

# Humanitarian Disaster under Humanitarianism: “Repatriation” of Koreans in Japan to North Korea and Its Root Cause

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## Abstract

The repatriation of Koreans in Japan to North Korea mainly in the 1960's is one of the most extraordinary types of international migration over the century. This is because they migrated from one of developed countries to one of the most oppressive nations in the world. The point here is that they were not at all forced to return, but rather volunteered to go to North Korea. However, even though this migration phenomenon is defined as “return migration”, careful analysis shows that many returnees were born in Japan and have no connection with the North Korean region. The North Korean government used this migration from Japan to show the supremacy of their regime compared to South Korea when the both countries were in deep confrontation. The North Korean government engaged in massive propaganda campaign to boost the number of returnees, but, its influence against Koreans in Japan is rather limited. What made this massive migration possible was Japanese mainstream media's very much proactive depiction of North Korea and full support to the repatriation movement. This strong cooperation is not only rooted in their illusion of the socialism of the day, but also “hidden logic of exclusion” of non-ethnic Japanese in the post-war period in Japan.

## 1. Introduction

It is impossible to omit to analyze “repatriation” of Koreans in Japan to North Korea which mainly happened in the 1960's, if we think about migration phenomenon. Many Koreans migrated to Japan mainly from the southern part of Korean peninsula during the Japanese colonial rule. After the end of WW2, many of them returned to South Korea, but about 600,000 people chose to remain in Japan mainly because of their long residence in Japan.

Mainly in the 1960's, some of these remaining Koreans in Japan chose to “return” to North Korea even though most of them came from the South Korean region. Total number who “returned” permanently to North Korea is about 93,000 and many second generations who were born in Japan also “returned”. This historical fact of mass migration from a developed country to one of the least developed and the most oppressed countries in the world suggests extraordinary and paradoxical nature of this “return” migration and its tragic aftermath, which is still continuing to influence not

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only to those who actually migrated and their immediate family, but also to bilateral relationship between Japan and North Korea.

This “return” migration is said to be one of the most serious humanitarian disasters in terms that not only returnees suffered tremendous downgrading of their living standard, but also suffered from systematic discrimination under the North Korean class system as they were put into one of the most oppressed groups. Many returnees said to be sent to concentration camps as political prisoners, also, returnees and their descendants are escaping from North Korea and some of them are now “returning” again to Japan and trying to settle in the Japanese society.

However, at the time of this movement, North Korea was depicted as “heaven on the earth” and repatriation to there was considered to be “humanitarian” based on “freedom of choice of place to live”. Almost all the major Japanese mainstream media praised this repatriation as “victory of humanitarianism over politics<sup>1</sup>”. But the historical fact shows that this international migration was quite extraordinary phenomenon compared with many cases of “return” migration and said to be one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the twenties century.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze why this humanitarian disaster happened under the name of humanitarianism and try to find its root cause in relation to postwar international and domestic situation in Japan and in the North East Asia. It is very important to carefully analyze this phenomenon in the broad perspective of international migration, rather than limiting to diplomatic aspect or “conspiracy theory”.

## 2. Critical Review of Previous Study

Even though this repatriation of Koreans in Japan to North Korea was not so much researched in migration studies, there is a recent attention to this historical fact. One of the most important academic works on this particular issue is Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s *Exodus to North Korea* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2007). This work is mainly on the role of the Japan Red Cross Society played in the repatriation movement. This work has done thorough investigation on JRC’s involvement by using documents obtained from Red Cross headquarters in Geneva. This work should be worthwhile analysis, especially considering that little academic work on this particular topic has been produced.

However, this work seems to miss out the wider context of this return migration and seems deliberately avoiding thinking this migration phenomenon in the more broad perspective of international migration. The historical fact Morris-Suzuki is describing in this work might be true, but, this does not make so much contribution of the understanding of the paradoxical and tragic nature of this phenomenon itself. In this work, the reason why so many Koreans in Japan decided to “return” to North Korea is not taken into so much consideration and also, their change of living standard before and after migration is not also examined. Therefore, this work has obvious limitation to understand

this migration phenomenon, where logic of “pull and push factor” traditionally exists. But the critical problem of this work is that it tries to lead to the conclusion of “Japanese government’s involvement” from this limited nature. In fact, Suzuki has been strong advocate of the theory of “responsibility of Japanese government” in recent years and wrote in a newspaper column that suggests this theory<sup>2</sup>. However, it is not necessarily productive to point out certain players’ “responsibility” by narrowing perspective.

In June 2008, a woman who migrated to North Korea and now living in Japan after escaping lodged an appeal to Osaka District Court against *Chong-ryong*<sup>3</sup> on the charge of deception in the repatriation movement by depicting North Korea as “Heaven on the Earth”. She did not appeal against the Japanese Government because it had no intention to deceive returnees<sup>4</sup>. This fact that the actual victim of the repatriation did not intentionally make an appeal to the Japanese government is probably enough to show that Morris-Suzuki’s “Japanese government’s responsibility theory” is not completely enough to analyze this irregular movement of people in a broader sense.

Therefore, upon Suzuki’s achievement, this paper tries to put this phenomenon in broader context of international migration, and then tries to show how peculiar and extraordinary this historical phenomenon was from academic view.

### 3. Was it real “return”?

Firstly, it is very important to analyze this phenomenon from the perspective of “return” migration. The whole idea of this phenomenon was “repatriation” of Koreans in Japan to their country of origin, namely Korean peninsula. If those people were returning back to where they actually came from, there should not have been so many problems in terms that this was a real “return” migration.

As the WW2 and colonization of Korean peninsula ended in 1945, there were almost two million Korean migrants in Japan. Most of those Koreans, especially those who stayed in Japan in a short period soon returned back to the Southern part of Korean peninsula immediately after the end of war.

In fact, most of Koreans who were staying in Japan in year 1959 — the starting year of “repatriation” — were either Japan-born or long-term residents. According to *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan*, there were about 607,800 Koreans in 1964. Of these, about 386,900 people or around 64% were born in Japan. Those who migrated from Korean peninsula are about 145,500 people and only about 5890 people were migrated after 1945, the year of the end of WW2. Around 74,690 people migrated to Japan before 1934<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, at the year 1959, there was not so much pressing reason to go back to where they actually came from in terms of smooth return to home place. Actually, as previously mentioned, at the immediate end of WW2, Korean residents in Japan counted up to two million and those who were staying in a short period of time immediately went back to Korea after the defeat of Japan at WW2.

As statistics on characteristics of actual returnees is not at all disclosed, it is very hard to understand basic components of returnees. However, it is possible to estimate at least the number of Japan-born residents who “returned” (actually migrated) to North Korea in this “repatriation”. *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan* was first published in 1959 and its second version was published in 1964. If statistics in both publications are used in comparative sense, this might reveal some characteristics of returnees.

During these five years, 74,767 people “repatriated” to North Korea. The total number of Korean residents in Japan was 607,533 in 1959 and 578,572 in 1964. If the only loss of Koreans attributed to “repatriation” and if there is no new inflow of Koreans, 45,806 people should have naturally increased. In 1959, number of Koreans born outside of Japan was 217,435 and 182,665 in 1964. If the same preposition is adopted, 34,770 Koreans who were born outside Japan considered to have “repatriated”. Therefore, at most 39,997 people (74,767 minus 34,770) who were born in Japan estimated to have “repatriated to North Korea, even though they themselves never know about North Korea at all<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it is estimated around half of total returnees in the first five years were people born in Japan.

In addition, most of Koreans in Japan originate from southern part of the Korean peninsula. The main provinces of origin are Cholla nam-do, Cholla puk-to, Kyongsang nam-do, Kyongsang puk-to, and Cheju Island, and all of them are in the current South Korean territory. Those who have origins in these provinces count up to about 546,200 or about 90% of the total population in the year 1959<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, North Korea was like a foreign country even for those who actually were born in Korean peninsula and migrated to Japan.

These critical facts of dominance of Japan-born residents and Southern-origin residents clearly show the nature of “repatriation” of Koreans in Japan to North Korea from 1959. This was not at all something those who actually came from North Korea went back to their place of origin. Even though for those who migrated to Japan from Korean peninsula, the North Korean region is not their place of origin. This means that this repatriation itself should never be considered to be “real return”.

#### **4. Why happened out of normal “Pull and Push”?**

Rather, this historical phenomenon should be considered as “migration” of those who lived in Japan, when the country is starting to experience “high economic growth” at that time — even though Koreans were discriminated and experienced relative lower standard of living compared with the Japanese—to North Korea, which is devastated by the Korean war and one of the most severe totalitarian regimes in the world. If we consider this in the context of the basic and traditional structure of international migration of “pull and push factors”, this “repatriation” completely stands out of the setting in terms of living standard.

It is true that many Japanese (or Nikkei)-Brazilians are migrating to Japan especially from 1990's, because of the fact that they are second or third generation of Japanese migrants to Brazil, and there is clear existence of "pull and push factor" if we consider the economic difference in both countries. At the same time, a lot of those migrants to Latin America from Japan especially after WW2 were "deceived" by the then Japanese Government on the situation of their destination. This historical fact has been already criticized by many people, including those who were directly involved<sup>8</sup> and the Japanese government was sued in court by migrants to Dominican Republic for their sufferings.

It is easily assumed that then Koreans who "repatriated" to North Korea was deceived on their expected living condition in North Korea. But the critical difference with Japanese migration to Latin America is on the point that those Koreans were "returned" to their mother land at least in the rhetoric and it was not pure overseas migration. It is common historical fact that migrants experience hardship in the foreign land, but this case considered to be "escape" from oppressive and severe living conditions in Japan by returning to "mother land". There were some other historical cases of "deceptive migration" to other foreign countries, however, there are not so many if that case should be "return".

Therefore, it is not appropriate that only the logic of "return", rather than migration, is justification for this extraordinary case of international migration. As the fact that this "repatriation" is not a real "return" migration was already explained earlier in terms that many Japan-born people have returned. So, it is very important to think about other factors which caused this international migration even though it seems completely out of ordinary "pull and push" migration pattern.

## 5. The Critical Role of Propaganda to Migration Decision

In relation to this point, Yoshiaki Kikuchi, a journalist in Japan, rightly reveals the clear intention of the North Korean government in this "repatriation" of Koreans in Japan. According to Kikuchi's comprehensive survey on diplomatic documents of former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the then North Korean regime had clear purpose for the benefit of accepting "returnees" from Japan. One is that they could be labor resources especially in mining and agricultural sector when the regime was experiencing labor shortages in the first five-year economic plan in postwar rebuilding. The other, more important factor is that migration of Koreans in Japan to the North itself could be used to show their regime's superiority in comparison with the South Korean government and to be a good international appeal to other countries<sup>9</sup>.

In other words, in the normal context of international migration of "push and pull", people migrate when they can expect "better life" in their destination. If people migrate from Japan to North Korea, this should be translated into the rhetoric that how "better" North Korea is compared to Japan, let alone South Korea. Kikuchi reveals that until the mid-1950's the North Korean regime was rather

reluctant to accept Koreans in Japan in a massive scale, however, after they realized “repatriation” could be used to boost their regime’s superiority, they very much actively engaged in massive propaganda campaign to increase the number of Korean returnees to their territory after late 1950’s, when actual “repatriation” has started<sup>10</sup>. Under this clear objective, the North Korean regime engaged in depicting themselves as “heaven on the earth” to target Koreans in Japan to boost the number of “repatriates”.

However, if North Korea can really boost their “pull factors” in terms of better living standard and better employment opportunity compared to Japan, in other words, if they were really “heaven on the earth”, there was no need for propaganda campaign. The fact that they created “pull factors” for their clear political purpose and strategy for the benefit of their regime, is one of the root causes of tragedy of this “repatriation”. Kikuchi appropriately says that their “heaven on the earth” campaign created “*deceptive pull factor*” in the basic framework of international migration of “pull and push”<sup>11</sup>.

According to Shunsuke Miyazaki, one of escapees from North Korea who “repatriated” and who have Korean father and Japanese mother, exactly point out that how this “deceptive pull factor” played in his decision making:

*The last thing which pushed our back to come across the sea was not the phrase of “dream for building of so hopeful socialist country”, rather, “our absolute grantee of their living condition and children’s education” in the statement of the North Korean government.*<sup>12</sup>

In this sense, the basic framework of international migration was working at least on the surface. It is probably true that there were some people who really believed in the socialist country and their motivation was to join the socialist motherland. However, as Miyazaki points out, if there should not have been “deceptive pull factors” such as “heaven on the earth” campaign, the total number of returnees would have not counted more than 90,000. In the North Korean regime’s initial strategy, the more the returnees migrate, the more their superiority would have been “proved”. Therefore, to pursue the goal, the “deceptive pull factor” must have been propagated as far as possible to maximize the number of returnees.

## 6. Active Involvement of the Japanese Media

It is true that the North Korean regime intentionally utilized international migration to boost their moral superiority by accepting Koreans in Japan, the regim’s influence itself should have had certain limitations for Koreans actually living in Japan and especially for those who were born in Japan and have no problem in the Japanese language (Many of these Japan-born people rather experienced difficulty in the Korean language.). Actually, a lot of so-called “progressives” and the mainstream

Japanese media believed that repatriation to North Korea is human-right issue and publicly and actively supported the scheme.

According to Miyazaki, he indicates that Japanese media rather played active role in “heaven on the earth” propaganda:

*Some might wonder why Koreans in Japan migrated to North Korea to escape from poverty. The reason is that almost all Korean families were living in poverty. At this moment, “repatriation movement” and “heaven on the earth” campaign has started in accordance with the movement. Japanese mass media and Chong-ryong was publicly saying North Korea as “heaven on the earth”. I, at this time, think that Japanese media’s propaganda was unlimited praise without confirmation, rooted both in their sense of guilt against Japanese colonial rule and in their illusion to socialism.*<sup>13</sup>

Other returnee and escapee from North Korea, Chung Ki Hea more directly mentions about the role of the Japanese mainstream media:

*Before returning, I read many newspaper articles of this kind (which to praise North Korea). I read a book titled like Visit to North Korea. Unlike Chung-Ryong people who were supposed to praise North Korea from the nature of their position, I thought Japanese media was reporting fairly about North Korea by seeing the actual situation from unbiased position because they were the third party. In fact, Japanese media’s coverage on North Korea had absolute influence towards someone like me, who were considering but also hesitating to return, in the face of both parents’ intention to return and my own true feeling of hesitation.*<sup>14</sup>

As Kikuchi points out, the very important factor of existence of this “repatriation” had been “deceptive full factor”, and the historical fact that the Japanese media had a significant role in creating the factor as well as North Korean regime must be strongly emphasized. Of course, the tragedy of downgrading of living standard and systematic discrimination against returnees rests in North Korean responsibility, however, Japanese side’s role, especially by media sector, *not* by government’s or quasi-government’s such as Japan Red Cross as Suzuki says, had significant influence to this extraordinary case of international migration.

## 7. Case of Asahi Shimbun’s Coverage

To show how mainstream Japanese media willingly supported “repatriation”, coverage of Asahi Shimbun, one of the most influential Japanese daily national newspapers, needs to be examined. At the time when signature of official agreement of repatriation should be determined on 13th August

1959, its editorial on 7th August 1959 welcomed the move. In this editorial, it expressed concern for disruption activities by the South Korean government and said “we would like to stress at this occasion that humanitarian issue must not be distorted by political reasons<sup>15</sup>”. It is very important that repatriation is recognized as “humanitarian issue” in mainstream Japanese media. This is the main preposition Japanese intelligentsia took at the day.

In relation to this strong support for repatriation, on 27th August 1959, Asahi reported industrial “development” in North Korea by using information from the North Korean government’s Korean Central Press. The article was titled as “North Korea creates Industrial development by scientific technology” and five photographs of factories were also published, and concluded that “people’s living standard is steadily upgraded”<sup>16</sup>. In addition, detailed guide for prospective returnees were published in the evening edition of 3 September 1959.

Furthermore, on 23 September 1959, Asahi published editorial titled “Do not prevent repatriation to North Korea”. It expressed concern that registration is not progressing because of Chungryong’s opposition against guide for repatriates made by the Japan Red Cross and said “our concern is only for prospective returnees. We expect Chungryong’s restraint.<sup>17</sup>” It is very interesting in this case that Asahi is even much more stronger advocate for repatriation ahead of Chungryong, which is expected to be the most strong advocate as subordinate of the North Korean regime. Again on 15 October 1959, Asahi published editorial titled “Do not overturn repatriation to North Korea” and said “it is of course that the Japanese government and the Japan Red Cross should pursue their initial good willing to the last”. Suzuki tries to depict the then Japan Red Cross as strong promoter for repatriation, however, it must be stressed that Asahi was in the position to demand both the Japanese government and the Japan Red Cross for smooth repatriation.

In this kind of strong support for repatriation, on 14 December 1959, when the departure of the first repatriation ship is confirmed, Asahi published editorial titled “For calm repatriation to North Korea” and said “in any case, we express our sincere delight in the fact that repatriation to North Korea is now coming true by sticking to the humanitarian principle that his or her own place of living is determined by his or her own free decision<sup>18</sup>”. However, as already quoted from the testimony of actual returnees above, the Japanese media such as Asahi Shimbun has contributed so much to mislead their own “free decision”.

When the first repatriation ship departed, there were heavy and detailed coverage on returnees in Asahi Shimbun. At the same time report on North Korea and its economic “development” is also published after the first departure. For example, on 25 December 1959, Asahi published a correspondent report from North Korea titled ““A dashing horse”: the North Korean hard working people, air field turns into apartments”. It is very doubtful that whether free journalistic activity is possible in the totalitarian regime such as North Korea and this correspondent reports what the North Korean government is saying: “*the North Korean government is saying that per capita production of*



iron, electricity, cement, chemical fertilizer and grain is higher than Japan". Then this correspondent concludes that "we cannot be so sure only with the numbers given, but, we can surely sense that a very rapid running horse is dashing."<sup>19</sup>" (See Figure 1)

This kind of very positive reporting on North Korea and strong support even ahead of Chungryong, the Japanese government and the Japan Red Cross, by an influential mainstream media seems to have had enormous impact on migration decision of Koreans in Japan as testimonies of returnees clearly show. Kikuchi rightly pointed out the critical role of "deceptive pull factor" as propaganda campaign by the North Korean regime, however, he does not seem to put so much emphasis on the role of mainstream Japanese media of the day played in forming "deceptive pull factor".

In addition, it must be mentioned that this strong and active support and cooperation to repatriation is not limited to Asahi Shimbun. Other major daily mainstream papers also had almost the same stance to this historical event. Yomiuri Shimbun also welcomed the signature of repatriation agreement and its editorial on 8 August 1959 said that "It is truly welcoming that concern over several years has finally come to a solution"<sup>20</sup> and demanded the Japanese government and the Japan Red Cross to immediately prepare for actual repatriation. Nihon Keizai Shimbun, which specializes in financial and economic coverage, also welcomed the signature in its editorial on 14 August 1959 and said that "It is delightful that it has come to official signature after long and difficult negotiation and that principle of our humanitarian diplomacy was pursued"<sup>21</sup>. Mainichi Shimbun also supported the whole scheme and in its editorial on 13 December 1959, when actual repatriation has become a reality, it said that "It is rather emotional if we think about various difficulties . . . we wish safe and see the process, just like to walk on thin ice, until when repatriation is completed without trouble"<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, it can be summarized that support for repatriation to North Korea is widely shared in the mainstream Japanese media. In fact, even left-leaning and anti-government opinion magazine *Sekai* said in its article that "[regarding cabinet approval to repatriation arrangement,] Japanese people gave suprapartisan support to Kishi administration's move to have this decision. It is the first occasion to the administration to have full public support."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, this wide-held support among the Japanese mainstream media and society had critical importance of creation of "deceptive pull factor".

## 8. The Root Cause of Media's Cooperation

It is logical that the North Korean regime and its intentional supporter deliberately engaged in "heaven on the earth" propaganda to maximize their own political achievements. However, the question why mainstream Japanese media such as Asahi Shimbun and other major newspapers so much played active role in propaganda campaign must be carefully examined. Of course, as testimonies from returnees suggest that these intelligentsia or so-called "progressives" of the day had some sympathy to the socialist regime. However, unlike Chungryong, which is a subordinate of the



North Korean regime and had direct benefit from the repatriation movement for its expansion of the organization<sup>24</sup>, these mainstream media does not seem to have any direct benefit for the support of repatriation movement. If the very much active and willing support for repatriation is not based on financial or economic benefit, it might be rooted in ideological reasons.

In this sense, it is very interesting to quote a column by an editorial member of Asahi Shimbun, Hiroshi Iwatare, which was published in commemoration of the twentieth years of repatriation movement, to understand the fundamental meaning of repatriation of Koreans in Japan to North Korea for so-called progressives:

*Repatriation movement to North Korea has faced various oppositions and disruptive activities . . . But the reason why the movement continued in the form of “very thin thread like spider thread” is considered that effort from humanitarian position by groups related and support associations both in Japan and in Korea overcome political walls every time in crisis. History of North Korea repatriation shows humanitarianism sometimes wins against politics<sup>25</sup>.*

As it is clear from other Asahi’s editorials, repatriation to North Korea was regarded as “humanitarian” issue and their repatriation well suited the meaning of “humanitarianism” in their mind. It is true that Asahi Shimbun was an active player in “heaven on the earth” propaganda, such as unsubstantiated reports from North Korea, however, it does not seem to have meant that “escape from poverty”, or “exodus for better life” was itself “humanitarian” for their settings. Rather, the point “humanitarian principle that his or her own place of living is determined by his or her own free decision” in Asahi’s editorial on 14 December 1959 clearly shows their clarification in terms of “humanitarian principle”. In other words, they thought it “humanitarian” that Koreans in Japan had the choice to depart permanently from Japan even to one of the most oppressed countries in the world. If that was the case, only if Koreans were fully informed on the true situation in North Korea, it is impossible to stop their repatriation as long as it was based on their own decision. But as repeatedly mentioned, “deceptive pull factor”, created by massive propaganda campaign both by the North Korean regime and by the Japanese mainstream media, was the root cause of repatriation.

There arises a one very important question. Theoretically, if they truly support the “humanitarian principle” of freedom of place of living, they should have supported the other decision of Koreans in Japan to live in Japan permanently and should have supported improvement of living condition and the more stronger legal residential position in Japan, including access to the Japanese citizenship. There was not any argument from this perspective and it seems that only repatriation was an option to pursue this “humanitarian principle”. Actually, in 1954 the first Director of Immigration Bureau of the Japanese Government, Hajime Suzuki proposed eight-point plan for Koreans in Japan in a column published in Asahi Shimbun and one proposal was the promotion of naturalization by lowering

condition<sup>26</sup>. But Suzuki later said in 1963 that “At last, no one reacted to the proposal over the nine years.<sup>27</sup>” These nine years exactly include the first phase of repatriation movement and there does not seem to have existed any proposal on this part in relation to “humanitarian principle”. In this sense, “humanitarian principle” which should be based on “free decision on choice of place of living” only worked in permanent departure *from* Japan, not in permanent settlement *in* Japan.

Interestingly, an article in *Sekai* reports about activities of certain police officers against prospective returnees and about their “threat” on the living condition of North Korea to discourage their repatriation. It says that they told that “You will be put in forced labor”, “You will definitely join the military because of your good shape”. From today’s point of view, these “threats” were really candid and really “humanitarian” advise to prospective returnees and this fact that not only all the Japanese mainstream society engaged in propaganda campaign must be well recorded. However, the article severely criticized these activities of police officers and went further to mention this as “shame of the Japanese people”<sup>28</sup>. It seems, as one of returnees rightly mentioned, the Japanese mainstream media’s ability to understand the situation was extremely compromised by their “sense of guilt”. The article rightly summarizes the nature of repatriation of Koreans in Japan as follows: “The issue of repatriation of Koreans in Japan was proposed under the name of humanitarianism, peace and friendship, because of responsibility of Japanese severe colonial policy for several decades and, responsibility of war which all the Japanese should accept”<sup>29</sup>.

If these people had real “sense of guilt” and “humanitarianism”, it should have worked towards permanent settlement of Koreans in Japan as Hajime Suzuki rightly proposed. But it has only worked towards exclusion of Koreans in Japan, which is the product of Japanese colonial rule, which is the very people they wished to extinguish to pursue their own ideological fulfillment. This has led to the creation of “deceptive pull factor”, which was the critically important factor of repatriation itself, which the North Korean regime itself only could have never been able to create.

## 9. Post-War International Migration in Japan and Hidden Logic of Exclusion

Therefore, this “humanitarian principle” could be translated into “exclusive principle”. If the repatriation to North Korea was voluntarily, this was their own decision and should never be criticized, even though Japanese mainstream opinion was “exclusion” of these people in reality. In this sense, the North Korean regime’s obvious intention for their own political benefit and the Japanese intelligentsia’s hidden desire for “exclusion” comfortably coincided in this particular historical phenomenon. Of course, primary player in this phenomenon was the North Korean regime, which intentionally misled Koreans in Japan, but secondary or maybe common player was Japanese intelligentsia or mainstream media which contributed so much to create “deceptive pull factor” under the name of “humanitarian principle”. Without the combination of these two players, it is unrealistic

to think that massive migration to North Korea occurred because it was not “real” return in terms of place of origin and integration phase as previously mentioned in this paper.

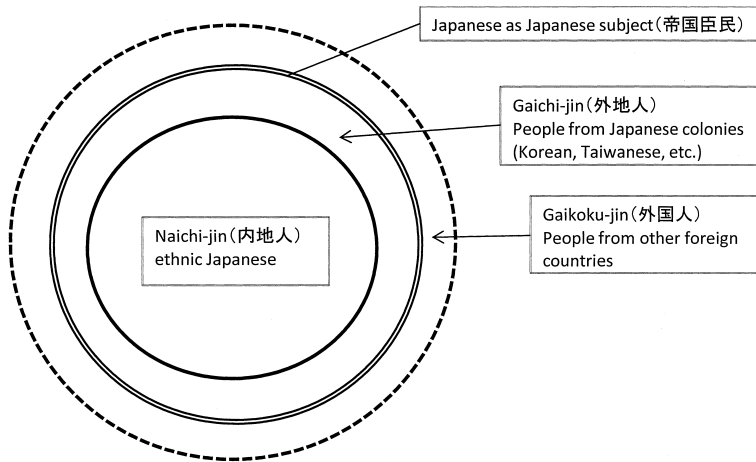
In this sense, Suzuki’s work is rather short-sighted and can be described as one of textbook examples of “conspiracy theory” in terms that she attributes almost all responsibility to the Japan Red Cross and deliberately ignores the role of Japanese mainstream media such as Asahi Shimbun played. On the other hand, Kikuchi’s analysis on the critical importance of “deceptive pull factor” is quite accurate and very much to the point, but he put less emphasis on the role Japanese mainstream media played in creating the factor, and this might lead to conclude that this historical phenomenon only attributed to North Korea’s “conspiracy theory”. As previously mentioned, it is very important that combination of North Korean regime’s obvious intention and voluntary cooperation by the Japanese mainstream society was the root cause of formation of “repatriation”.

It is rather easy to point out that hypocritical nature of “humanitarian principle” at that time, but it is very important to reveal why “humanitarian principle” turned into the logic of exclusion and repatriation of Koreans in Japan to one of the most oppressed regimes in the world in the wider historical context. One possible explanation would be complete change of preposition of international migration before and after the WW2 in Japan. Before the WW2, Korean peninsula was part of the Japanese territory and movement from and to there was domestic migration in wider sense. Also, people in Korea, Taiwan, Sakhalin and other Japanese Empire’s territory was theoretically Japanese citizens, or subjects of the Emperor. Therefore, Japanese citizenship was based on much more wider sense of allegiance to the Emperor, not necessarily based on ethnicity or blood. In 1899, the first Nationality Law was established to coincide with the abolition of restrictive migration policy, which required foreigners to live in designated areas in principle. Naturalization system was established by the law and more than 300 people have become naturalized under the system.

In this sense, there were three broad categories of people in Japanese Empire. One is ethnic Japanese who were born and brought up in Japan. The second is people born and brought up in Japanese colonies such as Korea and Taiwan. Both of them were subject of the Empire. The third is people who come from other countries such as Western countries. Actually, according to the Japanese 1930 census report, statistics based on these three categories is included. One is “Naichi-jin”(ethnic Japanese, literally means “people in inside territory”), the second is “Gaichi-jin”(people in colonies, literally means “people in outside territory”), and the third is “Gaikoku-jin”(foreigners, literally means “people from foreign countries”). Figure 2 shows this composition.

According to the 1930 census report, among total population in Japan at that time, “Naichi-jin” counted around 63,970,000, “Gaichi-jin” counted around 424,000, “Gaikoku-jin” counted around 54,000. About 99% of “Naichi-jin” were born in “Naichi” (current Japanese territory), and about 92% of “Gaichi-jin” were born outside of “Naichi”, and about 83% of “Gaikoku-jin” were born outside of “Naichi”<sup>30</sup>. This means that most of “Gaichi-jin” and “Gaikoku-jin” were actual migrants from outside

Figure 2 Pre-WW2 composition of people in Japan



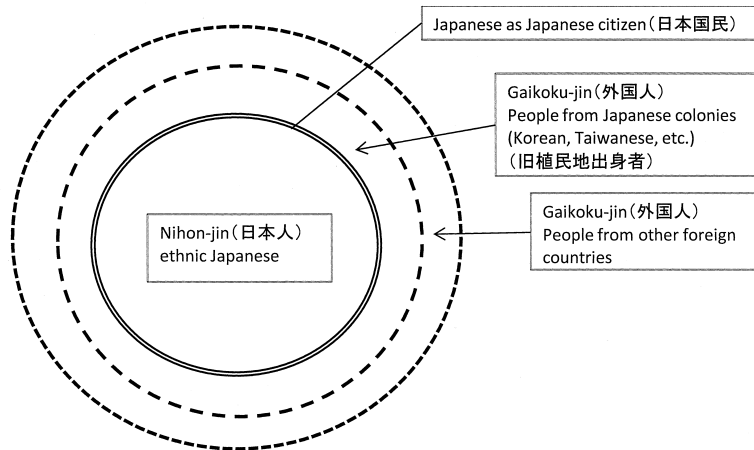
of “Naichi”, at the same time, “Gaichi-jin” were subjects of the Japanese Empire and “Gaikoku-jin” were not. In other words, whether he or she belongs to Japanese subject was not determined by migration origin. Furthermore, at least theoretically, people who do not necessarily have ethnic Japanese origin were counted into Japanese subjects before the WW2.

However, defeat of the Japanese Empire at the WW2 and removal and independence of former colonies completely changed this setting. Japanese citizen or subject had wider meaning including people originates from former colonies, but as a result of removal of colonies, the meaning of Japanese citizen became considerably narrowed into ethnic Japanese or “Naichi-jin”. Also, “Gaichi-jin” who were part of the Japanese subjects suddenly become foreigners as same as other original “Gaikoku-jin”. (Figure 3 shows this situation.)

The critical point here is that there were a lot of people born in Japan among “Gaichi-jin”. According to 1950 census after five years of the end of the WW2, former “Gaichi-jin” counted about 504,000 and about 250,000 people or about half of them were born in Japan. At the same time, former “Gaikoku-jin” counted about 23,000 or about 83% of them were born overseas<sup>31</sup>. Former “Gaichi-jin” were redefined as foreigners as the same as former “Gaikoku-jin”. As a result, a lot of Japan-born people and long term residents were also redefined as “foreigners”.

In summary, defeat of Japan and removal of its colonies lead to fundamental redefinition of the “Japanese” and this meant that it was narrowed into ethnic Japanese and that Japan-born people and long term residents of former colony origin were excluded from “Japanese” and redefined as “foreigners” as well. Therefore, in postwar Japan, especially in one or two decades after the end of war, it was very logical that former “Gaichi-jin” and their descendants should be outside of Japanese community and their repatriation to their “original place” (even though many of them were born in Japan.) thought to be “humanitarian” if that notion is combined with sense of guilt for the past colonial

Figure 3 Post-WW2 composition of people in Japan



rule. Narrowing of the definition of Japanese-ness into ethnic Japanese virtually neutralized the reality of international migration and the reality of integration into the Japanese society, and worked towards good-intentioned “exclusion” of Koreans in Japan. This exactly is why Hajime Suzuki’s quite realistic proposal to solve Korean issue by “inclusion” such as naturalization was not at all heard, but, its solution by “exclusion” by voluntary repatriation (even though it was deception) was pursued in 1950’s and 1960’s. In this sense, both Suzuki’s and Kukuchi’s “conspiracy theory” do not fully explain why the massive and extraordinary international migration had occurred.

## 10. Conclusion

This paper tried to analyze the root cause of massive repatriation of Koreans in Japan in the 1960’s to North Korea, which is completely out of the range of understanding of the logic of international migration. What is found is that Japanese mainstream media’s active involvement and cooperation under the name of “humanitarianism” turned into one of the most worst humanitarian disasters in the twenties century. The root cause of the paradox of this can be attributed to the hidden “logic of exclusion” in the Japanese society of the day because of their deep rooted “sense of guilt” against their defeat of WW2, which resulted in the complete change of setting of population composition and international migration in Japan. It seems clear that this ideological “sense of guilt”, which was the basic preposition of post-war Japanese politics and society was the root cause of this extraordinary international migration and sufferings of so many people.

This “sense” also seems to prevent the Japanese society from correctly coping with the current international migration such as Nikkei Brazilians, so-called technical trainees under the principle that “Japan does not accept migrants”. This might be natural in terms that the “sense” resulted in

exclusion of even so many Japan-born and long-term residents in Japan, let alone proper acceptance of newly arrived migrants. In other words, this “sense” paralyzed the basic logic and principle of international migration in post-war Japan. Unless the Japanese society completely overcomes this “sense” and be free from paralysis, proper policy on international migration will not be implemented, and confusion over migration policy will continue. The extraordinary case of this “return” migration shows the importance of critical review of post-war Japanese society and its ideological foundation of “sense of guilt”.

## Note

- 1 Hiroshi Iwatare, “Twenty years of North Korea Repatriation”, *Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, 17 December 1979, underline added.
- 2 Tessa-Morris Suzuki, “New resources on Korean Repatriation Movement: Responsibility of the Japanese Government: the Japan Red Cross Engaged in the “National Interest”” (朝鮮人「帰国」事業で新資料 問われる日本政府の責任 日本赤十字も「国益」に関与), *Asahi Shimbun* (evening edition), 21 September 2004.
- 3 Name of pro-North Korean association for Koreans in Japan, which played critical role in repatriation movement.
- 4 “Appeal against Chong-ryong by a woman of North Korea escapee: Repatriation Movement “Heaven was a deception”” (脱北女性総連を提訴 帰還事業「楽園は虚偽」), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 14 June 2008.
- 5 *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan 1959* (在留外国人統計昭和34年), Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Justice, 1960.
- 6 *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan 1959* (在留外国人統計昭和34年), Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Justice, 1960, *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan 1964* (在留外国人統計昭和39年), Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Justice, 1966.
- 7 *Statistics on the foreigners registered in Japan 1959* (在留外国人統計昭和34年), Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Justice, 1960.
- 8 For example, see Yasuo Wakatsuki (若槻泰雄), *The Japanese Erased by Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Half Century of Latin America Migration* (外務省が消した日本人 南米移民の半世紀), Maichichi Shimbunsha, 2001.
- 9 Yoshiaki Kikuchi (菊池嘉晃), “North Korea’s Scenario and Works Revealed by Top-secret Documents of Former Soviet Union: How Kim Il-Song utilized Repatriation Movement” (旧ソ連極秘文書から読み解く「北」のシナリオと工作—金日成は帰国運動をどう利用したか), *Chuo Koron* (中央公論), 121(11), pp. 163-165.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Yoshiaki Kikuchi (菊池嘉晃), “Scratch of the North Korean Repatriation Movement (Second): The Truth Revealed by Documents of Former Soviet Union and East European Countries: The Change of Repatriation Movement and Tragedy of Returnees” (北朝鮮帰還事業の爪痕 (後編) 旧ソ連・東欧文書で明かされる真相—帰国運動の“変質”と帰国者の悲劇), *Chuo Koron* (中央公論), 121(12), p. 262.
- 12 Shunsuke Miyazaki (宮崎俊輔), *The Great Exodus from North Korea: Return from the Hell* (北朝鮮大脱出地獄からの生還), Shinchosha, 2000, p. 46
- 13 *Ibid.* p. 11, underline added.
- 14 Chung Kee Hae (鄭箕海), *Repatriation Ship: Start of Journey to Frozen Land of North Korea* (帰国船 北朝鮮凍土への旅立ち), Bungei Shunju, 1997, pp. 67-69, underline added.
- 15 “Confirmation of signature of North Korean repatriation”, *Asahi Shimbun*, editorial 7 August 1959.
- 16 “North Korea creates: Industrial development by scientific technology”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 August 1959.
- 17 “Do not prevent repatriation to North Korea”, *Asahi Shimbun*, editorial 7 August 1959.
- 18 “For calm repatriation to North Korea”, *Asahi Shimbun*, editorial 14 December 1959.
- 19 ““A dashing horse”: the North Korean hard working people, air field turns into apartments”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 25



- December 1959, italic added.
- 20 “Signature of North Korean repatriation agreement”, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, editorial, 8 August 1959.
  - 21 “Signature of North Korean repatriation agreement”, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, editorial, 14 August 1959.
  - 22 “To those who return to North Korea”, *Mainichi Shimbun*, editorial, 13 December 1959.
  - 23 “Repatriation of Koreans and humanitarianism”, *Sekai*, no. 161, April 1959, p. 48.
  - 24 According to testimony of former one senior official of Chungnyong, it could obtain huge assets by using repatriation of business owners. When these business people actually repatriated, Chungryong made them donate in the false promise of their benefits after return. This significantly boosted financial position of the organization. (Han Gwang Hae (韓光熙), *My Chosen Soren’s Crime and Punishment* (わが朝鮮総連の罪と罰), Bungei Shunju, 2002, p. 81.)
  - 25 Hiroshi Iwatate (岩垂弘), “Twenty years of North Korea Repatriation”, *Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, 17 December 1979, underline added.
  - 26 Hajime Suzuki (鈴木一), “Short cut for Japan-Korea friendship: Urgent call for total solution in separate of diplomacy”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 9 April 1954.
  - 27 Hajime Suzuki (鈴木一), *Minds of Korea* (韓国のことろ), Yoyosha, 1968, p. 93
  - 28 “Repatriation of Koreans and humanitarianism (朝鮮人帰国問題と人道主義)”, *Sekai*, no. 161, April 1959, p. 51.
  - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
  - 30 Cabinet Statistics Bureau, *Final Report of the Population Census of 1930* (昭和5年国勢調査最終報告書), p. 203
  - 31 Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Prime Minister, *Population Census of 1950 Volume IV All Japan 1* (昭和25年国勢調査報告第四卷全国編I), 1954, pp. 130–131.