evaluation of the Japanese Intervention in Siberia]. *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 1, 121–140. (In Russian). DOI: 10.24412/2500-2872-2021-1-121-140
- Grishachev, S. V. (2020). Rossiya i Yaponiya: Istoricheskie obidy kak faktor natsional'noi identichnosti [Russia and Japan: Historical Grievances

- as National Identity Attribute]. *Istoriya*, 11, 12 (98). DOI: 10.18254/S207987840010434-6. (In Russian).
- Lemke, M. K. (2003). *250 dnei v tsarskoy stavke*. [250 Days in the Tsar's Supreme Headquarters]. Minsk: Kharvest. (In Russian).
- Levin, S. S. (2003). *Orden Svyatogo Apostola Andrey a Pervozvannogo (1699–1917). Orden Svyatoi Velikomuchenitsy Ekateriny (1714–1917). Spiski kavalerov i kavalerstvennykh dam* [Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle the First-Called (1699–1917). The Order of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr (1714–1917). The List of Knights and Dames]. Moscow: State Historical Museum. (In Russian).
- Pavlov, D. B. (2014). *Russko-yaponskie otnosheniya v gody Pervoi mirovoi voyny* [Russo-Japanese Relations During the First World War]. Moscow: ROSSPEN. (In Russian).
- Pestushko, Y. S. (2008). *Rossiisko-yaponskie otnosheniya v gody Pervoi mirovoi voyny (1914–1917)* [Russo-Japanese Relations During the First World War (1914–1917)]. Khabarovsk: Far Eastern State University for the Humanities. (In Russian).
- Polutov, A. V. (2012). *Yaponskie voennye missii v Man'chzhurii, Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii (1918–1922 gg.)* [Japanese Military Missions in Manchuria, Siberia, and the Russian Far East During 1918–1922]. *Vestnik DVO RAN* [Herald of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences], 4, 71–84. (In Russian).
- Ponomarev, V. P., Shabanov, V. M. (eds.). (2009). *Kavalery Imperatorskogo ordena Svyatogo Aleksandra Nevskogo, 1725–1917: Biobibliograficheskii slovar'* [The Knights of the Order of Alexander Nevsky, 1725–1917: Dictionary of Biographies and Bibliography]. Vol. 3. Moscow: Russkii mir. (In Russian).
- Selivanov, M. S. (2017). *Istoriya znakov grazhdanskoi voyny v Rossii. 1917–1922 gg.* [History of Awards of the Civil War in Russia. 1917–1922]. Vol. 3. Moscow. (In Russian).
- Semenov, G. M. (2007). *O sebe. Vospominaniya, mysli i vyvody (1904–1921)* [About Myself. Memories, Thoughts, and Conclusions]. Moscow: Tsentrpoligraph. (In Russian).

GRISHACHEV Sergey Victorovich – PhD (History), Associate Professor, School of Asian Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University: 21/4(5), Staraya Basmannaya Street, Moscow, 105066, Russian Federation.

E-mail: sgrishachev@hse.ru

ORCID: 0000-0002-6039-9637

SHMAKOTINA Zoya Alekseevna – student of the “Asian and African Studies” educational program, School of Asian Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University: 21/4(5), Staraya Basmannaya Street, Moscow, 105066, Russian Federation.

E-mail: zoya.shmakotina@gmail.com

This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is: Grishachev S. V., Shmakotina, Z. A. (2024). Nagrajdaniye yaponskikh voyennoslujaschih rossiskimi nagradami v gody Pervoi mirovoi I Grajdanskoi voin (1914–1922) [Rewarding Japanese Servicemen With Russian Awards During World War I and the Civil War (1914–1922)] *Yearbook Japan*, pp. 114–137. DOI: 10.55105/2687-1440-2024-53-114-137

From the Khalkhin Gol Events to the Neutrality Pact: Relations Between the USSR and Japan in the Reports of Soviet Diplomats in Tokyo (1939–1941)

I. A. Degtev

Abstract

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Soviet-Japanese relations were going through difficult times. The Mongolian issue and border incidents continually worsened bilateral contacts. In a state of hostility and open confrontation, the authorities of both countries detained and rummaged fishing vessels, artificially whipped up spy mania, increased pressure on left-wing elements (Japan) and arrested those who were associated with the enemy side through scientific or other work (the USSR). Limiting himself to two events from Soviet-Japanese history of this time, the author analyzes how Soviet-Japanese relations and the atmosphere of mutual perception changed in the period between the end of the Khalkhin Gol River conflict (1939) and the signing of the Neutrality Pact (1941).

Using reports from employees of the USSR Plenipotentiary Mission in Tokyo as an example, the author examines how Japan's attempt to begin building "new relations" with the USSR affected the position of Soviet diplomats and influenced the degree and quality of interaction between them and the Japanese.

Keywords: the USSR, Japan, Khalkhin Gol, Soviet-Japanese relations, Soviet diplomats, Neutrality Pact.

In 1939, Japan made a final decision to reconsider its views on the nature of its relations with the Soviet Union. Several circumstances contributed to this: the conclusion of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, the defeat of the Kwantung Army during the battles on the Khalkhin Gol River and the outbreak of war in Europe. All three events had an impact on the transformation of Japan's foreign policy, and while the declaration of war on Germany by Great Britain and France caused a much less severe shock, the deal between the German leadership and Moscow was perceived in Tokyo as an unequivocal and unforgivable betrayal [Molodyakov 2012, p. 425]. Having received reports of the upcoming signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Japanese press almost immediately lashed out at the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Newspapers wrote about the failure of Japanese diplomacy and called for a change in its course. The temporary chargé d'affaires of the USSR in Tokyo, N. I. Generalov, noted that the conclusion of the Soviet-German treaty not only changed the international situation, but also upset all the plans of Japan's military circles.¹ The diplomat concluded that, in connection with what had happened, the question of the desirable direction of the empire's policy was actively discussed: either to improve relations with the USSR, or to negotiate with Great Britain on the delimitation of spheres of influence in China.

A similar picture was painted at the American embassy in Tokyo. Temporary chargé d'affaires Eugene Dooman wrote that everyone, from government officials to ordinary subjects, were stunned by the actions of the Germans.² Anger and indignation prevailed, and the resentment due to the fact that Germany had given Japan no prior notice of its negotiations with the USSR, in fact, put an end to the further strengthening of the Anti-Comintern Pact and the coordination of policy with Berlin.³ Through its ambassador, Ōshima Hiroshi, Japan

¹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 170.

² FRUS, 1939. Vol. III, the Far East. Washington: United Press Government Printing Office, 1955. P. 51.

³ Ibid. P. 66.

expressed an official protest to Germany, declaring a serious violation of the secret protocol to the Anti-Comintern Pact, namely, the second article.⁴ “The alliance of Japan with Germany and Italy and the Anti-Comintern Pact are turning into empty paper,” as V. I. Belokurov, Secretary of the USSR Military Attaché in Tokyo, telegraphed to the head of the Fifth Directorate of the Red Army [Voennaya razvedka informiruet 2008, p. 163]. A similar idea was expressed in the reports to the U.S. State Department written by the American Ambassador to Moscow, Laurence Steinhardt. He noted that one of the chief advantages which the Soviet Union obtained through the non-aggression pact with Germany was the weakening of German-Japanese cooperation directed against the USSR.⁵

In an atmosphere of mistrust towards the Third Reich, the authority of the supporters of a military-political alliance with the Germans fell sharply, and the Axis faction began to disintegrate. With the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact, the Japanese Army Ministry, which was considered the core of Japanese-German cooperation, even temporarily banned discussion of the project of a trilateral alliance along the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo line [Hosoya 1976, p. 193]. Taking responsibility for the Japanese government’s failure to foresee the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact and symbolically demonstrating the “end” of the policy of collaboration with Germany, Prime Minister Baron Hiranuma Kiichirō announced the resignation of his cabinet.

The task of forming a new cabinet was entrusted to General Abe Nobuyuki, whose candidacy was expected to attract the support of all sectors of society, including the army. Surprisingly, the circumstances that led to the resignation of the Hiranuma government aroused much more interest than Abe’s appointment. The reasons given by the baron were received with great satisfaction by the Japanese press, and his

⁴ DGFP. 1918–1945. Series D. Vol. VII. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1956. P. 278.

⁵ FRUS, 1940. Vol. I, General. Washington: United Press Government Printing Office, 1959. P. 654.

determination to “scrupulously [...] fulfill his obligations to the Emperor” was presented by commentators in laudatory terms.⁶

Following the attack on Poland, on September 4, 1939, the Abe government issued a statement on Japan’s non-intervention in the European war, and, on September 13, it was announced that the country would maintain an “independent position” in international affairs [Istoriya voyny na Tikhom okeane 1957, p. 307]. In an effort to achieve a balanced foreign policy, the Japanese leadership chose to resolve the “Chinese Incident” and improve relations with the United States, Great Britain, France, and the USSR.

Unwilling to take responsibility and commit themselves to specific, primarily military, obligations to the Germans, the Japanese took steps to normalize relations with the USSR. Of course, they were largely prompted to do so by the situation in China and the desire to resolve the issue of Moscow’s political and economic support for the Chiang Kai-shek’s regime. Informing the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, Generalov wrote that some leaders of right-wing organizations were considering the possibility of concluding a non-aggression pact with Moscow [Dokumenty vneshnei politiki 1992, p. 111]. In their opinion, a restoration of relations and a rapprochement with the USSR were necessary to counter Great Britain. On the other hand, according to reports from the Soviet intelligence resident in Tokyo, Richard Sorge, it was most difficult to push through this point of view in the ranks of the Kwantung Army, whose leadership was reluctant to take such a step [Russkii arkhiv 1997, p. 160]. Despite the disagreements and factional struggle that existed within the Japanese political elite, a course was adopted to change policy towards the USSR. “On the issue of ending the adventuristic policy against the North,” Sorge concluded on September 27, 1939, “there is currently a general agreement of all factions” [Ibid, p. 161].

⁶ FRUS, 1939. Vol. IV, the Far East, the Near East and Africa. Washington: United Press Government Printing Office, 1965. P. 459.

The Reestablishment of Soviet-Japanese Relations

After the suspension of hostilities at Khalkhin Gol and the conclusion of an armistice in Moscow, the situation in Soviet-Japanese relations was gradually changing for the better. An agreement was reached to create a quadripartite commission to clarify the border between the Mongolian People's Republic and Manchukuo, and a draft trade agreement was discussed. In response to the Japanese government's proposal to improve trade and economic ties between the two countries, the Soviet authorities declared their full readiness for negotiations. Towards the end of 1939, in the Kremlin, the USSR Foreign Commissar Molotov and the Japanese ambassador to Moscow Tōgō Shigenori signed a new protocol on the extension of the fishing convention. "After the signing, as a sign of the completion of the negotiations that lasted all night within the walls of the Kremlin," Tōgō recalled, "on Molotov's orders, some *hors d'oeuvres* [snacks. – I. D.] and drinks were served, and he raised a toast to the improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations, in which he also expressed gratitude for my efforts. In response, I raised my glass, saying that it was significant that I was meeting the first day of the year 1940, which would be memorable for the entire world, in the Kremlin" [Togo 1996, p. 205].

The changes that were taking place at the official level naturally affected the position of Soviet diplomats and influenced the nature of the Japanese interaction with them. Based on the obvious reasons for maintaining peaceful and good-neighborly relations with the USSR, it was important for the Japanese authorities to show that the "new relations" with the Soviet Union were developing in all directions, including through interaction with its representatives in Tokyo. Anti-Soviet propaganda in the press was reduced, posters and slogans that had hung on the streets of Tokyo not so long ago were removed from all places.⁷ Similar measures were taken on the Soviet

⁷ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 174.

side. U.S. ambassador Steinhardt, analyzing rumors about a possible improvement in the Soviet-Japanese relations, reported to Washington on September 8, 1939, that public attacks on Japan in the press had subsided. According to his observations, this was confirmed during the celebration of the 25th International Youth Day on the Red Square, where “comparatively few anti-Japanese slogans and banners” were displayed.⁸ Although the Soviet leadership did not pursue the goal of a profound transformation of Japan’s image, as relations were restored, it nevertheless went so far as to soften the language on the Land of the Rising Sun and reduce the negative connotations of it in the media [Korshenko 2018, p. 121]. The same was done by the Japanese.

“Malicious and anti-Soviet articles,” as K. A. Smetanin, the new USSR plenipotentiary representative in Tokyo, wrote to Molotov on November 25, 1939, “have been replaced in a significant number of newspapers by more or less balanced, calm ones that pose questions in a businesslike manner.”⁹ “Now the life of the Plenipotentiary Mission will proceed in better conditions,” claimed Nomura Kichisaburō, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the first unofficial meeting with Smetanin.¹⁰ The Soviet Plenipotentiary Representative admitted that he was glad to hear these words, but did not fail to remind his partner of the “far from satisfactory state” in which the work of the Plenipotentiary Mission and its staff had been all this time. Nomura’s words reflected the new course of Japanese diplomacy, and the impatience with which the country’s public awaited the arrival of the new Soviet ambassador to Tokyo only confirmed this. “Everyone is showing great interest in the arrival of Comrade Smetanin,” summarized Chargé d’Affaires Generalov at the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, “the newspapers are trying to connect his arrival with some kind of ‘new’ policy of the USSR towards Japan, and his

⁸ FRUS, 1939. Vol. III, the Far East. Washington: United Press Government Printing Office, 1955. Pp. 62–63.

⁹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 191. D. 3. L. 150.

¹⁰ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 254.

delay in leaving is explained by the ongoing discussion of this 'new' policy."¹¹

Having left Moscow on October 22, Smetanin arrived in Tokyo on November 6, although the Japanese capital was ready to welcome him long before that. At the time, when even the Soviet embassy did not know the date of Smetanin's arrival, various rumors were actively spreading in Japan on this matter. According to a number of Japanese newspapers, Smetanin was supposed to leave Moscow on October 10 and go to the Land of the Rising Sun a month earlier than expected. "Smetanin," wrote *Nichibei Shimbun* on September 23, citing *Hōchi Shimbun*, "has advanced his scheduled date of departure by one month reportedly to conduct negotiations with the Japanese for the readjustment of relations of the two countries side by side with the Moscow conference now going on between Ambassador Togo and Foreign Commissar Molotov in accordance with the decisions of the Supreme Council."¹² "The arrival of the new ambassador in Japan," reported *Teikoku Shimpō* on October 8, "attracts the attention of all circles, since it has a serious bearing on the issue of relations between Japan and the USSR. Although the Foreign Ministry has not yet received the telegram about Smetanin's departure, there are nevertheless rumors that he will leave for his destination in the coming days."¹³

In the wake of these rumors, a delegation from the "Association of Fishing Interests," headed by Count Kabayama Sukehide, planned to meet Smetanin on October 13. Having learned of this news from Kabayama's secretary, Generalov said that if they knew that Smetanin was coming, then let them meet him, "we have no information about his arrival yet."¹⁴

The politeness which the Japanese showed at home accompanied Smetanin throughout the entire journey to Tokyo. "On the morning of

¹¹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 227.

¹² *Nichibei Shimbun*. 23.09.1939.

¹³ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 202. D. 101. L. 122.

¹⁴ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 227.

October 29, we crossed the border in Otpor (Zabaykalsk. – *I. D.*) and arrived at the Manzhouli station. An unusual meeting took place (or rather, Soviet diplomats had not had such meetings for a long time): a solid number of all sorts of official representatives, excessive courtesy and attentiveness, extremely polite treatment. <...> Despite the fact that we arrived in Seoul at three o'clock in the morning on November 2, we were met here quite honorably.”¹⁵ Upon arrival in the city, Smetanin gave an interview to Japanese journalists, and his phrase that “there is no question between Japan and Soviet Russia which cannot be peacefully solved” flew around and was placed on the front page of many newspapers.¹⁶

The change that occurred in relation to Soviet diplomats in Tokyo could not have happened without the negotiations then underway in Moscow and the improvement of the political climate between the two capitals as a whole. Even foreign diplomats were wondering about the extent to which police pressure had decreased against the backdrop of the turning point in Soviet-Japanese relations. “When I asked him,” the plenipotentiary noted in his diary, commenting on a conversation with the German ambassador Eugen Ott, “if he knew about this regime, he literally exclaimed: ‘Oh, very good’.”¹⁷ Having received the answer that the regime had weakened, Ott, according to Smetanin, “with some boasting reported that he had personally talked more than once with the right people about changing this regime, proving that an improvement in the regime would be one of the measures that would improve relations between Japan and the USSR.”¹⁸ However, Ott did not inspire confidence, and later Smetanin gave him the following description: “Ott, having dealings and conversations with us, holds a branch of ‘peace and friendship’ in his left hand, but in his right one [he holds] a well-sharpened dagger, which he uses from time to time, inciting some of his Japanese friends against us. <...> Pretending to be

¹⁵ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 252.

¹⁶ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*. 04.11.1939.

¹⁷ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 258.

¹⁸ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 258–259.

a friend and fawning over us, he can always do us harm. Caution and more caution [is needed] with such a subject.”¹⁹

Through its ambassador in Tokyo, Germany sought to act as a mediator in relations between the USSR and Japan. The Japanese partners were informed about this long before the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, although when negotiations on it were already underway. On August 21, 1939, before the trip of the Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Joachim Ribbentrop to Moscow, the Japanese ambassador in Berlin was once again told about the advisability of a speedy normalization of Japanese-Soviet relations: first at a reception with the State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry Ernst Weizsäcker, who reported on the “forced” German-Soviet rapprochement due to provocations by Poland, the British-French encirclement and the lack of success in the negotiation process on an alliance of three powers, and then during a personal conversation with Ribbentrop. The Germans sought to convince the Japanese that Britain was the “number one enemy” for Japan and Germany, and therefore the treaty with the USSR was concluded in the interests of both countries [Mileev 2017, p. 109]. After the signing of the pact, Ribbentrop also offered his country’s mediation services to I. V. Stalin. The Soviet leader considered Germany’s assistance useful, but he did not want the Japanese to get the impression that this initiative had come from the USSR. Agreeing with Stalin’s words, Ribbentrop emphasized that he would simply continue the conversations that had taken place with the Japanese ambassador and that no initiatives would be made on this issue by either the Soviet or German side [1941 god 1998, p. 579].

“New Relations” With the USSR

In order to emphasize the progressive nature of Soviet-Japanese relations and create a favorable atmosphere around them, the Japanese authorities used various means.

¹⁹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 94.

On the one hand, they used politicians and entrepreneurs who presented themselves as “friends” of the USSR and talked about the “good will” and “friendly intentions” of the Japanese authorities. The Soviet embassy treated such speeches with distrust and often called them nothing more than “verbal demagoguery” and “idle talk” that were not believed to be backed by concrete actions.²⁰ “We, Russians, are materialists,” as G. G. Dolbin, First Secretary, told Andō Yoshirō, an employee of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, “and for us, deeds and facts are more important than verbal assurances, even from high-ranking persons.”²¹ These “assurances” were usually given at ceremonial events, breakfasts, lunches and dinners, to which Soviet diplomats were invited and where calls for cooperation and the establishment of good-neighborly relations between the two countries were often heard. “The purpose of this ‘route’ that the Japanese arranged for us,” concluded Y. A. Malik, a counsellor to the plenipotentiary mission, in his diary on July 2, 1940, “was obviously to test the possibility of communicating with us. It is quite obvious that all of this was done with the sanction and on the instructions of the leadership of the so-called ‘renovation’ movement from Japan, of which Vice-Admiral Sakonji Seizō, chairman of the North Sakhalin Oil Company, is an active participant.

It is clear from newspapers and from personal conversations with individual representatives of this movement that a number of active figures of this movement, who are striving to rebuild Japan along ‘totalitarian lines,’ support the idea that it is necessary to somehow come to an agreement with the USSR.”²² “Passivity in the north and activity in the south,” Sakonji had previously convinced Smetanin.²³ “It is becoming incomprehensible to me,” the vice-admiral asked at a meeting with the Soviet plenipotentiary envoy, “why the Soviet Union is creating a reinforced defensive line in the Far East, thereby keeping the Kwantung Army in suspense. It would be better if the Soviet Union understood

²⁰ AVP RF. F. 06. Op. 6. Pap. 58. D. 803a. L. 193.

²¹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 47.

²² AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 73.

²³ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 63.

the point of view of Japanese sailors and established friendlier relations with Japan.”²⁴

Although Sakonji had visited the Soviet envoy before, his visits took on special significance during the period when the position of the Prime Minister of Japan was occupied by Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa. Yonai was known for his moderate and friendly views on the Soviet Union and opposed an alliance with Germany. It follows from diplomatic documents that, in the context of the discussion of the choice of the direction of aggression, it was primarily representatives of naval circles who sought dialogue with the USSR, having strengthened their positions in the country's political leadership and believing that Japan's interests lay in the South Seas region.

On the other hand, there were attempts to recall the existence of Soviet-Japanese cultural ties, which, however, as the international situation worsened and political mistrust between the countries grew, came to naught by the end of the 1930s. Being in a state of hostility and open confrontation, the authorities of both countries detained and rummaged fishing vessels, accusing each other of poaching and border violations, artificially whipped up spy mania, increased pressure on left-wing elements (Japan) and persecuted those who, by virtue of their service, were associated with the enemy side (the USSR) [SSSR i strany Vostoka 2010, p. 76].

In Japan, with the appointment of Suetsugu Nobumasa to the post of Minister of Internal Affairs in December 1937, mass arrests of representatives of the left-wing movement began. Those who disagreed with government policy were arrested and sentenced to prison. “The left-wing and liberal-minded intellectuals quickly felt the pressure from the ruling clique,” Smetanin wrote in his review to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. “No sooner had the military begun the war against the Chinese Republic in 1937 than the Minister of Internal Affairs began to carry out a large-scale crackdown on trade unions, leftist organizations of journalists, writers, and artists: arrest radically minded professors,

²⁴ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 63.

impose a ban on the sale of 'seditious' books, limit the publication of journals, and implement strict censorship of the printed word, films, and stage performances."²⁵ For attempting to create a popular front movement against Japan's war in China, two Diet members, the leaders of the Japan Proletarian Party and the All-People's Peasant Union, Katō Kanjū and Kuroda Hisao, were sentenced to several years in prison, and their organizations were banned. In parallel with the events in Japan, in the USSR, at the height of mass repressions, a persecution of famous Japanologists from Moscow, Leningrad, and Vladivostok was underway. D. M. Pozdneev, E. D. Polivanov, N. A. Nevsky, K. A. Kharnsky, N. P. Ovidiev were accused of espionage and promptly and secretly shot. N. I. Konrad, E. M. Kolpakchi, A. L. Kletny, M. S. Tsyn, I. L. Ioffe remained alive, but were unable to avoid arrest and punishment in the form of labor camps [Filippov 2021, p. 105].

In a situation where Soviet-Japanese relations were being restored, Japan decided to play the cultural card and turn to those organizations in the country that were not yet closed, whose tasks included maintaining interaction with the USSR. Among such structures, the Japanese-Soviet Society stood out. Being the successor of the Japanese-Russian Society, founded in 1902, the current organization had as its main goal, like its predecessor, "the study of Russia and the promotion of friendship between the two peoples" [Samoylov 2015, p. 32]. Throughout its history, the society enjoyed the support and patronage of high-ranking figures in Japanese politics: Prince Kan'in Kotohito remained its permanent president, and the military commander Terauchi Masatake and the famous politician Gotō Shimpei served as chairmen and vice-chairmen at various times.

Having resumed its work in 1926, the society continued to study its new and at the same time old neighbor: it encouraged research into Soviet culture, science, and art, and was also involved in holding lectures and welcoming meetings for distinguished guests from the Soviet Union. However, in an era of ubiquitous images and stereotypes, when

²⁵ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 191. D. 3. L. 79.

every step or sign of attention from the Japanese was questioned, the activities of the Japanese-Soviet Society could not help but be viewed in a suspicious light. In addition, in April 1939, “completely unnoticed by public attention,” its reorganization took place.²⁶ “Only a note we accidentally found,” Smetanin wrote to Molotov in June of that year, “placed in the *Nichi-Nichi* newspaper somewhere in the back, informed us of this fact.”²⁷ The essence of the reorganization was as follows:

“1) to change the goal of the society so that it would have the goal of studying the situation in the USSR, thereby assisting the state policy of Japan;

2) to ask Prince Kan'in to resign from the post of chairman of this society;

3) to accept a collegial system of advisers (managers) of this society from among the Japanese members of this society.

The following eight people are appointed as advisers (managers) of the new body: Ōhashi Shintarō, the old vice-minister of foreign affairs Kurachi Tetsukichi, retired Lieutenant General Hashimoto Toranosuke, the former Japanese ambassador to the USSR Tanaka Tokichi, honorary professor of the Tokyo Institute of Foreign Studies Yasugi Sadatoshi, the former Japanese consul general in Vladivostok Watanabe Rie, and then, from among the members of this society, Numata Masajiro and Sekine Seiichi.”²⁸

After meeting with the new chairman of the society, Kurachi, at the USSR Plenipotentiary Mission in Tokyo, Malik made the following conclusion: “I have the impression that this dummy society exists only on paper and is essentially nothing more than one of the anti-Soviet cells in Japan, which aims to carry out intelligence activities in relation to the USSR. In the appropriate political situation, this society quickly disguises itself as a ‘Japanese-Russian’ and even a ‘Japanese-Soviet Society,’ through which the Japanese try to carry out one or another

²⁶ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 191. D. 3. L. 127.

²⁷ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 191. D. 3. L. 127.

²⁸ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 191. D. 3. L. 127.

event requiring contact with the USSR Plenipotentiary Mission in Tokyo.”²⁹ According to Malik, the purpose of this society was not to improve cultural relations between the USSR and Japan, as Kurachi stated, but to “study the situation of the Soviet Union and the regions in its immediate vicinity in order to promote the development of Japanese state policy.”³⁰ Smetanin gave a similar assessment of the organization, calling it a “long-dead society” that the Japanese decided to revive in light of the “new relations” with the USSR.³¹ At the same time, neither Malik nor Smetanin completely rejected the idea of cooperation with the society, at least on the grounds that it could bring some benefit to the Soviet embassy, namely, to obtain additional information about certain people and distribute printed materials about the USSR.

The change in rhetoric towards the USSR and the desire to maintain good-neighborly relations with it influenced the public activities of Soviet diplomats in Japan. While in February 1939, as was the case at the farewell banquet given in honor of the Belgian ambassador Albert de Bassompierre, a number of foreign diplomats tried to avoid public conversations with Soviet representatives,³² as the USSR became more and more actively involved in European and Far Eastern affairs, contacts between the two groups of people gradually expanded. Now, not only the Japanese (for obvious reasons), but also foreigners sought to attract their attention. One such telling incident occurred at the funeral of Kitashirakawa Nagahisa, a cousin of Emperor Hirohito, who died, as the press reported, in an airplane crash while on duty in Inner Mongolia in China.³³ At the official farewell ceremony for the prince, the Soviet side was represented by Smetanin and Counselor D. A. Zhukov. The envoy reported that, among the foreigners, only two or three people “turned away” from him, while the other diplomats “willingly greeted and

²⁹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 172.

³⁰ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 172.

³¹ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 151.

³² AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 19.

³³ *Shin Sekai Asahi Shimbun*. 06.09.1940.

conversed.”³⁴ The Japanese expressed similar courtesy: “Today Matsuoka (Yōsuke – *I. D.*) is with me, and Nishi (Haruhiko – *I. D.*) and Zhukov greeted us with an emphatic courtesy.”³⁵

A major symbolic expression of the changed attitude towards Soviet diplomats can be seen in the appearance of the managing director of the Kabuki theater on the territory of the USSR embassy in October 1940. The purpose of his visit was to invite Plenipotentiary Smetanin to one of the productions dedicated to the celebration of the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Empire. In the history of the Soviet embassy, this situation was unique. “This fact in itself,” wrote Malik, “is obviously unprecedented in the history of the Soviet embassy, when a director of a theater personally invites an ambassador.”³⁶ Despite diplomatic acts of politeness and the desire to emphasize the normal course of development of Soviet-Japanese relations, Soviet diplomats continued, however, to believe that the Japanese authorities, due to the current international circumstances, were thus trying to “flirt” with representatives of the USSR.

The pinnacle of Japan’s “friendly” policy towards the Soviet Union and its diplomats was the signing of the neutrality pact in Moscow in April 1941. The Japanese press, according to TASS, paid great attention to this document and wrote that the political agreement would be followed by the signing of a trade agreement.³⁷ This was not the only news that the press discussed. Foreign agencies eagerly reported on the alleged proposal made to Molotov at the Yaroslavsky railway station by Matsuoka to visit Tokyo in return and on the fact that this proposal was accepted by the Soviet People’s Commissar.³⁸

The conclusion of the Soviet-Japanese pact caused an ambiguous and sometimes even negative reaction in the world. According to the

³⁴ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 150.

³⁵ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 150.

³⁶ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 174.

³⁷ GA RF. F. P-4459. Op. 27. D. 590. L. 1.

³⁸ GA RF. F. P-4459. Op. 27. D. 590. L. 149.

Associated Press, the Soviet-Japanese treaty did not affect the current situation in international relations, but, in the future, under certain circumstances, it could cause serious changes.³⁹ The Washington Post newspaper linked the signing of the pact with the expansion of Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia and, at the same time, expressed dissatisfaction with the participation and role of the USSR in it. "Thus," the publication wrote, "Russia becomes an accomplice to future Japanese aggressions in the same way as in August 1939 its treaty with Germany contributed to German aggression. The Soviet Union kindled a great fire and has now apparently decided not to weaken it."⁴⁰

At the time when newspapers wrote about the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement that followed the conclusion of the pact, representatives of the USSR became the main heroes of public life in Japan for some time.⁴¹ A mention in the press, a special invitation to Kabuki theater, an acquaintance with one of the famous actors of our time, Onoe Kikugorō VI [Dokumenty vneshnei politiki 1998, p. 619]. On April 29, at the military parade in Tokyo, organized on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday, Smetanin, following the German ambassador Ott, found himself in the same row with Japan's main allies in the Tripartite Pact: Germany and Italy. The arrangement could have been different if not for the absence of the American, British, and French ambassadors – the most senior in terms of time spent as the heads of their diplomatic missions. The reasons why they did not come could have varied. Perhaps their absence was due to instructions from their capitals: Great Britain and France were at war with Germany, and this, in turn, forced the ambassadors to demonstratively avoid meetings with the Germans. It is possible that the U.S., maintaining neutrality but at the same time "morally" and economically supporting Britain, made the same arrangements and sent corresponding instructions to its diplomats. The special attention of the members of the diplomatic corps, the

³⁹ GA RF. F. P-4459. Op. 27. D. 590. L. 6.

⁴⁰ GA RF. F. P-4459. Op. 27. D. 590. L. 6.

⁴¹ *Nippo Jiji*. 29.04.1941.

Dōmei News Agency reported, was riveted on the Soviet envoy: it was all because, over the past few years, the USSR representative had never appeared at military parades.⁴²

Conclusion

The reestablishment of relations between the USSR and Japan, which began in the second half of 1939, was to a large extent a reaction to the Soviet-German rapprochement and the results of the military border conflicts of 1938–1939. As a result of the clashes at Khasan and Khalkhin Gol, Japan realized its vulnerability to the Soviet Union in terms of preparation, logistics, and coordination of actions. The economic difficulties caused by the war in China and related to the general situation in the world economy in connection with the outbreak of World War II also pushed Tokyo towards reconciliation with Moscow [Ermakov 2022, p. 28].

Having gone from open military confrontation to normalization of political dialogue, Soviet-Japanese relations acquired a new dimension. One of the consequences of the improvement in relations was a change in the position of Soviet diplomats in Japan. Police pressure decreased, and the quality and degree of interaction between the Japanese and the diplomats changed. In addition to official contacts with the leadership of the USSR, the Japanese authorities sought to develop relations with the Soviet embassy in Tokyo – this helped to emphasize the progressive nature of Soviet-Japanese relations and create a “friendly” atmosphere around them. The manifestation of Japanese “sincerity,” which diplomats encountered in various forms throughout 1939–1941, was questioned; the embassy called on its employees to “be on guard”⁴³ for every step or sign of attention from the Japanese: both the experience of past relations and the idea that changes in Japan’s position towards the USSR were temporary and situational were at play. The diplomats’ distrust was also due to their own view of the Japanese, which was not devoid of racial,

⁴² GA RF. F. P-4459. Op. 27. D. 590. L. 339.

⁴³ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 23. Pap. 206. D. 14. L. 151.

physical, and everyday stereotypes. “My impression of Abe himself was not good,” Chargé d’Affaires Generalov once said after a meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan. “<...> The manner of conversation and the vague, senile, but typically Japanese flattering smile reveals in him a dodger and a not entirely smart trickster.”⁴⁴

References

- 1941 god: v 2 knigah. Kniga 2.* (1998). [1941: In Two Parts. Part 2]. Moscow: International Fund “Democracy”. (In Russian).
- Dokumenty vneshnei politiki. T. XXII. 1939: v 2-h knigakh. Kniga 2. 1 sentyabrya – 31 dekabrya.* (1992). [Documents of Foreign Policy. 1939. Vol. XXII. In Two Books. Book Two. September 1 – December 31]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya. (In Russian).
- Dokumenty vneshnei politiki. T. XXIII. 1940 – 22 iyunya 1941: v 2-h knigakh (3-h ch.). Kniga 2 (2). 2 marta – 22 iyunya 1941.* (1998). [Documents of Foreign Policy. 1940 – 22 June 1941. Vol. XXIII. In Two Books. Book Two. March 2 – June 22, 1941]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya. (In Russian).
- Ermakov, D. N. (2022). Politicheskaya otsenka sobytiy Vtoroi Yaponokitajskoi voyny (1937–1939 gody) v trudakh germanskikh ofitsialnykh voennykh predstavitelei [Political Assessment of the Events of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1939) in the Writings of German Official Military Representatives]. *Konfliktologiya / nota bene*, 2022, 3, 16–32. (In Russian).
- Filippov, A. V. (2021). Yaponovedenie v Rossii: traditsii klassiki i trendy peremen [Japanese Studies in Russia: From Its Classical Origins to the Winds of Changing Trends]. *Kontury globalnykh transformatsii: politika, ekonomika, pravo*, 14 (6), 92–116. (In Russian).
- Hosoya, C. (1976). The Tripartite Pact, 1939–1940 / Trans. by J. W. Morley. In: *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany, and the USSR, 1935–1940*. New York: Columbia University Press, 179–257.

⁴⁴ AVP RF. F. 0146. Op. 22. Pap. 192. D. 13. L. 182.

- Istoriya voiny na Tikhom okeane. V 5 tomakh. T. 2. Yapon-kitaiskaya voina.* (1957). [The History of the Pacific War. In Five Books. Book Two. The Second Sino-Japanese War]. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House. (In Russian).
- Korshenko, S. V. (2018). *Obraz Yaponii i yaponsev v sovetskom massovom soznanii nakanune i v period Vtoroi mirovoi voiny* [The Image of Japan and the Japanese in the Soviet Mass Consciousness on the Eve and During the Second World War]. (Candidate of Historical Sciences Dissertation). Saint Petersburg. (In Russian).
- Mileev, D. A. (2017). *Otnosheniya Yaponii i Germanii v XX veke: slozhnye poiski modus vivendi* [Japanese-German Relations in the Twentieth Century: Complex Searches of Modus Vivendi]. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS. (In Russian).
- Molodyakov, V. E. (2012). *Rossiya i Yaponiya v poiskakh soglasiya (1905–1945). Geopolitika. Diplomatiya. Lyudi i idei* [Russia and Japan in Search of Amity (1905–1945). Geopolitics. Diplomacy. People and Ideas]. Moscow: AIRO-XXI. (In Russian).
- Russkii arkhiv: Velikaya Otechestvennaya vojna. Sovetsko-yaponskaya vojna. 18 (7–1). Sovetsko-yaponskaya vojna 1945 g. Istoriya voenno-politicheskogo protivoborstva dvukh derzhav v 30–40-e gody: Dokumenty i materialy v 2 t.* (1997). [Russian Archive: The Great Patriotic War. The Soviet-Japanese War. 18 (7–1). The Soviet-Japanese War of 1945. The History of the Military-Political Confrontation between the Two Powers in the 30–40s: Documents and Materials. In 2 Vols.]. Moscow: TERRA. (In Russian).
- Samoylov, N. A. (2015). *Rossiisko-yaponskie otnosheniya v 1906–1916 gg. (po materialam iz fondov Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo arkhiva)* [The Russian-Japanese Relations in 1906–1916 (Based on the Materials of the Russian State Historical Archive)]. *Istoriya Peterburga*, 1 (75), 28–33. (In Russian).
- SSSR i strany Vostoka nakanune i v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny.* (2010). [The USSR and the Oriental Countries on the Eve and During the Second World War]. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS. (In Russian).

Togo, S. (1996). *Vospominaniya yaponskogo diplomata* [The Memoirs of a Japanese Diplomat]. Moscow: Novina. (In Russian).

Voennaya razvedka informiruet. Dokumenty Razvedupravleniya Krasnoi Armii. Yanvar' 1939 – iyun' 1941 g. (2008) [Military Intelligence Informs. Documents of the Red Army Military Intelligence Administration. January 1939 – June 1941]. Moscow: International Fund “Democracy”. (In Russian).

DEGTEV Ivan Andreevich – Post-Graduate student, School of International Relations, Saint Petersburg State University.

E-mail: ivan.degtev@mail.ru

ORCID: 0000-0001-7091-9328

This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is: Degtev I. A. (2025). Ot sobitii na Khalkhin-gole do pakta o neitralitete: otnosheniya mejdu SSSR i Yaponiei v doneseniakh sovetских diplomatov v Tokyo (1939–1941) [From the Khalkhin Gol Events to the Neutrality Pact: Relations Between the USSR and Japan in the Reports of Soviet Diplomats in Tokyo (1939–1941)] *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 2025, 2, 5–19. (In Russian). DOI: 10.55105/2500-2872-2025-2-5-19

The Narrative of the Northern Territories in the Socio-Political Discourse of Contemporary Japan

D. V. Streltsov

Abstract

The article analyzes the Japanese official narrative about the Northern Territories, which is widespread in Japanese society as a key factor in the formation of the bad image of Russia in Japan. Of particular importance from the point of view of the emotional effect on public consciousness is the thesis that the Southern Kurils are the “ancestral territory of Japan,” that the USSR committed aggressive and unfair actions against Japan during World War II, and modern Russia did not correct them, and that the Japanese natives of the Southern Kurils experience enormous moral suffering, not having the opportunity to freely visit the graves of their ancestors. The article examines the organizational structure of state, public, and socio-political organizations designed to ensure public policy to popularize this narrative and shows the features of its reflection in school textbooks, museums, and memorial complexes. The author focuses on the Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories and the events held within its framework, including the annual “Northern Territories Day,” held on February 7.

It is concluded that, despite all the efforts of the government, Japanese public opinion in reality turns out to be relatively poorly informed about the problem of the Northern Territories. At the same time, as generations change, the interest in this problem is gradually decreasing, especially among young people. There is a process of realizing the futility of maintaining a hard line in the government’s approach to solving it. The humanitarian aspect of the

problem, related to visits to graves by former islanders and members of their families, causes the greatest public outcry, but even this aspect, as the results of public opinion polls show, has a limited effect.

Keywords: narrative of the Northern Territories, “ancestral territories”, visits to graves, victimization, “illegal occupation”, Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories, awareness of the problem of the Northern Territories.

Acknowledgements: This research was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (grant number 23-18-00109).

According to Japanese public opinion polls, Russia has consistently remained one of the most unpopular countries in Japan throughout the whole post-war period. For several decades, a friendly attitude towards Russia was expressed by the minority of Japanese people, not exceeding 10–15 percent [Chugrov 2016, p. 56], and by even fewer people after the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine in 2022. There is no doubt that bad feelings of the Japanese towards Russia are to a large extent rooted in the official narrative of the Northern Territories issue, which is widespread in Japanese society.

The name *Northern Territories* appeared during the Japanese-Soviet negotiations on normalizing relations in 1956, when Japan, with the support of the United States, included the islands of Kunashir and Iturup in the list of its territorial claims to the USSR. This led to a situation where the claims started to include four islands, not just two, as had been before. The invention of this name is connected with geographical confusion regarding the definition of the object of these territorial claims, requiring a certain level of systematization. Unlike the islands of Shikotan and Habomai, Japan recognizes the islands of Kunashir and Iturup as part of the Kuril Islands (calling them *Minami Chishima*, or the Southern Kurils), basing its position on evidence by the international geographical science and the pre-war administrative status of the islands. Since 1951, according to Article 2 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan has

renounced the Kuril Islands, so it was necessary to explain why this renunciation does not apply to the Southern Kuril Islands. The Japanese government argues that the islands of Kunashir, Iturup, Shikotan, and Habomai were recognized by Russia as part of Japan proper in 1855, when the first Russo-Japanese border treaty, the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia (the Treaty of Shimoda), was signed. Therefore, although, geographically, they partly belong to the Kuril Island Chain (at least the islands of Kunashir and Iturup), in the political sense, they do not correspond to the territories that Japan renounced in the San Francisco Peace Treaty, as they had never been part of any state other than Japan before 1945.¹ To avoid confusion in understanding Japan's territorial claims which include the islands of Kunashir and Iturup, which are recognized as part of the Kuril Islands, the Shikotan Island, which Japan sees as separate from the rest of the Kurils, and the Habomai Islands, which it considers part of Hokkaido but not part of the Kurils, a special name "Northern Territories" was invented. The name was coined by Takezo Shimoda, head of the Department of Treaties at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who first used it during parliamentary hearings on March 20, 1956 [Shimotomai 2011, p. 304]. However, in official documents and speeches by officials, this name started to be used only after January 1960, when government notes were exchanged between the USSR and Japan following the signing of the new version of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty [Fujiu 2020, p. 168]. In particular, it was mentioned in a speech given by Foreign Minister Fujiyama in February 1960.

According to Japan's official position, the Northern Territories still remain under Japan's sovereignty. On maps published in Japan, they are depicted as part of national territory of Japan. Other former possessions of Japan that were given to the USSR as a result of World War II, such as Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands north of Iturup Island, are

¹ われらの北方領土 2022年版. 外務省 [Our Northern Territories. Yearbook 2022]. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/pr/pub/pamph/hoppo6.html> P.11

marked on Japanese maps with an uncertain legal status. This means that there is currently no peace treaty between Japan and Russia with specific provisions regarding these territories, and that the border line between the two countries is not clearly defined. Therefore, the ownership of these territories is still undetermined and should be resolved through bilateral negotiations between Japan and Russia.

It should be noted that the name *Northern Territories* is pivotal for understanding the Japanese position on the territorial issue, so it is used in this article solely for describing this position. For each point of Japanese argumentation, Russia has its own counterarguments, which are adequately outlined in relevant bibliography [Cherevko 1992; Sarkisov 1997; Georgiev 1998; Kuzminkov 2013; Streltsov 2019]. The purpose of this article is not to refute the arguments of the Japanese side, but rather to analyze the essence of the Japanese narrative, its mass appeal, and the extent to which it resonates in modern Japanese society.

Features of the Official Japanese Narrative About the Northern Territories

The official Japanese narrative of the Northern Territories is reflected in various sources, including the websites of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,² other ministries and government organizations, official documents, brochures, and information materials. It is also expressed through comments of government officials.

According to the website of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Japan received information about the existence of the four “northern islands” (Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, and Habomai) earlier than Russia. The Treaty of Shimoda, signed in 1855 between Japan and Russia, peacefully and amicably established the border between Iturup and Urup, and, since

² 北方領土 [Northern Territories]. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/hoppo/index_4to.html

that moment, these four islands have come under the administrative control of Japan and were rightfully part of its territory until the end of World War II. However, at the end of the war, on August 9, 1945, the Soviet Union violated the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact and invaded Japan, occupying the four islands in the period from August 28 to September 5. This occurred after Japan had already accepted the Potsdam Declaration. Although only the Japanese citizens (about 17,000 people) resided on these islands at that time, the Soviet Union unilaterally annexed the four islands in 1946 and forced all Japanese residents to leave by 1948. The illegal occupation of these islands by the Soviet Union continues by today's Russia. Due to the Northern Territories issue and the absence of a mutually recognized border, no peace treaty has been signed between Japan and Russia, despite the fact that more than seven decades have passed since the end of the war.

It is noteworthy that there are certain moments in the Japanese narrative that are of particular importance in terms of their emotional effect on public consciousness. First, it is the thesis that the Southern Kuril Islands are the “ancestral territory of Japan” (固有の領土 *koyū-no ryōdo*).³ This thesis roams everywhere – from school textbooks and popular pamphlets published by government agencies to official documents. For example, the Japanese Diet resolution on the issue of the Habomai Island Chain adopted in March 1951 refers to territories geographically representing a continuation of Cape Hanasaki of the City of Nemuro as those “where the Japanese have lived since ancient times” (古来より日本人が居住していた) [Fujiu 2020, p. 159].

Russian authors put forward weighty counterarguments against the idea that the Southern Kuril Islands were discovered by Japan, including documentary evidence of the first appearance of Russians on the islands and the low level of reliability of maps and other historical documents submitted by the Japanese side. Among such documents that raise doubts among Russian historians, we can mention, for example,

³ Since July 2009, the Southern Kuril Islands have been referred to as *waga koyū no ryōdo* (“our ancestral territories”) in Japanese legislation.

the Shōhō Era Map of Japan (正保国絵図 *Shōhō kuni ezu*), dated 1644, which is often referred to as evidence of Japanese sovereignty over the islands [Georgiev 1998, pp. 13–70]. The idea that the Southern Kuril Islands are “ancestral territories” does not stand up to criticism, since Japan began active development of not only these islands, but also Hokkaido only in the second half of the 19th century, when a special colonization agency was created to settle the Japanese on the “new” territories such as Hokkaido, Sakhalin (Karafuto), and the Kuril Islands. For example, the settlement of Nemuro was founded only in 1869, and acquired the status of a city in 1900. Obviously, for Japanese culture and civilization, the value of the Southern Kuril Islands is insignificant and therefore they are not considered “sacred” territories in the context of Japanese cultural and historical identity. To support the thesis of the “ancestrality” of Southern Kurils, some Japanese historians suggest interpreting this term in an unusual way – not as territories belonging to a specific country since ancient times, but rather territories acquired by a state as a result of discovering “ownerless lands” and including them in the sphere of its effective control, and not necessarily uninhabited lands (as was the case with the Southern Kurils, which were inhabited mainly by Ainu people in the mid-19th century) [Tanaka 1991, p. 58]. In this context, the word “ancestral territories” in the Japanese interpretation means only that, at the time of Japan’s appearance in the Southern Kuril Islands, from the point of view of Japan, there were no Russian settlers there yet.

In other words, the phrase “ancestral territories” in its official Japanese interpretation acquired a distinctly politicized meaning, contrasting with its basic definition (which implies a sense of ownership from time immemorial, akin to the Japanese 固有 *koyū*). This shift in meaning can be traced through the historical context of its emergence in official documents. The idea of South Kuril Islands as “ancestral territories” was first introduced on December 7, 1955, during a speech delivered by a government official at a session of the budget committee in the Lower House. At this point, claims against the Soviet Union were extended to four islands, rather than the previously

stated two, thus becoming an official stance of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party [Fujiu 2020, p. 162]. Subsequently, in order to create the impression that these claims have an international recognition, and, in particular, the recognition from Japan's key ally, the phrase "ancestral territories" (*koyū-no ryōdo*) was used when translating into Japanese the politically neutral phrase "part of Japan proper" of the memorandum by the U.S. State Department dated September 7, 1956, which expressed the U.S. support for Japan's position on the South Kuril Islands.⁴ However, in some cases, when it was politically expedient, the Japanese government refrained from using this wording in official documents. This was the case, for example, after 2013, during the Japanese-Russian negotiations on signing a peace treaty held under the cabinet of Shinzo Abe. At that time, the phrase "territories under Japanese sovereignty" was used instead.⁵

In the classical sense, the Southern Kuril Islands have been "ancestral" since ancient times (according to some estimates, for about 15 thousand years) only for the Ainu people, who inhabited the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin, which, at various historical stages, were under the control of either Japan or Russia. It is worth noting in this regard that, in Japan, there is also a point of view that, since the Ainu people are an ethnic minority of Japan, all the lands on which they previously lived should belong to Japan [Turaev 2018, p. 223]. However, it cannot be denied that, since the Ainu people live on Southern Sakhalin, which was returned to the USSR after World War II, and even on Kamchatka, it

⁴ See the text of this document in the Japanese official translation on the website of the Cabinet Office. www8.cao.go.jp/hoppo/shiryoku/pdf/gaikou14.pdf

⁵ 北方領土は「固有の領土」「主権を有する領土」…首相「用語使い分けた記憶はない」 [The Northern Territories are "ancestral territories", "territories under Japanese sovereignty".. The prime minister: "I do not remember making a distinction in the use of these terms"]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*. 07.03.2022. <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20220307-OYT1T50283/>

seems unconvincing to assert that the Southern Kurils belong to Japan, based only on the fact that the Ainu inhabited these islands since time immemorial.⁶

Another emotionally charged part of the Japanese narrative is that the islands have been “captured” by the Soviet Union during World War II as a result of “aggressive” and “illegal” actions, which, in particular, included the unilateral violation by the USSR of the Neutrality Pact, leading to the subsequent military occupation of the islands. Little is known in Japan about the Russian legal argument that the obligations of the USSR under the UN Charter, according to which it was necessary to take all possible actions to end the war as soon as possible, took precedence over the Neutrality Pact.

In addition, an argument is used that the USSR occupied the islands in the very last period of the war, when Japan was no longer able to resist. In the most cynical form, this idea is promoted by the Soviet image of *kaji dorobō* (“thief at the scene of fire”, i.e., someone who takes advantage of a crisis).⁷ Japan believes that the occupation of the islands by the USSR was the result of a secret deal between the Allies (the Yalta Agreement of February 1945), which was concluded “behind its back.” Moreover, on September 24, 1941, the USSR joined the Atlantic Charter, which fixed the principle of not expanding territories for the Allied powers, and then violated it by annexing the Northern Territories. In Japan, Moscow’s actions are seen as a practical manifestation of the Stalinist approach to foreign policy, and therefore Tokyo places special emphasis on the fact that post-Soviet Russia proclaimed in its relations with Japan the rejection of “the legacy of totalitarianism” and “the

⁶ In December 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin, at a meeting with members of the Human Rights Council, proposed including Ainu among small peoples inhabiting Russia. *RIA Novosti*. 17.12.2018. <https://ria.ru/20181217/1548135596.html>

⁷ See, for example, a lecture by the former Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, Hyodo Nagao, on the occasion of the Northern Territories Day. <https://www.pref.toyama.jp/documents/8576/01490581.pdf>

legacy of the difficult past”.⁸ Besides, Japan often appeals to the contrast between the USSR and the United States, which returned Okinawa to Japan after more than 25 years of occupation. This fact is often used by the Japanese side to argue that modern Russia has not repented yet and, in fact, remains for Japan the same hostile state that the Soviet Union was. This historical thinking creates a sense of psychological comfort for the Japanese, allowing them to see themselves not only as the culprit, but also the victim in understanding their own militaristic past.

Another important part of the Northern Territories narrative refers to its humanitarian aspect, specifically, to sufferings experienced by former Japanese islanders who had lived on the Southern Kuril Islands before 1945. Approximately 280,000 Japanese civilians and war prisoners were forcibly relocated from the Sakhalin region between 1946 and 1949 [Kim 2009, p. 29], including 16,000 people from the Southern Kurils. Since the Japanese had inhabited the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin since the middle of the 19th century, for many of them these territories became the homeland where the graves of their ancestors were located. After their return to Japan, they were denied the opportunity to freely visit these places, and this became a source of considerable emotional distress for them, since, in Japan, caring for the graves of ancestors is considered a sacred duty.

It should be noted that Japanese citizens whose close relatives are buried in the Southern Kuril Islands have been able to visit their graves since 1964, when this practice was organized after the visit of Soviet Vice-Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan to Japan.⁹ According to the

⁸ われらの北方領土 2022年版. 外務省 [Our Northern Territories. Yearbook 2022. Our Northern Territories. Yearbook 2022]. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/pr/pub/pamph/hoppo6.html> P.4

⁹ This practice continued unabated until 2022, with interruptions between 1976 and 1986, when the Soviet side required a passport with a Soviet entry visa for entry from the Japanese.

Japanese Foreign Ministry, over the entire period of its implementation, almost 5,000 Japanese citizens visited 52 cemeteries located on these islands.¹⁰ This practice has not been abolished, although it was suspended, even after the Russian side terminated visa-free exchanges in September 2022.

The Japanese side emphasizes that these are elderly people (whose average age is about 88), who find it difficult to make multi-day sea journeys. Charter flights launched in 2017 were suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic and have not been resumed as of 2024.

Government Support for the Narrative of the Northern Territories

The government of Japan created a strong and extensive network of government, public, and socio-political organizations to support the narrative of the Northern Territories. The purpose of this network is to disseminate information about the issue to the general public.

On August 31st, 1982, the Law on Special Measures to Help Solve the Problem of the Northern Territories was passed. This law is still in effect today with several amendments and additions. Article 4 of the law specifically outlines the government responsibilities for promoting campaigns to return the Northern Territories and for educating the public about this issue through school curricula and other means.¹¹

The Cabinet includes the post of the minister without portfolio overseeing, among other areas, the sphere of state policy towards the Northern Territories (since 2023, in the second cabinet of Kishida,

¹⁰ 北方領土 [Northern Territories]. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/hoppo/index_4to.html

¹¹ CM. 北方領土問題等の解決の促進のための特別措置に関する法律施行令 [Law Relating to Special Measures for Promoting the Solution of the Northern Territories, 2020]. *E-gov*, <https://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/document?lawid=361CO0000000252>

it has been occupied by Jimi Hanako). The so-called Government Headquarters for the Problem of the Northern Territories (内閣府北方対策本部) has been established as a separate government body. It has been in existence since 1972 (and since 1958 as a special unit of the Prime Minister's Office), but, since 2001, after the reform of the government structure, it has been a part of the Cabinet Office.

With a fairly large budget (1.683 billion yen, or more than 11.2 million US dollars in 2024),¹² the Headquarters implements awareness-raising campaigns to “consolidate and strengthen public opinion supporting diplomatic negotiations”, supports the Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories, carries out activities to promote exchanges with the Northern Territories and conducts other measures aimed at solving the problem of the Northern Territories. As evidenced by a document prepared for parliamentary hearings on the financial support of this body, the government is concerned about the process of aging and natural decline of the community of former islanders reducing the potential base of activists for the Movement for the return of the islands. In this regard, as the primary task of this movement, the document proposes to focus efforts on developing new, more modern methods of educational work among young people, adapting the movement to the aging of former islanders, as well as conducting effective public education (especially among the younger generation).¹³

The Headquarters supervises the semi-governmental Association for the Problem of the Northern Territories, established in September 1969, which has the status of an independent legal entity, and several quasi-public (semi-governmental) organizations operating in Sapporo,

¹² 令和6年度沖縄・北方関係予算 [Budget for Policy in Relation to Okinawa and the “Northern Territories” for FY 2024]. 立法と調査 [Legislation and Surveys], 2024, 2 (463), 176. https://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/annai/chousa/rippou_chousa/backnumber/2024pdf/20240207166.pdf (In Japanese).

¹³ Ibid.

including the League for the Return of the Northern Territories, the Association of Immigrants from the Kuril Islands and the Habomai Islands, and the Coordinating Committee of the Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories. In addition, the Headquarters closely coordinates its activities with municipal authorities – the City of Nemuro in Hokkaido (due to its geographical proximity to the Southern Kuril Islands, as well as the historical tradition of active participation in social movements based on a large community of immigrants from the Southern Kuril Islands) and other municipal bodies throughout Japan that are associated with the Northern Territories issue.

In order to disseminate the narrative of the Northern Territories as widely as possible, the Japanese government conducts targeted information and propaganda campaigns, which are implemented through Internet sites and print media outlets of central government and local administration bodies, radio and television, newspapers and magazines of various levels, educational and popular science literature, cultural and educational events, etc.

Among these propaganda materials, the brochure “Our Northern Territories,” published by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, occupies a special place. This brochure sets out the Japanese perspective on this issue and provides an exhaustive list of documents related to the history of border demarcation between Japan and Russia. The brochure is available on the website of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁴ and is also being mass-published as a separate brochure.

Textbooks for elementary, middle, and high schools also play an important role in spreading information about the Northern Territories. The relevant sections of textbooks on morality, social studies, history,

¹⁴ われらの北方領土 2022年版. 外務省 [Our “Northern Territories.” Yearbook 2022. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan]. Tokyo: Gaimushō. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/pr/pub/pamph/hoppo6.html> (In Japanese).

geography, and public policy are devoted to this issue, setting out the official position and emphasizing that Japan seeks to solve the problem exclusively by peaceful means.

Since 2021, the Ministry of Education of Japan has decided that all schools should teach the official point of view on this issue (there was no such obligation initially, although the version outlined in textbooks earlier had almost never differed from the official one). Textbooks should now include the idea that the Northern Territories are the “ancestral territories” of Japan.¹⁵ In addition, the inclusion of the wording “illegal occupation” (不法占拠 *fuhō senkyo*) of the Northern Territories has become mandatory for all textbooks. Some books had previously stated that Russia has only “administrative control” (実効支配 *jikkō shihai*, 事実上統治 *jijitsujō tōchi*) in relation to these territories, but now the “error” was ordered to be corrected. The Ministry comments state that, if the phrase “illegal occupation” is left out, students may have a “false understanding” of the essence of the problem.¹⁶

Among other noteworthy instructions from the Ministry of Education, the textbooks should contain maps with the Japanese names of all four islands, and even the mention that a solution to the border problem based on the 1956 Joint Declaration has not yet been achieved should be removed from them. As a reason, the Ministry cites comments that schoolchildren should not get the impression

¹⁵ 北方領土、竹島、尖閣「固有の領土」明記定着 小学校教科書検定 [The requirement to include the phrase “ancestral territories” in relation to the Northern Territories, Takeshima and Senkaku Islands]. *Sankei*. 28.03.2023. <https://www.sankei.com/article/20230328-37YB6YUPR5NOLCGLTJXP2QTNHI/>

¹⁶ 高校教科書検定「自虐史観を拭えず」[Secondary school textbook certification. “The Masochistic view of history is not wiped”]. *Sankei*. 07.04.2021. <https://www.sankei.com/article/20210407-W5ORXM3W7RISTFY06HXV4URURQ/2/> (In Japanese). See also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKj_NV3YqFs

that Japan is currently negotiating on the basis of the “transfer of two islands” formula.¹⁷

Another way to spread information about the Northern Territories is through historical and cultural sites such as museums, mnemonic complexes, and memorials. There are several museums and historical sites in Japan dedicated to the problem of the Northern Territories, through which the Government actively promotes the official interpretation of the problem of the Northern Territories.

The largest of these is the museum and mnemonic complex in Nemuro, a small city in eastern Hokkaido. Not far from the city, on Cape Nosappu, adjacent to the Habomai Islands, there is Nemuro City Northern Territories Museum (根室市北方領土資料館), which tells about the nature of the Southern Kuril Islands, the history of settlement, and the way of life of the Japanese colonists. Special emphasis is placed on the events of 1946–1948, when the Japanese had to live on the islands with Soviet immigrants and then leave for Japan. The narrative of the “brutality” of the Soviet invaders is highlighted by specially selected visual and cartographic materials attesting to the Soviet “invasion” of the islands, including the looped screening of the 10-minute animated film “*Etopirika*”, where these events are presented through the eyes of a Japanese girl.

When leaving the museum, there is a large whiteboard on which visitors can write their impressions with a felt-tip pen. In addition to the standard wishes for the islands to “return” to their native harbor as soon as possible, there are also responses to the geopolitical situation in the world after 2022, for example, wishes for Japan to quickly put an end to the “obsession with pacifism.”

On cape Nosappu, there is also a Viewing Pavilion for the Northern Territories (*Hoppokan*), where visitors can see the Habomai Islands located just a few kilometers away through binoculars and receive

¹⁷ 「固有の領土」記述求める [Demand for the inclusion of the phrase “ancestral territories” in textbooks]. *Jiji.com*. 30.03.2021. <https://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=2021033000815> (In Japanese).

a “Certificate of Visiting the Northern Territories” upon exit. In 1981, a 35-meter memorial was built on the same cape in the form of a symbolic bridge (arch) connecting Japan with its Northern Territories, at the foot of which an eternal flame burns, symbolizing, as stated in the guidebooks, “the plea of the Japanese people for reunification with their ancestral territories”.¹⁸ On the entire coast of the cape, various organizations, mainly of the right wing, have installed many commemorative steles and signs on the theme of the “plea for the Northern Territories.”

The narrative of the Northern Territories is also popularized with the help of souvenirs (T-shirts, key chains, stickers, badges, mugs, etc., depicting the contours of the islands, which are designated with Japanese names), as well as billboards on the streets of Nemuro and other cities in Japan.

Nemuro City is also home to the Hokkaido Prefectural Center for Relations with the Northern Islands (*Nihoro*), established in February 2000. The center has an exhibition space with video materials, “the Room of Russian culture,” “the Room of Japanese culture,” several classrooms and an observation deck from where on clear days one can observe the island of Kunashir. In turn, the Tokyo Museum of Territories and Sovereignty (領土主権展示館 *Ryōdo shuken tenjikan*) presents mainly political events and documents related to Japanese territorial disputes with neighbors. The section on the Northern Territories displays the main historical events related to the formation of the border between Japan and Russia in the official Japanese interpretation.

In addition to Nemuro, there are also museums and special “classrooms of historical education on the problem of the Northern Territories” in the villages of Shibetsu and Rausu in Hokkaido, as well as in the City of Kurobe, Toyama Prefecture, where especially many immigrants from the islands and their descendants live. Museum

¹⁸ 北方領土返還運動のシンボル像の建設 [Construction of a symbolic object of the Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories]. *Betsukai.jp*. https://betsukai.jp/gyosei/seisaku/4island/4island_mondai_toha/hopposhinboru (In Japanese).

facilities receive generous grants for their educational activities from the budgets of the central government, Hokkaido Prefecture, and local authorities. There is an endless stream of sightseeing buses with Japanese schoolchildren and tourists. The creativity of these objects should be noted – not only textual information is presented there, but also video and photographic materials, as well as other visual exhibits. For example, in 2024, a plan was unveiled to reorganize the exposition of the Museum of National Territories and Sovereignty. According to the new concept of the museum, which proposes to use projection mapping technologies (where images are projected onto walls, ceilings, and floors), visitors will feel as if they are flying over the sea and diving underwater, looking at the world from the point of view of animals associated with each type of territories that have become the object of disputes with neighbors. For example, for the Northern Territories, it will be *etopirika* (tufted puffin, a seabird that lives in the waters of the Nemuro Peninsula and the four northern islands).¹⁹

With the support of state authorities, the Movement for the Return of the Northern Territories has been launched in Japan, manifesting itself in mass rallies, demonstrations, propaganda caravans, lectures and exhibitions, which are organized throughout the country. Various essay and oral presentation contests, as well as lectures and quizzes on the topic of the Northern Territories, are held for children in schools and on the basis of municipal and state cultural facilities. A large number of events aimed at the younger generation are planned in the form of information and propaganda campaigns using media and social networks, including Facebook and Twitter (X). To make it more attractive to young people, the organizers use the images of cartoon characters and other “hyped” brands of popular culture.

¹⁹ 北方領土へ足を運んだ感覚、プロジェクションマッピングで味わう...政府が東京の展示館を改装へ[Experience the feeling of visiting the Northern Territories with the help of projection mapping. The government will renovate the exhibition hall in Tokyo]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*. 07.02.2024. <https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20240207-OYT1T50073/>

Especially many events are being implemented within the framework of the Monthly Campaigns of Struggle for the Return of the Northern Territories, which are traditionally held in February and August each year. These monthly campaigns were established in 1986 in order to promote the movement more actively throughout the country. To give an additional impetus to the movement, in January 1981, the cabinet of Zenko Suzuki established a special commemorative date – the Northern Territories Day, which is celebrated annually on February 7. It was on this day in 1855 that the historical Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia (the Treaty of Shimoda) was signed, according to which the islands were recognized as owned by Japan. Official documents emphasize a special political meaning of this memorable date: it was the first time that Japan gained new territories as a result of diplomatic negotiations rather than military action. When deciding on the establishment of the date, some organizations proposed September 3, when the Soviet military occupation of the islands was carried out. Yet the Japanese Prime Minister, assuming that the islands would “return” to Japan as a result of peace negotiations with the USSR, chose February 7, with the hope that it would become one of the memorable dates of the Soviet-Japanese friendship [Uda 1984, p. 64].

However, in reality, its celebration turned into a demonstration of openly anti-Soviet/anti-Russian sentiments. Every year, on the Northern Territories Day, a national rally is held demanding their return, attended by the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs, representatives of political parties, former islanders, and other activists. On this day, noisy demonstrations and rallies of right-wing organizations are taking place in front of the Russian Embassy in Tokyo and other Russian diplomatic missions in Japan. At a meeting with government officials held on February 7, 2024, a statement was adopted in which the Russian administration of the four islands was qualified as “illegal occupation” (until 2023, the milder

wording “occupation without legitimate grounds” was used at such events).²⁰

Another form of activity is the collection of signatures calling for the return of the Northern Territories, which has been carried out throughout Japan since the early 1980s. It is held during educational, cultural, and scientific events, various congresses and rallies. The collected signatures are submitted annually to the Diet in the form of a petition. Recently, in accordance with the new version of the Law on Petitions, it has become possible to submit an electronic signature. Since the Japanese generally support the main message of this campaign, it is not surprising that, by December 2008, more than 80 million signatures had been raised – that is, almost the entire adult population of Japan.²¹

The Northern Territories problem is also actively discussed in the Japanese media. A special emphasis is placed on the sufferings of former islanders who are not destined to return to their homeland during their lifetime. Gradually, the narrative of the sufferings began to occupy a special, if not central, place when covering the topic of the Northern Territories. For example, a national NHK news channel broadcast on December 16, 2016, gained great resonance. There, it was reported that the Japanese Prime Minister had extended letters to President Vladimir Putin from several former residents of the islands, which contained a “plea to resolve the issue with the islands as soon as possible.” One of the authors of the letter, Kodama Taiko, a former resident of the island of Habomai and a public activist, explained the initiative of its compilation in the following words: “We want to visit the islands more freely than

²⁰ PM Kishida says Japan-Russia ties are “difficult” amid Ukraine war. *Kyodo news*. 07.02.2024. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/02/e02081d057a4-pm-kishida-says-japan-russia-ties-are-difficult-amid-ukraine-war.html>

²¹ Activities aimed at the return of the Northern Territories. *Hokkaido Governorate website*. <https://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/sm/hrt/hopporyodo/rosia6.html>

we do now and to have the chance to wake up there in the morning” [Iwashita 2019, p. 117].

The emotional subtext of this message finds a significant response in Japanese society, where Russophobic sentiments are developing largely against the background of sympathy for the “indigenous inhabitants of the islands.” Japanese political leaders are clearly aware that the Japanese tend to view this problem primarily as a humanitarian issue rather than a political one. It is no coincidence that, on February 7, 2024, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, speaking at a rally on the occasion of the “Northern Territories Day,” stressed that the Japanese government “demands that the Russian side resume the practice of visiting graves,”²² which was suspended in September 2022 in response to Japan’s joining the anti-Russian sanctions.

The Attitude of the Japanese Public to the Northern Territories Issue

Government policy is bearing fruit: in the context of the official narrative of the Northern Territories, Russia appears to Japanese citizens as a state alien to Japan, the state which has committed unforgivable atrocities against the Japanese and does not want to admit its wrongdoing, as a continuing source of blatant injustices and suffering of the Japanese people. Japanese media coverage of the situation in Ukraine has significantly added negativity to the already gloomy image of Russia in Japan. The picture offered by the media fell on well-prepared ground: for most Japanese, who have been raised on the Northern Territories narrative, the news that come from

²² 前年踏襲、響かぬ首相の演説 元島民「政府の関心低い」 領土返還大会 [After last year’s speech by the Prime Minister, which did not cause a public outcry, former islanders note the low interest of the government to the problem of the Northern Territories]. *Hokkaido Shimbun*. 07.02.2024. <https://www.hokkaido-np.co.jp/article/972906/>

Ukraine in the form presented by the Japanese media do not cause much surprise: “What else can you expect from these Russians?” At the same time, many observers note the Japanese media fixation on the Ukrainian conflict. A study conducted by the Global News View Media Research Institute showed that, in the first half of 2022, 94.7 percent of Japanese media covering international conflicts focused on the war in Ukraine. Some experts criticized the media for deliberately spreading the Ukrainian versions of events in order to increase their profits, attracting the attention of the anti-Russian and pro-Ukrainian public, which in turn further strengthens public sentiment in favor of Ukraine [Kamata 2023].

In many reports, as well as in the reaction of the political authorities, there has been a desire to link Russian actions in Ukraine with Russia’s stance on the border issue with Japan. These, they say, are links in the same chain, parts of the policy of an “aggressive” and “lawless” state. For example, on February 28, 2022, Hideki Uyama, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, speaking to a Diet committee, compared Russia’s actions in Ukraine with the occupation of the islands: “In my understanding, Russia’s occupation of the Northern Territories and the Russian military invasion in Ukraine both contradict international law.”²³

The situation around the practice of visits by Russian officials to the Southern Kuril Islands, which continued after 2014, when Japan joined the anti-Russian sanctions after the Crimean events, added fuel to the fire. In March 2022, the Russian government announced that, in response to the sanctions, it was suspending negotiations on a peace treaty with Japan, and, in September of the same year, it suspended the agreement on visa-free travel to the islands. Another strong irritant for the Japanese public opinion was

²³ Reynolds, Isabel. How Ukraine War Fuels Japan’s Island Feud With Russia. *Bloomberg*, 03.03.2022. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/how-ukraine-war-fuels-japan-s-island-feud-with-russia-quicktake>

President Vladimir Putin's public promise to visit the South Kuril Islands, given by him in Khabarovsk during a meeting with the business community on January 11, 2024. Each time there was an increase of anti-Russian sentiment in Japan in response to Russia's actions. For example, an opinion poll ordered by the Cabinet Office in September–October 2023 revealed that the proportion of those in Japan who “sympathize” or “to some extent sympathize” with Russia fell to a record low of 4.1 percent, down 0.9 percent over the year, and the percentage of those who “dislike” it totaled 95.3 percent.²⁴ This shift is especially striking in comparison, for example, with the situation in October 2018, when the cumulative percentage of Japanese who sympathize with Russia to one degree or another was 20.8 percent.²⁵

At the same time, it should be admitted that, despite all the efforts of the government, the Japanese public opinion is actually not informed about the Northern Territories problem to the extent the organizers of propaganda campaigns expect. In general, there is a fairly high awareness of the problem in society, but most Japanese people do not know its details. Besides, the level of awareness has been falling over the years.

Public opinion polls confirm this conclusion. Since 2008, every five years the Cabinet Office has conducted a survey on the “awareness” of residents regarding the problem of the Northern Territories. It is interesting to look at the data of the latest one, which was conducted in November 2023.²⁶ A survey involving 1,624 respondents representing different age categories and regions of Japan showed that a significant

²⁴ 「外交に関する世論調査」の概要.令和6年1月 [Public opinion poll on Japan's relations with foreign countries. January 2024]. <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/ro5/ro5-gaiko/gairyaku.pdf>. P.11

²⁵ Ibid. P. 13.

²⁶ 「北方領土問題に関する世論調査」の概要.令和6年1月 [Public opinion poll on the problem of the Northern Territories. January 2024]. <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/hutai/ro5/ro5-hoppou/gairyaku.pdf>

part of the Japanese (almost 36 percent of respondents) either do not understand the meaning of this problem or have not heard anything about it at all. Only 10 percent of the respondents know about it well, while another 54.1 percent know about it “to some extent.” It is particularly noteworthy that the percentage of ignorance is much higher among young people. Speaking in detail, 47.0 percent of respondents aged 18–29 and 49.1 percent aged 30–39 chose the answer “I’ve heard about the problem, but I don’t understand its meaning”. Older people showed the greatest awareness of the problem: only 29.0 percent of respondents over the age of 70 reported their “ignorance”.

The change in Japanese interest in this issue over time is significant. For example, data from a similar survey conducted ten years ago, in October 2013, shows that the level of awareness at that time was significantly higher. 81.5 percent of respondents chose the first two answers (“Well informed” and “Somewhat informed”), while 17.9 percent chose the answers “I’ve heard the name Northern Territories, but I don’t know the present situation” and “I haven’t any idea.”²⁷ In other words, the level of awareness has dropped by more than 17 percent in ten years. In addition, the percentage of young people who know almost nothing about the Northern Territories is also significantly increasing – for example, in 2018, the percentage of respondents who chose the answer “I’ve heard the name Northern Territories, but I don’t know the present situation” was 42.0 percent for the age group of 18–29 and 43.2 percent for the age group of 30–39, whereas in 2023 this figure was 47.0 and 49.1 percent.²⁸

Surveys have shown that the majority of the Japanese are quite indifferent to participating in the campaigns “for the return of the islands.” 62.4 percent of respondents said in 2023 that they had

²⁷ Ibid, p.2.

²⁸ 「北方領土問題に関する世論調査」の概要. 平成30年12月 [Public opinion poll on the problem of the Northern Territories. December 2018]. <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/hutai/h30/h30-hoppou.pdf>. P.1.

no desire to participate in them, while the most significant part of respondents, 45.7 percent, when asked why they did not participate in these campaigns, replied that the Northern Territories would not return to Japan with their personal participation.²⁹

In addition, conformism and the readiness for compromise in solving this problem are growing among the Japanese. For example, in November 2016, before Vladimir Putin's arrival in Japan, the majority of respondents in a public opinion poll conducted by the *Mainichi* newspaper said that Japan should respond to the territorial dispute with Russia "flexibly."³⁰ 57 percent of respondents said that Japan should not insist on the return of all four disputed islands, while only 25 percent of respondents chose an uncompromising answer.

Thus, with the change of generations, the acuteness of this problem in Japanese socio-political discourse is gradually decreasing. Along with a general decrease in public interest in the topic of the Northern Territories among young age groups, there is a process of realizing the futility of maintaining a hard line in the government's approach to its solution. The humanitarian aspect associated with visits to graves by former islanders and their family members is causing the greatest public outcry, but even this, as the results of surveys show, has a limited effect on public opinion. From this point of view, the declared goal of ensuring broad and active public support for the Japanese position in negotiations with Russia on the issue of a peace treaty is becoming increasingly elusive over time.

²⁹ 北方領土問題に関する世論調査」の概要.令和6年1月 [Public opinion poll on the problem of the Northern Territories. January 2024]. <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/hutai/ro5/ro5-hoppou/gairyaku.pdf>. Pp. 6, 8.

³⁰ Majority say Japan shouldn't insist on return of all disputed Northern Territories islands: poll. *The Mainichi*, November 7, 2016. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20161107/p2a/oom/ona/019000c>

References

- Cherevko, K. (1992). *Territorial'no-pogranichnyye voprosy v otnosheniyakh Rossii i SSSR s Yaponiyey* [Territorial and Border Issues in Relations Between Russia and the USSR With Japan]. Doctor of Sciences Dissertation in History. Moscow, Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences. (In Russian).
- Chugrov, S. (2016). *Obraz Rossii v Yaponii i obraz Yaponii v Rossii, Rabochaya tetrad' 33* [The Image of Russia in Japan and the Image of Japan in Russia, Working Paper 33]. Moscow, NPMP RIAC. (In Russian).
- Fujiu, S. (2020). *Hoppō ryōdo-o meguru [koyū-no ryōdo]ron (jō). Kokkai rōgi, seifu shiryō oyobi kokusaihō-no kanten-kara-no seiri – rippō to chōsa* [The Theory of *koyū-no ryōdo* ("Inherent Territories") on the Issue of the Northern Territories (Part 1). Diet Debate, Arrangement From the Viewpoint of Government Materials and International Law]. *Rippō to chōsa*, 10 (428), 158-171. Retrieved March 7, 2024, from https://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/annai/chousa/rippou_chousa/backnumber/2020pdf/20201001158s.pdf (In Japanese).
- Georgiev, Yu. V. (ed.). (1998). *Kurily – ostrova v okeane problem* [The Kurils – Islands in an Ocean of Problems]. Moscow: Rosspen. (In Russian).
- Iwashita, A. (2019). Abe's Foreign Policy Fiasco on the Northern Territories Issue: Breaking with the Past and the National Movement. *Eurasia Border Review*, 1(10), 111–133. <https://doi.org/10.14943/ebr.10.1.111>
- Kamata, J. (2023). The Invasion of Ukraine Turned Japan's Russia Policy on Its Head. From attempts at flattery and concerted diplomacy in 2014, Tokyo has pivoted to sanctions in lockstep with the rest of the G-7. *The Diplomat*. February, 23. Retrieved March 7, 2024, from <https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/the-invasion-of-ukraine-turned-japans-russia-policy-on-its-head/>
- Kim, I. (2009). Repatriatsiya yapontsev s Yuzhnogo Sakhalina [Repatriation of Japanese from Southern Sakhalin]. *Bulletin of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University*, 12, 26–30. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2223-2095-2009-12-4> (In Russian).

- Kuzminkov, V. (2013). Kurily – zemlya rossiiskaya. O nesostoyatel'nosti territorial'nykh pretenzii Yaponii k Rossii [On the Insolvency of Japan's Territorial Claims against Russia]. *Svobodnaya mysl'*, 4 (1640), 117–130. (In Russian).
- Sarkisov, K. (1997) The Northern Territories Issue After Yeltsin's Re-election: Obstacles to a Resolution From a Russian Perspective. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 4(30), December 1997, 353–363.
- Shimotomai, N. (2011). *Nihon reishensi* [The History of Cold War for Japan]. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. (In Japanese).
- Streltsov, D. (2019). The Territorial Issue in Russian-Japanese Relations: An Overview. In D. Streltsov, N. Shimotomai (eds.), *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations. Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition* (pp. 577–606). Brill's Japanese Studies Library (Volume 66). Leiden; Boston: Brill.
- Tanaka, T. (1991). Chishima rettō to nihon koyū no ryōdo: Kunashiri, Etorofu wa Chishima rettō-no ichibu [The Kuril Islands and the Inherent Territories of Japan: Kunashir and Iturup are Part of the Kurile Islands]. *Studies in Languages and Cultures*, 2, 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.15017/4271> (In Japanese).
- Turayev, V. (2018) Etnicheskaya istoriya ainov Sakhalina i Kuril'skikh ostrovov v kontekste rossiisko-yaponskikh territorial'nykh razmezhevanii [The Ethnic History of the Ainu of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands in the Context of Russian-Japanese Territorial Delimitations]. *Rossiia i ATR*, 2 (100), 213–230. <https://doi.org/10.24411/1026-8804-2018-00028> (In Russian).
- Uda, F. (1984). Policy and Public Image in Japanese-Soviet Relations: Diplomatic Strains and Declining Popularity. *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, 3 (summer), 43–65.

STRELTSOV Dmitriy Victorovich – Doctor of Sciences (History), Professor, Head of the Department of Afro-Asian Studies, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University): 76, Vernadskogo Prospect, Moscow, 119454, Russian Federation.

Leading Research Fellow of the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia
of RAS

E-mail: d.streltsov@inno.mgimo.ru

ORCID: 0000-0001-7177-2831

This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is: Streltsov, D.V. (2024). Narrativ o “severnnykh territoriyakh” v obshchestvenno-politicheskom diskurse sovremennoi Yaponii [The narrative of the “Northern Territories” in the socio-political discourse of contemporary Japan]. *Japanese Studies in Russia*, 2024, 3, 65–85. (In Russian). DOI: 10.55105/2500-2872-2024-2-65-85

The Failure of Japanese Whale Diplomacy: A Constructivist Analysis of Changes in International Norms

R. Imawan, Surwandono

Abstract

This research examines the failure of Japanese whale diplomacy following the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986, with a focus on Japan's attempts to change the conservationist view of whales to the one focused on consumption of whale meat. This article explains how Japanese whale diplomacy attempts to convince the international public that whaling is part of cultural preservation. The method used is a qualitative approach with analysis of official government documents and research related to Japanese diplomacy and whaling. The constructivism approach was used to analyze how international identities, norms, and discourses shape Japan's diplomatic policies.

The findings show that, despite Japan's efforts to prove that whaling is safe and sustainable, it has failed to change international norms on whale conservation. The dominant international discourse continues to regard whaling as unethical and environmentally damaging. Significant resistance from other countries that support conservation was a major obstacle.

This research reveals that the failure of Japanese diplomacy was not only due to international resistance, but also Japan's inability to align their scientific and cultural arguments with a global narrative that prioritizes environmental ethics. The contribution of this research lies in understanding the dynamics of norms and identities in international relations and the importance of ethical narratives in environmental diplomacy.

Keywords: Japanese whale diplomacy, conservation, constructivism, norms, whaling.

Introduction

Whaling has long been a focal point in Japan's environmental diplomacy, drawing global attention to how a country can influence international norms and overcome external pressures while preserving its cultural traditions. Japan has become a country that has to negotiate with countries that oppose *whaling*, trying to lift the 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling set by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in its 34th *Annual Meeting* on the 6th *Agenda*. This diplomacy has become a concern for many parties because it has become a tool for Japan to normalize this prohibited practice. From 1986 to 2018, Japan hunted about 20,497 whales under its scientific whaling program [IWC 2024], averaging 500–1000 whales per year. This data shows the continuity of Japan's whaling activities despite international bans and global criticism for various reasons that are also allowed by the IWC. This article seeks to explain why Japanese diplomacy has failed to alter key international norms established under the 1986 IWC moratorium on commercial whaling, despite Japan's sustained scientific and cultural justifications.

This study explores how Japan's diplomatic failure is shaped by complex dynamics, including domestic political pressure from the Japanese Whaling Triangle (bureaucrats, politicians, and industry groups), global environmental norms reinforced by anti-whaling coalitions (Australia, New Zealand), and the influence of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd. The 1986 moratorium marked a pivotal moment in global governance for marine life conservation, bringing Japan's whaling practices into the international spotlight [Holm 2019b]. Prior to the moratorium, Japanese whaling activities were largely viewed in the context of historical and cultural significance that has been deeply rooted in Japanese society for centuries [Butler-Stroud 2016]. Whaling not only

provides an important resource, but is also an integral part of Japan's cultural and social order [Barclay and Epstein 2013; Nomura 2020].

Japan's withdrawal from the IWC in 2018 highlighted its complex stance on whaling, shaped by cultural, economic, and international factors [Butler-Stroud 2016; Holm 2019b; Kojima 2019; Nomura 2020; Wakamatsu et al. 2018]. Increased global pressure in favor of environmental conservation and animal rights, fueled by the rise of environmental NGOs and a growing scientific consensus on the impact of whaling on marine biodiversity, has increased international criticism of Japan's whaling policies. In response to the moratorium and subsequent global criticism, Japan navigated a complex diplomatic landscape, balancing its domestic interests with its image and international relations at the same time. Post-moratorium, Japan's involvement in what it calls *scientific whaling* under the auspices of the IWC's provisions for scientific research, has been debated, seen by many as a way to circumvent a ban on commercial whaling [Coady, Gogarty, and McGee 2018]. The maneuver reflects Japan's nuanced strategy of environmental diplomacy, in which Japan seeks to maintain its cultural practices while engaging with an international regulatory framework. The Japanese government's arguments, centered on the principle of sustainable use of marine resources and the need for scientific data to effectively manage whale populations [MoFA 2024], highlight the delicate balance that Japan seeks to achieve between its national interests and global environmental norms.

This approach demonstrates Japan's efforts to maintain its cultural practices for reasons permitted by the IWC, despite facing international legal and diplomatic challenges. This article not only highlights Japan's diplomatic engagement tactics and strategies, but also its challenges in aligning domestic policy with global environmental standards. The Japanese diplomacy is inseparable from Japan's strongly integrated domestic politics. There is an internal political structure that influences whaling policy in Japan – the so-called *Japan Whaling Triangle*, consisting of bureaucratic institutions, political figures, and industry groups, who collectively push the pro-whaling agenda, ensuring strong

domestic support despite international criticism [Kagawa-Fox 2009]. This political attitude is also firmly embedded in Japanese society and has become a tradition that they consider worth preserving [Hein 2023].

Economically, whaling has a significant impact on local communities in Japan's fishing industry even though its contribution to national GDP is very small and it is classified as a minor industry in Japan today, with very little impact on the Japanese economy [Japan Times 2022]. The industry not only provides employment for thousands of people in the fisheries and processing sectors, but also contributes to the local economy in coastal communities that depend on marine resources. Whaling also plays an important role in national food security, with whale products being part of food consumption of economic value for the Japanese government, especially with subsidies for schools and hospitals in Japan [Barclay and Epstein 2013; Wakamatsu et al. 2018], but the trend of consuming whale meat in Japan has also decreased significantly [Fielding 2022].

Although its contribution to Japan's national GDP is very small, less than 0.1 percent, the industry still contributes about 10–20 percent to local GDP in areas that depend on whaling, such as Taiji and Shimonoseki [Hein 2023, p. 2; Holm 2019a; Nomura 2020]. In addition, the Japanese government has spent nearly \$400 million to support the industry through subsidies, suggesting that the whaling industry is not profitable without government support [McCurry 2021].

Japan's post-moratorium policy highlights negotiations in international environmental governance and the interplay between national actions and global norms. The interaction among the Japanese government, domestic interest groups, international NGOs, and the IWC showcases the complexities of environmental diplomacy. The author also explores how Japan's whaling policies have evolved in response to internal and external pressures [Strausz 2014], emphasizing the need to understand the balance between preserving cultural practices and adhering to global environmental norms, offering insights into the challenges of contemporary environmental diplomacy.

As such, this article provides a thorough examination of Japanese whale diplomacy that is directly related to the interaction between

cultural heritage, economic interests, and international environmental obligations. The central research question is: Why has Japan's diplomacy failed to alter the 1986 IWC moratorium despite claims of sustainable and culturally justified whaling? Japan has attempted to use a variety of diplomatic strategies, including scientific arguments that their whaling is sustainable and does not threaten whale populations, as well as cultural campaigns that emphasize the importance of whaling as part of Japan's cultural heritage. Nonetheless, international norms on whale conservation are strong and have been widely internalized by the global community, with whaling seen as unethical and environmentally destructive. The Japanese cultural identity, which views whaling as an integral part of their national tradition, is at odds with these international norms, creating significant resistance. In addition, domestic political dynamics, such as the political structure that favors the whaling industry, also contribute to Japan's failure to change the international outlook. By analyzing these factors through the lens of constructivist theory, this study seeks to explain why Japanese diplomacy has not succeeded in changing international norms regarding whaling.

Methodology

This study applies the constructivist theory developed by Wendt [Wendt 1999], which argues that international norms are socially constructed through interactions among state and non-state actors. According to constructivist theory, norms such as whale conservation emerge from social processes and collective identities within international forums like the IWC. Japan's diplomatic strategy, which seeks to reframe whaling as a cultural and scientific activity, reflects an effort to challenge and reshape these deeply ingrained conservation norms.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative approach based on document analysis and discourse analysis. Primary sources include official reports from the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and international agreements such

as the 1986 IWC moratorium and UNCLOS. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed academic publications and reports from environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd. The study covers the period from 1986 (the introduction of the IWC moratorium) to 2024, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of Japan's evolving diplomatic strategy. This study does not include direct interviews with policymakers, focusing instead on analyzing policy documents and international reactions.

Literature Review

This section reviews the existing literature on whaling diplomacy, marine environmental law, and norm diffusion theory to provide a comprehensive background for analyzing Japan's diplomatic strategy in the context of whale conservation. However, while existing literature extensively covers the international diplomacy of whaling, the legal frameworks surrounding marine conservation, and the political dynamics of whaling diplomacy [Fitzmaurice 2015; Dorsey and Cronon 2014], there remains a gap in understanding why Japan's diplomacy has failed to reshape international norms regarding whaling. Most studies focus on the broader legal and political context, but none specifically examines Japan's failed efforts to shift the global perspective on whaling through diplomatic channels and the internal cultural and political dynamics that hindered this change. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on Japan's diplomatic strategies to maintain whaling practices, especially through the lens of cultural identity and the scientific justification offered by Japan to circumvent the IWC moratorium.

The study aims to understand why Japan's attempt to align its national values with global conservation norms has not been successful in reshaping international policy on whaling. This research draws on constructivist theory to explore how Japan's national identity, which views whaling as an integral part of its culture, clashes with global conservation norms that have become deeply entrenched. Through this lens, the study evaluates Japan's diplomatic efforts to localize international norms to

align with domestic practices, while also assessing the social and political factors that contributed to Japan's resistance to the internalization of these norms. This section reviews the existing literature on whaling diplomacy, marine environmental law, and norm diffusion theory to provide a comprehensive background for analyzing Japan's diplomatic strategy in the context of whale conservation.

Whaling Diplomacy and International Environmental Politics

Research on whaling diplomacy has highlighted the contentious nature of Japan's position within the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the broader international community. Fitzmaurice [Fitzmaurice 2015] provides an in-depth analysis of the legal and political conflicts surrounding commercial whaling, particularly Japan's strategic use of scientific justification to circumvent the 1986 IWC moratorium. Dorsey and Cronon [Dorsey and Cronon 2014] similarly trace the evolution of global whaling diplomacy, highlighting the shifting alliances between pro-whaling (e.g., Japan, Iceland, Norway) and anti-whaling (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, USA) coalitions within the IWC framework. Sellheim and Morishita [Sellheim and Morishita 2023] examine Japan's withdrawal from the IWC in 2018 as a strategic response to the IWC's institutional resistance to commercial whaling. Shutava [Shutava 2023] expands on this by analyzing domestic factors influencing Japan's decision, including the economic and cultural significance of whaling in certain coastal communities.

Marine Environmental Law and Trade Regulations

Japan's diplomatic challenge is rooted in the broader legal framework of international environmental governance. Rayfuse, Jaeckel, and Klein [Rayfuse, Jaeckel, and Klein 2023] provide a comprehensive overview

of marine environmental law, including the role of UNCLOS and CITES in regulating whale hunting and trade. The 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) serves as the foundational legal framework for whaling regulation, but the addition of CITES (1973) and UNCLOS (1982) introduced more stringent environmental protection measures, effectively reinforcing the IWC moratorium. Harris [Harris 2022] explores the interaction between global environmental norms and trade regulations, emphasizing the conflict between sovereign rights over marine resources and collective conservation goals. Scholtz [Scholtz 2019] expands on this by discussing the ethical dimension of animal welfare in international law, underscoring the moral opposition to whaling among many Western nations.

Norm Diffusion and Political Dynamics

Finnemore and Sikkink [Finnemore and Sikkink 1998] introduced the “norm life cycle” model to explain how international norms emerge, spread, and become institutionalized. According to this model, whale conservation norms have reached the “cascade” and “internalization” stages, where they are widely accepted and embedded in state behavior. Japan’s diplomatic resistance reflects a clash between the internalization of whale conservation norms by the global community and Japan’s efforts to redefine them through cultural and scientific arguments. Acharya [Acharya 2004] further develops the concept of “norm localization,” where states adapt global norms to align with domestic values. Japan’s attempt to frame whaling as a sustainable cultural practice aligns with Acharya’s model of localized norm adaptation. However, Japan’s strategy has faced resistance due to the deeply embedded moral opposition to whaling among leading anti-whaling states and environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd [Milstein, McGaurr, and Lester 2021]. Mascia and Mills [Mascia and Mills 2018] explain that conservation norms spread not only through formal international agreements but also through advocacy and pressure from non-state actors. This dynamic

explains the growing influence of NGOs and pro-conservation coalitions in reinforcing whale conservation norms despite Japan's diplomatic efforts to shift them.

Theoretical Framework

This research applies the constructivist theory developed by Alexander Wendt [Wendt 1999], which argues that international norms and social structures are shaped through interactions between state and non-state actors. According to Wendt, international anarchy is not an objective condition but a social construct that reflects the collective identities and shared norms of the international community. Norms, therefore, emerge through repeated social interactions and become institutionalized over time through processes of acceptance, rejection, and adaptation [Wendt 1999]. In the context of whaling diplomacy, Japan's attempt to alter global conservation norms reflects a struggle between domestic identity and established international standards. The 1986 International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling represents a widely accepted global norm based on the principle of species conservation and animal welfare. Japan, however, frames whaling as part of its cultural heritage and seeks to redefine this norm through diplomatic strategies within the IWC and other international forums.

The process of norm formation and diffusion can be explained using the "norm life cycle" proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink [Finnemore and Sikkink 1998]. In this framework, norms go through three stages: (1) emergence – where norms are introduced and advocated by norm entrepreneurs, (2) cascade – where norms are widely accepted and institutionalized by international organizations and states, and (3) internalization – where norms become deeply embedded in state behavior [Finnemore and Sikkink 1998]. Japan's resistance reflects a clash between the norm cascade phase (where whale conservation norms have been institutionalized) and the process of internalization, which Japan resists due to domestic political and cultural factors.

Acharya's [Acharya 2004] concept of "norm localization" is also relevant in understanding Japan's strategy. Norm localization refers to how states adapt global norms to fit local values and traditions [Acharya 2004]. Japan's framing of whaling as a scientific and cultural practice reflects an attempt to align the global anti-whaling norm with domestic pro-whaling identity. However, this strategy has failed because whale conservation has become a moral issue that is deeply embedded in global environmental discourse, reinforced by the efforts of conservation groups such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd.

Mascia and Mills [Mascia and Mills 2018] highlight how innovative conservation policies spread through different channels, including state-to-state interaction and advocacy by non-state actors [Mascia and Mills 2018]. Japan's failure to shift the international norm reflects the strength of the existing conservation regime and the opposition from key anti-whaling states (e.g., Australia, New Zealand) and international NGOs. Winston [Winston 2018] also emphasizes that the success or failure of norm change depends on how well new norms align with existing social identities. Japan's national identity, which frames whaling as a traditional and sustainable practice, conflicts with the prevailing international norm that sees whaling as unethical and environmentally destructive.

Thus, Japan's failure to shift global whaling norms reflects a deeper tension between domestic identity and international expectations. Constructivism explains how Japan's attempt to redefine the norm faces resistance due to the entrenchment of whale conservation norms at both institutional and societal levels within the international community.

Result

Before looking at the details of Japan's diplomatic strategy divided into several periods, it is important to understand the historical and political context that drove the change as Japan's long-standing whaling tradition was being challenged by growing global conservation pressures.

As a result, Japan has adapted its diplomatic strategy to defend its cultural practice while navigating evolving international norms. The following is a table summarizing the periodization of Japan's diplomatic strategy in whaling:

Period	Key Trends and Strategies
Pre-Moratorium (before 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Engage in commercial whaling openly and extensivelyb. Defensive strategies to defend whaling rights
Moratorium (1986–2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Turning to scientific whaling (scientific justification for whaling)b. Forming coalitions with countries supporting whaling (Iceland and Norway)c. Bilateral diplomacy to seek support
Adaptation and Resistance (2000–2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Boosting public campaigns and cultural diplomacyb. Seeking more countries to support their position at IWC
Withdrawal and Return to Commercial Hunting (2018 – present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Announced its withdrawal from IWC in December 2018, effective from July 2019b. Continuing commercial whaling in its territorial watersc. Focus on domestic consumption and whale diplomacy in a cultural context

Japan's diplomatic strategy regarding whaling has evolved in response to international pressure and shifting global norms. In the pre-moratorium period, Japan's defensive strategy aimed to preserve the status quo despite growing global criticism. After the imposition of the moratorium, Japan sought to justify whaling scientifically, albeit on a reduced scale. During the subsequent period of adjustment and opposition, Japan intensified public campaigns and cultural diplomacy to garner international support and reshape global perceptions of whaling.

However, resistance from the international community highlighted the strong establishment of conservation norms, making it difficult for Japan to relax the moratorium. Japan's withdrawal from the IWC in 2018 and its return to commercial whaling marked a pivotal shift in diplomatic tactics. By focusing more on domestic consumption and cultural diplomacy, Japan seemed to view its participation in the IWC as ineffective in achieving its goals. This analysis reveals that Japan's whaling strategy has adapted over time to global pressures, with ongoing challenges as it strives to balance cultural identity with conservation concerns.

Japan's Failure to Change International Norms

Japan has been working hard to change international norms on whale conservation to be more supportive of whaling but faces significant resistance from the international community. Japan's domestic policies complicate this process, as the government continuously emphasizes whaling as part of its cultural heritage. The Small-Type Coastal Whaling (STCW) and Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW) policies have been used to justify the continuation of whaling practices. These domestically driven policies highlight the tension between cultural sovereignty and international conservation norms [Holm 2019b; Kagawa-Fox 2009; Nomura 2020]. Member countries of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support whale conservation continue to oppose Japan's efforts [Berkowitz and Grothe-Hammer 2022; Holm 2019b; Stoett 2011]. This resistance stems from the view that whaling is an unethical and environmentally damaging practice [Cunningham, Huijbens, and Wearing 2012; Nomura 2020; Papastavrou and Ryan 2023]. Countries such as Australia and New Zealand [Coady, Gogarty, and McGee 2018; Scott 2014; Scott et al. 2019], along with NGOs such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd,

have been active in campaigns against whaling [Greenpeace 2024; Sea Shepherd 2024], advocating for whale protection around the world. This campaign created great political and diplomatic pressure on Japan, making their efforts to change conservation norms very difficult.

Whale conservation norms have become deeply ingrained in international policy and the global community, making them difficult to change. These agreements have contributed to the growing international consensus that whaling is not only unsustainable but also unethical, especially as whale populations continue to recover from past over-exploitation [Mascia and Mills 2018]. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling, established in 1986, is a key international agreement that has been central to the global conservation effort to protect whale populations. Japan's resistance to this moratorium, notably through its use of scientific whaling, highlights the tension between sovereign rights and international environmental norms.

The IWC's decision to impose the moratorium reflects a growing global consensus on the need to protect whale populations from commercial exploitation [Berkowitz and Grothe-Hammer 2022]. In addition to the IWC, CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) have been crucial in regulating the international trade and protection of whales. These agreements serve as complementary frameworks to the IWC, with CITES regulating the trade in whale products, and UNCLOS providing a framework for the conservation of marine biodiversity, including cetaceans [Gray and Kennelly 2018; Sellheim and Morishita 2023b]. This norm is supported by eight international agreements created within the 1986–2024 period. Here is a table summarizing the international agreements on the conservation of endangered species and the protection of the marine environment that specifically addresses whales during the 1946/1986–2024 time range:

No	International Agreement	Year	Japan's Status	Description & References
1	International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) & IWC Moratorium	1946 / 1986	Former Party (Withdrew in 2019)	Established the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. Japan withdrew in 2019, resuming commercial whaling in its territorial waters [Fitzmaurice 2015; Sellheim and Morishita 2023]
2	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)	1973	Party	Regulates international trade in endangered species, including several whale species under Appendix I (prohibited trade) and Appendix II (controlled trade). Japan has repeatedly challenged restrictions on whale meat trade [Danaher 2002; Wold 2020].
3	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)	1982 (effective 1994)	Party	Article 65 allows for state regulation of marine mammal exploitation but also mandates international cooperation for their conservation. Japan's interpretation often conflicts with conservation-focused interpretations by other nations [Caddell 2023; Kolmaš 2020b].
4	Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) & Madrid Protocol	1991	Party	Prohibits commercial exploitation in the Antarctic, but Japan justified its whaling operations under the scientific research exemption (Article VIII of ICRW), leading to international disputes [Maruf and Chang 2023].

No	International Agreement	Year	Japan's Status	Description & References
5	Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region (Pacific Cetaceans MoU)	2006	Observer	Promotes whale conservation among Pacific island nations. Japan supports scientific cooperation but resists calls to ban all whaling [Maruf and Chang 2023].
6	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)	1979	Not a Party	Establishes conservation measures for migratory species, including cetaceans. While Japan is not a signatory, it recognizes CMS's influence on global conservation policies [Caddell 2014, 2023].
7	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)	1996	Not a Party	This regional agreement focuses on cetacean conservation in European waters, but indirectly influences international whale protection norms [Panigada et al. 2024].
8	International Maritime Organization (IMO) – Guidelines for Ships Operating in Arctic Ice-Covered Waters	2010	Participant	While Japan does not conduct Arctic whaling, it adheres to IMO guidelines for marine biodiversity protection [Suisted and Neale 2004].

Japan, as a member of CITES and UNCLOS, has faced increasing international pressure to adhere to global norms on whale conservation. The diplomatic landscape surrounding whaling is far more complex than a binary conflict between Japan and the rest of the world. While Japan has faced opposition from anti-whaling countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, it has also built alliances with pro-whaling states including Norway, Iceland, and Russia. These countries advocate for sustainable use of marine resources and have resisted the blanket prohibition of commercial whaling imposed by the IWC. Additionally, Japan has garnered support from developing nations through diplomatic and economic incentives, ensuring a more nuanced global debate on whaling policy [Dorsey 2014; Sellheim and Morishita 2023]. However, Japan's withdrawal from the IWC in 2018 and its continued practice of whaling within its territorial waters demonstrates a direct challenge to these international agreements. Despite being a party to these agreements, Japan has found ways to navigate the system in order to continue its whaling activities.

These agreements address the importance of conservation of endangered species and the protection of the marine environment [Gray and Kennelly 2018]. The IWC, as the main regulatory body in this regard, has adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling since 1986, reflecting the global consensus on the need to protect whales from exploitation. In addition, this norm is also driven by increased public awareness of animal rights and environmental protection, which makes whaling increasingly unacceptable in the eyes of many international communities [Hein 2023]. An analysis of data on changes in ratification and support for whaling since the 1986 moratorium shows a clear trend. Since the imposition of the moratorium, the number of countries supporting whaling in the IWC has tended to decline [Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2018; Simmonds et al. 2021]. Although Japan managed to gain support from several developing countries through economic diplomacy, this amount was not enough to reverse the moratorium [Matsuoka 2018]. Many countries that previously supported whaling have changed their

positions due to domestic and international pressures, as well as changes in their national environmental policies [Betsill 2007; Holm 2019a; Holt 1999]. This shows that, despite Japan's use of various diplomatic strategies, it has not succeeded in overcoming the strong and widespread conservation norms that have been established in the international community.

International Whaling Governance Beyond the IWC

While the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the primary regulatory body for global whaling policies, several other international organizations play crucial roles in shaping whale conservation and resource management. Japan has actively engaged with these organizations, utilizing them as alternative platforms to justify its whaling policies. The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), established in 1992, serves as a pro-whaling regional body that supports sustainable whaling practices. Unlike the IWC, which focuses on conservation, NAMMCO promotes the management of marine mammals as a natural resource [NAMMCO 2023]. Japan has maintained informal cooperation with NAMMCO member states, particularly Norway and Iceland, to strengthen its pro-whaling stance in global negotiations [Wold 2020].

Additionally, CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have become alternative forums for Japan's whaling advocacy. Within CITES, Japan has persistently challenged restrictions on whale meat trade, arguing that such trade should be permitted under sustainable management practices. Meanwhile, through FAO, Japan has sought to emphasize the economic and cultural dimensions of whaling, framing the practice as an issue of food security rather than conservation [Sakaguchi et al. 2021; Wold 2020].

The Role of Japanese Cultural Identity

Japanese cultural identity plays a significant role in maintaining their whaling policy, with whaling being deeply embedded in their culture and tradition [Imawan, Wirasenjaya, and Zhafran 2021, p. 4]. Historically, whaling has not only provided a source of food but also has strong cultural and spiritual meaning for certain coastal communities in Japan, extending back hundreds of years [Holm 2019b; Kato 2007; Kolmaš 2020a]. In many coastal communities, whaling is not just a food source, but also a deeply respected cultural practice passed down through generations, supporting local economies and even contributing to regional tourism [Harrell 2020; Kato 2007; Rots and Haugan 2023]. This practice reflects Japan's cultural sovereignty and national identity, which emphasizes the importance of respecting local traditions and independence in determining their own environmental policies [Nomura 2020].

The Japanese government often uses this argument in international diplomacy to defend whaling, asserting that this practice is part of the cultural heritage that the global community must respect [York 2017]. Japan has continually framed its Small-Type Coastal Whaling (STCW) as an essential cultural practice, similar to Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW) recognized by IWC regulations. Japan formally applied for an ASW exemption in 1986, arguing that STCW served similar purposes to subsistence whaling practiced by Indigenous communities in Alaska, Chukotka, and Greenland [Sellheim 2018]. Japan continues to push for the recognition of STCW as a matter of cultural preservation and food security, emphasizing its importance for local coastal communities [Holm 2019b]. In 1986, Japan applied for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW). Japan argued that their Small-Type Coastal Whaling (STCW) was similar to aboriginal subsistence whaling that was exempt from the moratorium [Sellheim 2018], but their proposal was rejected because it did not meet the subsistence standards of the IWC [Holm 2019a].

Japan's stance on whaling, deeply tied to its cultural identity, often clashes with the evolving international conservation norms. Despite the 1986 IWC moratorium and Japan's repeated attempts to secure ASW exemptions, international opposition against whaling remains strong, further shaping global norms about sustainable whaling practices [Dippel 2015]. While some Indigenous communities have been granted subsistence whaling rights, Japan continues to argue that coastal whaling should be considered similarly under IWC regulations, though it has not succeeded in changing this norm [Dippel 2015; MoFA 2024]. Many countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) argue that whaling is unethical and damaging to global whale populations. These norms are supported by international agreements [Holm 2019b], media framing [Xu#, Liu, and Leslie 2022], and paradigm shifts in IWC [Dippel 2015]. The ongoing clash between Japan's cultural identity and global conservation norms presents a significant challenge for its diplomacy.

Despite Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasizing the sustainability of its whaling practices, arguing they are based on scientific research and cultural necessity [MoFA 2024], Japan faces persistent resistance from both environmental NGOs and pro-conservation countries globally. This debate demonstrates the complexity of balancing cultural sovereignty with international obligations for environmental conservation, as well as how national identity can influence foreign policy in an increasingly integrated global context.

Discussion

Failure of Japanese Diplomacy

Japan's whaling policy has been used as a tool to negotiate its position and influence in international environmental politics, with the goal of shaping global environmental norms and policies in its favor. However, Japan's failure to effectively alter these norms exposes the limitations of this strategy. It often finds itself at odds with countries

that prioritize stricter conservation efforts, hindering its ability to lead in global environmental politics. This study uses a constructivist theory approach to analyze Japan's diplomatic failure. Constructivism focuses on the role of ideas, norms, and identities in international relations, as outlined by Alexander Wendt, who argues that social reality is shaped by the interactions and collective perceptions of international actors [Wendt 1999]. In Japan's case, strong global conservation norms, driven by heightened environmental awareness and anti-whaling campaigns, have been widely internalized. Japan's attempt to shift the focus from conservation to consumption clashes with these deeply ingrained international norms, which prioritize environmental protection and animal rights.

Constructivism explains that the failure of Japanese diplomacy is largely due to their inability to change the international community's perceptions and beliefs about whaling. Although Japan has used a variety of diplomatic strategies, including scientific and ethical arguments and cultural campaigns, they have failed to overcome strong resistance because whale conservation norms have become an integral part of global identity. Constructivism suggests that changing norms takes a lot of time and effort, often involving a fundamental change in the perspectives and beliefs of international actors. In addition, constructivism also highlights the importance of identity in Japanese diplomacy. Japan sees whaling as part of their cultural identity and sovereignty, which has led them to continue trying to maintain this practice despite facing international pressure. However, this Japanese cultural identity clashes with the collective identity of the international community, which increasingly prioritizes environmental protection and animal welfare. This clash of identities creates a diplomatic dilemma for Japan, where it must strike a balance between maintaining their cultural traditions and meeting international norms.

Thus, the theory of constructivism helps explain that Japanese diplomacy's failure to change international norms about whaling is the result of the complexity of the interaction between norms, identities, and collective perceptions at the global level. Japan's efforts

to promote whaling as a legitimate and sustainable practice continue to face major obstacles as whaling conservation norms have become an integral part of the current international order. This analysis shows that environmental diplomacy requires a more cooperative and sensitive approach to changing norms and identities that exist in the international community.

The Impact of Japan's Diplomacy Failure

Japan's failure in changing international norms on whaling has significant and complex implications for its foreign policy and international reputation. Despite using diplomatic strategies such as scientific data, cultural campaigns, and economic diplomacy, Japan has failed to shift the global perspective in favor of whaling. This highlights Japan's limited influence over international normative structures, which prioritize environmental protection. The immediate consequence has been a shift in Japan's foreign policy from attempting to change these norms to focusing on defending its whaling practices. Japan's withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 2018 and its return to commercial whaling in 2019 [Holm 2019a; Kojima 2019] reflect its frustration with international pressure. This move underscores a policy shift that increasingly prioritizes cultural sovereignty and the right to set national policy without international interference.

Further implications can be seen in Japan's international reputation. The failure to reach a consensus or change international norms regarding whaling has reinforced the negative view of Japan in the eyes of many countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support conservation. Japan is often perceived as a country that opposes global efforts to protect endangered species, which has impacted their diplomatic relations with pro-conservation countries such as Australia and New Zealand [Coady, Gogarty, and McGee 2018; IWC 2011; Strand and Tuman 2012]. This negative

perception also affects Japan's global image as a country that supports sustainable development and environmental protection. Japan's Foreign Ministry, worried about the possible loss of international reputation, was reluctant enough to withdraw from the organization. However, the LDP Whaling Caucus (LDP-WC), with the strong leadership of Toshihiro Nikai, Secretary General of the LDP, managed to gain the support of Prime Minister Abe [Matsuoka 2018]. Thus, the withdrawal was made possible with the support of the prime minister and his office. However, this has a major impact on Japan's diplomatic reputation as a country that has a good bargaining position [Sakaguchi et al. 2021].

In addition, the failure of Japanese whale diplomacy also has domestic implications. Domestically, the Japanese government has to deal with divided public opinion regarding whaling [Tsubuku and Brasor 2019]. While some coastal communities support whaling as part of cultural traditions, many Japanese citizens, especially the younger generation and environmental advocates, are increasingly opposed to this practice [Wakamatsu, Nakamura, and Managi 2022]. This creates a political dilemma for the Japanese government in balancing domestic interests with international pressure. Overall, the failure of Japanese whale diplomacy shows the complexity of changing entrenched international norms. It highlights the challenges in navigating international political dynamics that are increasingly influenced by the values of conservation and environmental protection. In this context, Japan needs to reevaluate its diplomatic approach and seek a more cooperative and consensus-based strategy to address sensitive global environmental issues. The diplomatic complexity of whaling policies extends beyond Japan's conflict with anti-whaling nations. Japan's ability to maintain alliances with countries that support whaling, such as Norway and Iceland, highlights a multi-faceted global debate rather than a binary opposition. Furthermore, the presence of alternative regulatory bodies, such as NAMMCO and CITES, demonstrates that Japan has pursued a diverse diplomatic strategy to sustain its whaling policies despite international resistance [Mauad and Betsill

2019]. Recognizing these multi-layered governance structures is essential for understanding Japan's continued engagement in whaling diplomacy.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complexities surrounding Japanese whale diplomacy, focusing on the intersection of its cultural identity and evolving international norms. Japan's continued efforts to preserve its whaling practices have been met with significant resistance from global conservation entities and states advocating environmental protection. By employing constructivist theory, the research highlights the interplay between domestic cultural values and international environmental norms, illustrating how Japan's national identity, particularly in relation to whaling, impacts its foreign policy strategies.

The study has shown that, while Japan views whaling as an integral part of its cultural heritage, this stance often conflicts with international consensus on conservation. Japan's diplomatic efforts to frame Small-Type Coastal Whaling (STCW) as subsistence whaling face strong opposition from global conservation frameworks. However, Japan's cultural stance on whaling frequently clashes with the evolving international norms of whale conservation.

Furthermore, the analysis underscores the significance of international legal agreements, such as the IWC moratorium, CITES, and UNCLOS, in shaping global norms and highlighting Japan's challenges in aligning with these frameworks. The study also expands on the broader dynamics of international whaling, acknowledging the role of pro-whaling nations and the shifting alliances within forums like NAMMCO, which add layers of complexity to Japan's diplomatic efforts.

In conclusion, Japan's diplomatic failure to alter international norms on whaling stems not only from international pressure but also from the challenges of reconciling deeply embedded cultural practices with the global shift towards environmental protection. This conflict between

Japan's cultural sovereignty and international conservation efforts remains a central issue in understanding the dynamics of contemporary international environmental diplomacy.

References

- Acharya, A. (2004). How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism. *International Organization*, 58 (02), 483–519. http://www.journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0020818304582024.
- Barclay, K., and Epstein, C. (2013). Securing Fish for the Nation: Food Security and Governmentality in Japan. *Asian Studies Review*, 37 (2), 215–333. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357823.2013.769498>.
- Berkowitz, H., and Grothe-Hammer, M. (2022). From a Clash of Social Orders to a Loss of Decidability in Meta-Organizations Tackling Grand Challenges: The Case of Japan Leaving the International Whaling Commission. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 115–138. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S0733-558X20220000079010/full/html>.
- Betsill, M. M. (2007). Reflections on the Analytical Framework and NGO Diplomacy. In *NGO Diplomacy* (pp. 177–206), The MIT Press. <https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/3214/chapter/91655/Reflections-on-the-Analytical-Framework-and-NGO>.
- Butler-Stroud, C. (2016). What Drives Japanese Whaling Policy? *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 3 (JUN), 1–4. <http://journal.frontiersin.org/Article/10.3389/fmars.2016.00102/abstract>.
- Caddell, R. (2014). Science Friction: Antarctic Research Whaling and the International Court of Justice. *Journal of Environmental Law*, 26 (2), 331–340.
- Caddell, R. (2023). Marine Mammals and Migratory Species. In *Research Handbook on International Marine Environmental Law* (pp. 333–359), Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://www.elgaronline.com/view/book/9781789909081/book-part-9781789909081-24.xml>.
- Coady, D., Gogarty, B., and McGee, J. (2018). Scientific Whaling and How Philosophy of Science Can Help Break the International Deadlock.

- Australian Journal of International Affairs, 72 (1), 49–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2017.1334758>.
- Cunningham, P. A., Huijbens, E. H., and Wearing, S. L. (2012). From Whaling to Whale Watching: Examining Sustainability and Cultural Rhetoric. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 20 (1), 143–161. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09669582.2011.632091>.
- Danaher, M. (2002). Why Japan Will Not Give up Whaling. *Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change*, 14 (2), 105–120.
- Deitelhoff, N., and Zimmermann, L. (2018). Things We Lost in the Fire: How Different Types of Contestation Affect the Robustness of International Norms. *International Studies Review*, 22 (1), 51–76. <https://academic.oup.com/isr/advance-article/doi/10.1093/isr/viy080/5266952>.
- Dippel, C. (2015). Foreign Aid and Voting in International Organizations: Evidence from the IWC. *Journal of Public Economics*, 132, 1–12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2015.08.012>.
- Dorsey, K. (2014). *Whales and Nations: Environmental Diplomacy on the High Seas*. Washington: University of Washington Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwngrn>.
- Dorsey, K., and Cronon, W. (2014). *Whales and Nations: Environmental Diplomacy on the High Seas*. University of Washington Press. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=eNkYAgAAQBAJ>.
- Fielding, R. (2022). Whalers in ‘A Post-Whaling World’: Sustainable Conservation of Marine Mammals and Sustainable Development of Whaling Communities—With a Case Study from the Eastern Caribbean. *Sustainability*, 14 (14), 8782. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/14/8782>.
- Finnemore, M., and Sikkink, K. (1998). International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization*, 52 (4), 887–917. https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0020818398440608/type/journal_article.
- Fitzmaurice, M. (2015). *Whaling and International Law*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gray, C. A., and Kennelly, S. J. (2018). Bycatches of Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species in Marine Fisheries. *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*, 28 (3), 521–541. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11160-018-9520-7>.

- Greenpeace. (2024). Save the Whales. Greenpeace. <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/oceans/save-the-whales/>.
- Harrell, A. M. (2020). Whaling in Japan: Conflicts and Controversies Surrounding a Dying Tradition. *The Macksey Journal*, 1, 185. <https://mackseyjournal.scholasticahq.com/article/21871-whaling-in-japan-conflicts-and-controversies-surrounding-a-dying-tradition>.
- Harris, P. G. (2022). *Routledge Handbook of Marine Governance and Global Environmental Change*. Routledge Handbook of Marine Governance and Global Environmental Change.
- Hein, P. (2023). When Domestic Interests and Norms Undermine the Rules-Based Order: Reassessing Japan's Attitude toward International Law. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 8 (4), 895–922. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20578911231168206>.
- Holm, F. (2019a). After Withdrawal from the IWC: The Future of Japanese Whaling. *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 17 (4). <https://apjjf.org/2019/04/holm>.
- Holm, F. (2019b). Japan's Whaling Policy: The Reasons for Leaving the International Whaling Commission 1. In *Japan 2019: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft* (November) (pp. 126–151). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337387724_Japan's_Whaling_Policy_The_Reasons_for_Leaving_the_International_Whaling_Commission.
- Holt, S. J. (1999). Whaling and International Law and Order. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 38 (7), 531–534. <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0025326X98001544>.
- Imawan, R., Wirasenjaya, A. M., and Zhafran, M. Y. (2021). Japan's Rejection of International Norms against Whaling” In M. Senge et al. (eds.), *E3S Web of Conferences*, 316, 04016. <https://www.e3s-conferences.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202131604016>.
- IWC. (2011). Chair's Report of the 63rd Annual Meeting. https://archive.iwc.int/pages/download_progress.php?ref=66&size=&ext=pdf&k=.
- IWC. (2024). Total Catches. International Whaling Commission. <https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/whaling/total-catches>.
- Japan Times. (2022). A Middle Way to Whaling. *Japan Times*. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2002/05/22/editorials/a-middle-way-to-whaling/>.

- Kagawa-Fox, M. (2009). Japan's Whaling Triangle – The Power Behind the Whaling Policy. *Japanese Studies*, 29 (3), 401–414. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10371390903298078>.
- Kato, K. (2007). Prayers for the Whales: Spirituality and Ethics of a Former Whaling Community— Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainability. *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 14, 283–313.
- Kojima, C. (2019). Japan's Decision to Withdraw from the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Ocean Law and Policy*, 4, 93–96.
- Kolmaš, M. (2020a). International Pressure and Japanese Withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission: When Shaming Fails. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 75 (2), 197–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2020.1799936>.
- Kolmaš, M. (2020b). When Shaming Fails: Japanese Withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission. *Australia Institute of International Affairs*. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/when-shaming-fails-japanese-withdrawal-from-the-international-whaling-commission/>.
- Maruf, M., and Yen-Chiang Chang. (2023). Strengthening the Regulatory Framework for the Conservation of Cetaceans and Migratory Marine Species against Anthropogenic Underwater Noise. *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 39 (1), 5–38. https://brill.com/view/journals/estu/39/1/article-p5_2.xml.
- Mascia, M. B., and Mills, M. (2018). When Conservation Goes Viral: The Diffusion of Innovative Biodiversity Conservation Policies and Practices. *Conservation Letters*, 11 (3), 1–9. <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/conl.12442>.
- Matsuoka, K. (2018). The Full Story Behind Japan's Decision to Withdraw from the International Whaling Commission. *Kodansha*. <https://gendai.media/articles/-/59221>.
- Mauad, A., and Betsill, M. (2019). A Changing Role in Global Climate Governance: São Paulo Mixing Its Climate and International Policies. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 62 (2).

- McCurry, J. (2021). Japan's Whaling Town Struggles to Keep 400 Years of Tradition Alive. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/26/japans-whaling-town-struggles-to-keep-400-years-of-tradition-alive>.
- Milstein, T., McGaurr, L., and Lester, L. (2021). Make Love, Not War?: Radical Environmental Activism's Reconfigurative Potential and Pitfalls. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 4 (2), 296–316. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2514848620901443>.
- MoFA. (2024). Japan and the Management of Whales. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/whales/japan.html>.
- NAMMCO. (2023). Report of the Scientific Committee Ad Hoc Working Group On Narwhal in East Greenland. https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/report_negwg-2023.pdf.
- Nomura, K. (2020). Antiwhaling Groups in Japan: Their Historical Lack of Development and Relationship With National Identity. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 29 (2), 223–244. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1070496519878218>.
- Panigada, S. et al. (2024). Editorial: The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI): Implementing Large Scale Surveys for Marine Megafauna in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 11 (November), 10–12.
- Papastavrou, V., and Ryan, C. (2023). Ethical Standards for Research on Marine Mammals. *Research Ethics*, 19 (4), 390–408. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17470161231182066>.
- Rayfuse, R., Jaeckel, A., and Klein, N. (2023). *International Marine Environmental Law and Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing. https://www.routledge.com/International-Marine-Environmental-Law-and-Policy/Hassan-Karim/p/book/9781138651135?srsId=AfmBOoqpM6cnCsADyUj_eqaR6yNx8a511CNp6Ci_aAkrxW75IHeeEd8V.
- Rots, A. P., and Haugan, E. (2023). Whaling on Stage: A Comparison of Contemporary Japanese Whale Festivals. *Religion*, 53 (3), 528–553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2023.2211393>.

- Sakaguchi, I. et al. (2021). Japan's Environmental Diplomacy and the Future of Asia-Pacific Environmental Cooperation. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 21 (1), 121–156. <https://academic.oup.com/irap/article/21/1/121/6024964>.
- Scholtz, W. (2019). *Animal Welfare and International Environmental Law: From Conservation to Compassion*. Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://lawcat.berkeley.edu/record/1098855?ln=en>.
- Scott, S. V. (2014). Australia's Decision to Initiate Whaling in the Antarctic: Winning the Case versus Resolving the Dispute. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 68 (1), 1–16.
- Scott, S. V., and Oriana, L. M. (2019). The History of Australian Legal Opposition to Japanese Antarctic Whaling. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 73 (5), 466–484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2019.1639135>.
- Sea Shepherd. (2024). Whale Defense Campaign History. Sea Shepherd. <https://www.seashepherdglobal.org/latest-news/whale-defense-campaign-history/>.
- Sellheim, N. (2018). Quotas, Cultures, and Tensions. Recent Schedule Amendments for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. *Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science (HELSUS)*, 4–16.
- Sellheim, N., and Morishita, J. (2023). *Japan's Withdrawal from International Whaling Regulation*. London: Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781003250814>.
- Shutava, N. (2023). *Japanese Whaling and the People Behind It*. Routledge.
- Simmonds, M. P., McLellan, F., Entrup, N., and Nunny, L. (2021). Whaling in Europe: An Ongoing Welfare and Conservation Concern. In *Under Pressure: The Need to Protect Whales and Dolphins in European Waters* (pp. 62–76). https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Animal_Species_Protection_Under-Pressure_Whales-and-Dolphins_EU_Report_OceanCare_EN_146p_2021.pdf.
- Stoett, P. (2011). Irreconcilable Differences: The International Whaling Commission and Cetacean Futures. *Review of Policy Research*, 28 (6), 631–634. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1541-1338.2011.00529.x>.

- Strand, J. R., and Tuman, J. P. (2012). Foreign Aid and Voting Behavior in an International Organization: The Case of Japan and the International Whaling Commission. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8 (4), 409–430. <http://fpa.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/doi/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2011.00173.x>.
- Strausz, M. (2014). Executives, Legislatures, and Whales: The Birth of Japan's Scientific Whaling Regime. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 14 (3), 455–478. <https://academic.oup.com/irap/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/irap/lcu007>.
- Suisted, R., and Neale, D. M. (2004). Department of Conservation Marine Mammal Action Plan for 2005-2010. New Zealand Department of Conservation.
- Tsubuku, M., and Brador, P. (2019). In 2019, How Hungry Is Japan for Whale Meat? *Japan Times*. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/01/11/business/future-whale-meat-consumption-japan/>.
- Wakamatsu, M., Kong Joo Shin, Wilson, C., and Managi, S. (2018). Exploring a Gap between Australia and Japan in the Economic Valuation of Whale Conservation. *Ecological Economics*, 146 (October 2017), 397–407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2017.12.002>.
- Wakamatsu, M., Nakamura, H., and Managi, S. (2022). The Value of Whaling and Its Spatial Heterogeneity in Japan. *Marine Policy*, 135, 104852. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X21004632>.
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/CBO9780511612183A007/type/book_part.
- Wold, C. (2020). Japan's Resumption of Commercial Whaling and Its Duty to Cooperate with the International Whaling Commission. *Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation*, 35 (1), 87–143.
- Xu#, Jiaxin, Zhijia Liu, and Leslie, M. S. (2022). A Comparative Analysis of US and Japanese News Reports on Whaling Suggests Strategies to Improve Bilateral Communication on Commercial Whaling in Japan. *Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy*, 25 (3), 267–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13880292.2022.2146847>.
- York, R. (2017). Why Petroleum Did Not Save the Whales. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 3, 1–13. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2378023117739217>.

IMAWAN Riswanda – Master student in Master Program in International Relations, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Email: r.imawan/psc23@mail.umy.ac.id

SURWANDONO – Lecturer, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Email: surwandono@umy.ac.id

ORCID: 0000-0003-0559-527X

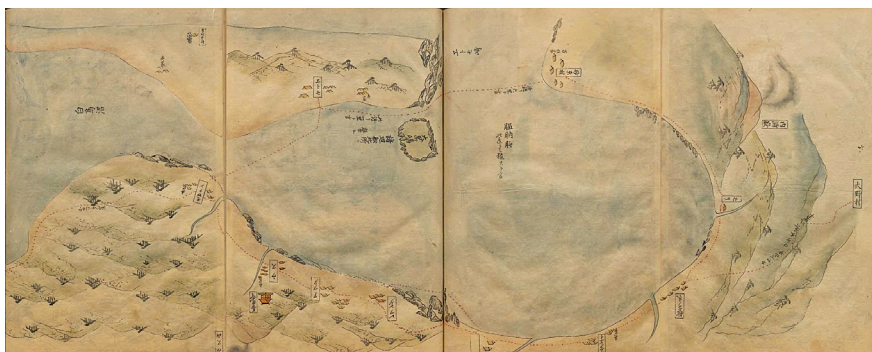


Illustration 1. Map showing the route from Ōno-mura 大野村 to Swan Harbor (Hakuchō-no-Minato, 白鳥の港)



Illustration 2. Image of a bear festival

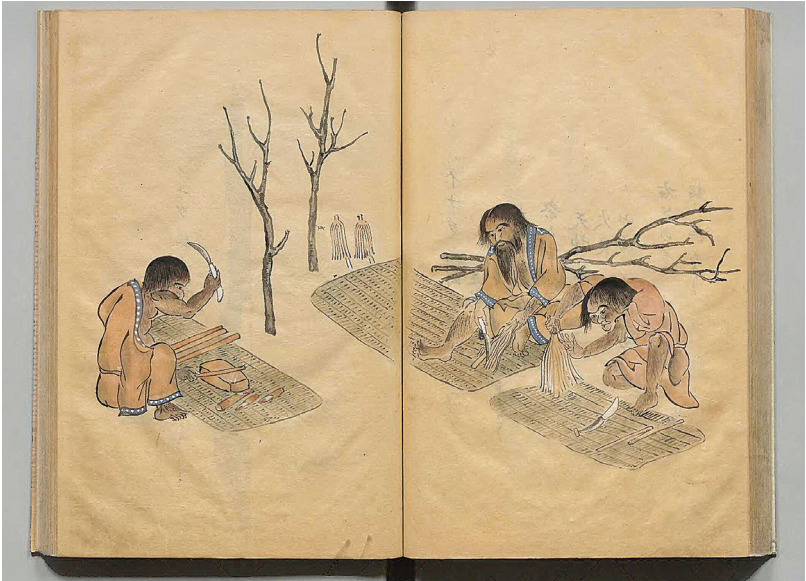


Illustration 3. Image of Ainu making inawo

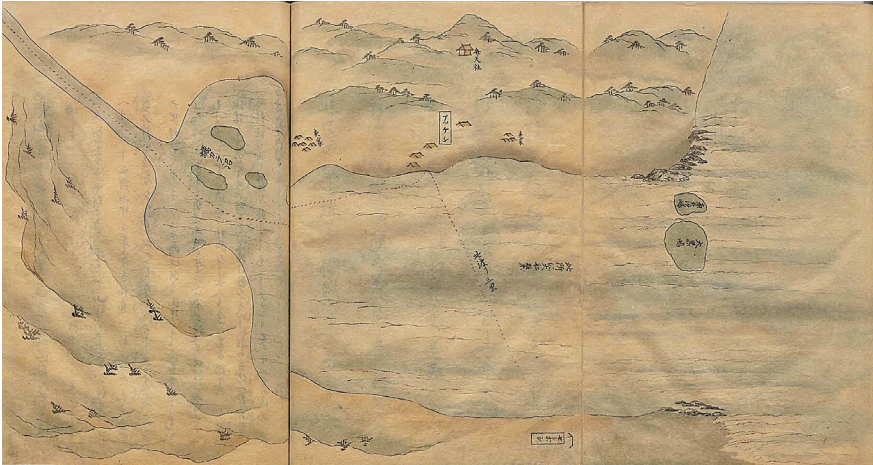


Illustration 4. Map showing the harbor of Akkeshi

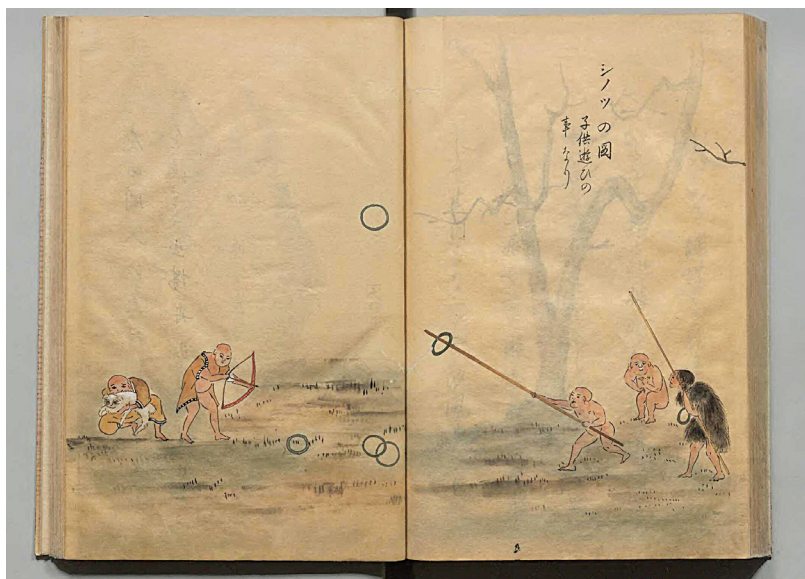


Illustration 5. Drawing of children playing with rings



Illustration 6. Seals playing



Illustration 7. Three strong Ainu on the hunt

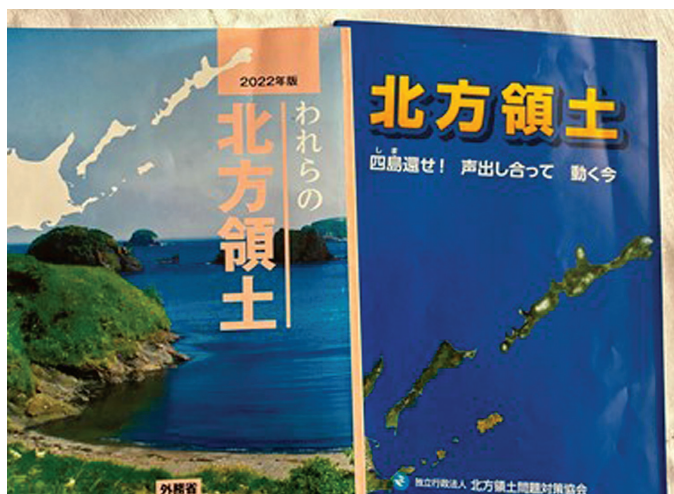


Fig. 1. Propaganda brochures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Association for the Problem of the Northern Territories.

Photo by the author

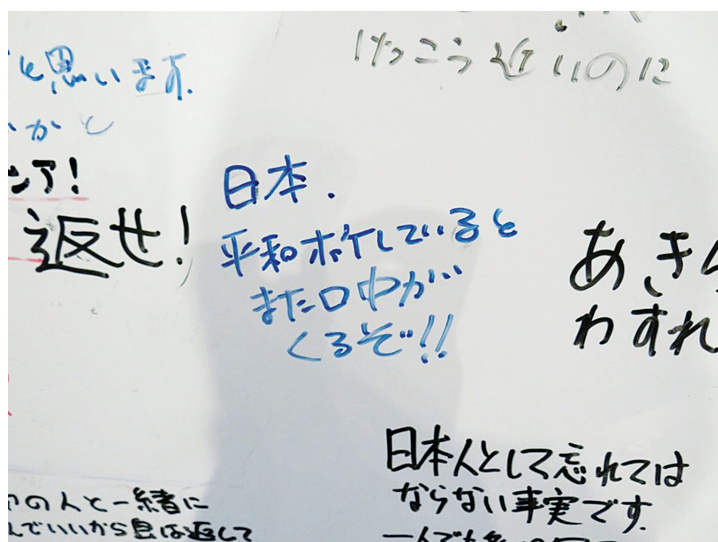


Fig. 2. Fragment of the "board of impressions" in the Museum of the Northern Territories at Cape Nosappu, Nemuro. *Photo by the author*

Sources: <https://president.jp/articles/-/44911?page=1>; website of the Sankei.
<https://www.sankei.com/article/20230328-37YB6YUPR5NOLCGLTJXP2QTNHI/>



*Fig. 4. The arch symbolizing Japan's connection with the Northern Territories.
Photo by the author*



*Fig. 5. A stele of the "plea for the Northern Territories."
Photo by the author*



Fig. 6. Souvenirs with calls for the return of the Northern Territories.
Photo by the author



Fig. 7. A billboard on the street of Nemuro with the demand for the “return of the islands.” *Photo by the author*



Fig. 8. Information and propaganda materials in the Museum of Territories and Sovereignty. Photo by the author



Fig. 9. The collection point for signatures “for the return of the Northern Territories” during the Snow Festival (Sapporo). Photo by the author

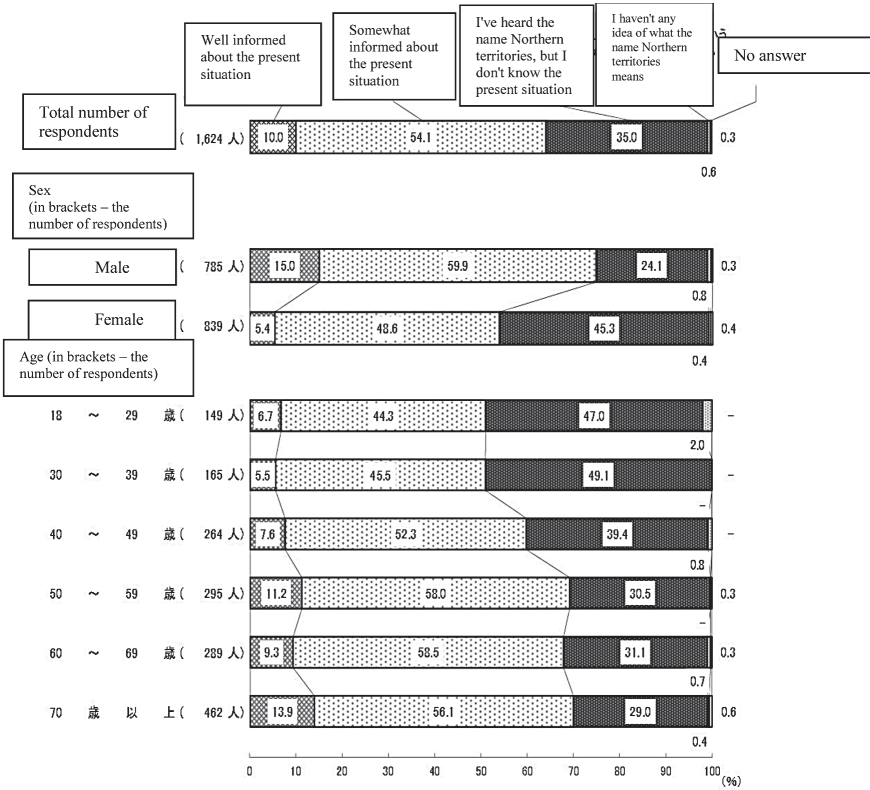


Fig. 10. Japanese people's awareness of the problem of the Northern territories, survey materials of the Cabinet Office in November 2023.

Source: 「北方領土問題に関する世論調査」の概要. 令和6年1月 (Public opinion poll on the problem of the Northern Territories. January, 2024). <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/hutai/ro5/ro5-hoppou/gairyaku.pdf>. P.1 (accessed 07.03.2024)

Russian Japanology Review
2025. Vol. 8 (No. 1)

Association of Japanologists

E-mail: japanassoc@gmail.com

Website: www.japanreview.ru