ABSTRACT

This paper studies the postwar phase of the integration of repatriates into Japanese society, thereby shedding new light on the nationalism of postwar Japan. To this end, it reviews the discourses surrounding the repatriation project and examines the existential consciousness of repatriates in postwar Japanese society. In particular, it examines the novels of Abe Kōbō, who suffered from a confused identity after he returned to Japan from Manchuria. After its defeat in World War II, Japan endeavored to build a “New Japan” through re-education and repatriation. The repatriation project became the basis for the national solidarity required for this restructuring.

The personal tales of repatriation, which record the experiences of those evacuated from the former colonies, constitute a history of the ordeals suffered by the Japanese victims of the war. However, repatriates felt both bitterness and discrimination directed against them by postwar Japanese society, as though they were strangers in their own country. Furthermore, they sensed the disjunction between the identity of the colonial Japanese and that of the “pure” mainland Japanese, which caused them to experience existential confusion. However, the cause of this sense of incompatibility was the ideology of postwar Japan, which aimed at reintegrating the nation-state. As the public memory of the Japanese as eternal victims spread, the truth was buried. A review of the postwar fate of the repatriates reveals the “crack” inherent in the nationalism of postwar Japan; it thus contributes to the deconstruction of the myth of the “great achievement” of Japanese homogeneity and reveals its illusory nature.

Keywords: postwar Japan, repatriation, reintegration, nationalism, Abe Kōbō

Nation-State Reintegration and the Repatriation Project of Postwar Japan

The severe earthquake of 2011 reminded the world of the forgotten identity of the nation-state of Japan. At the devastating sight of northeastern Japan, the world recalled the potential for recovery of the nation that had grown into a great economic power in the twenty years following its defeat in World War II. Many forecast that the Japanese people’s DNA would overcome the crisis and once again restore the nation.

Suffering defeat, Japan strove to accomplish the great national cause of building a “New Japan” out of the ruins of war. It proclaimed a new constitution based on the draft of the GHQ (the American-occupation directed General Headquarters), reorganized its legal and administrative institutions and its education system along democratic lines, and sought an economic revival. By the
mid-1980s, Japan’s economy was second only to that of the United States.

Japan reconstructed itself within twenty years of its defeat and all the phenomena related to this reconstruction are explained through the discourse of “postwar Japan.” As the following reference shows, according to some, such postwar reconstruction was to be achieved by unifying the nation.

The Emperor system, which is the best expression of Japan’s national authority and the symbol of Japan’s national integration, will be and must be maintained eternally. This has been affirmed based on the integration of the nation’s long history, and it is the immutable essence of the Japanese ethnic community based on the “oneness of Emperor and nation,” which transcends the conflicts of monarchism and popular sovereignty. Now, as we have returned to a pure Japan without “different races from other areas,” Japan’s historical individuality and spiritual independence will perish if we betray the system. (1946)\(^1\)

This quotation is from a lecture by Nanbara Shigeru (President and political scientist of the Tokyo Imperial University in 1946) on Tenchōsetsu (the emperor’s birthday). It is not difficult to see that he advocates the establishment of a New Japan populated by “pure Japanese” and centered on the emperor and that he appeals to the origins and traditions of the Japanese people. Moreover, the Ningen-sengen (Humanity Declaration) of the eighty-ninth Imperial Council on January 1 of the same year officially declared the reorganization of the Japanese people, excluding other ethnic groups, to build a New Japan (Pak Chin-u 2010).\(^2\) In other words, “postwar Japan” attempted national reintegration by projecting the myth of the homogeneity of the “pure” Japanese people. The “repatriation project,” an extensive mass migration into and out of Japan, cannot therefore be overlooked in understanding the nationalism of the postwar period.

On August 15, 1945, the date of Japan’s surrender, approximately 6.6 million Japanese people were living in the colonies or other areas under Japanese control. Half of them were soldiers or civilians with connections to the military, and in accordance with Article 9 of the Potsdam Declaration, they were returned to Japan under the initiative of the Fukuinchō (the Office of Repatriation).\(^3\) On October 18, 1945, the General Headquarters designated the Department of Welfare as the central office responsible for the repatriation of the general public and opened a local Repatriation Relief Bureau on November 24 to accept the remaining Japanese civilians (Takasugi 2011).

However, as the project became difficult to control because of the chaotic

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\(^1\) This quotation has been translated by the author. All translations hereafter are those of the author.

\(^2\) The intentional exclusion of people from the old colonies first emerged clearly in the revision of rules for the election of members of the Imperial Parliament in December 1945. The intentional redefinition of what constituted the “Japanese people,” guided by the government, encouraged the discrimination and scorn of others and led to collective oblivion with regard to Japanese responsibility in colonial matters.

\(^3\) The Army Department and the Navy Department in the prewar days were reorganized into Repatriation Departments 1 and 2, which were then integrated into the Office of Repatriation in June 1946. After October 1947, the Office of Repatriation was abolished, following the transfer of repatriation duties to the Department of Welfare.
state of affairs in other countries, Japan established Repatriation Relief Bureaus outside the country in March 1946 and began full-scale repatriation in April (Hikiagechō 1950). By 1950, 6.24 million people (95% of those eligible for repatriation) had moved to Japan; after a three-year gap, the repatriation project recommenced in 1953. By 1958, over 6.29 million colonial Japanese had been officially repatriated (Kōseishō 2000). 4

The Japanese who returned during that time are generally termed “repatriates” (hikiagesha), a word that pertains specifically to those Japanese with colonial experience. O Mi-jōng’s assessment is helpful here. She writes, “Considering the dismantling of colonial rule, whereby Japanese had to return to their homeland due to their defeat in the war, the term hikiage (evacuation of civilians) is appropriate” (O 2010). Soldiers or people who were otherwise employed by the military and were repatriated are properly termed “returned soldiers” (jukuinsha or fukuinhei) to distinguish them from “returned civilians” (hikiagesha). This latter group of non-combatants, rather than military personnel (including prisoners of war), are the focus of this paper. 5

The purpose of the repatriation project was not only the return of Japanese from abroad; it was also the deportation of foreign residents from Japan. In November 1945 the GHQ established a policy for the deportation and repatriation of “non-Japanese” residing in Japan, along with the return of Japanese living in foreign countries. The main targets were people who had moved to Japan while maintaining residency in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Okinawa, along with German and Italian immigrants. There was a registration process to determine the numbers of non-Japanese, which marked the beginning of the Aliens Registration Act. This project proceeded relatively quickly and was completed by November 1950; it resulted in the transfer of approximately 1.3 million people out of the country.

Thus far, the repatriation project has been perceived as the process of repatriating Japanese from the colonies to Japan after the war. However, as seen above, it actually included both the reception of Japanese living in other areas and the deportation of foreigners living in Japan. In this way, the project played a significant role in promoting nationalism in postwar Japan. In Nanbara’s previously quoted words, its significance was also to “return to a pure Japan without different races from other areas.” Based on this effort to “purify” Japan, the personal experiences and memories of repatriates were suppressed and integrated into the consciousness of a “unitary state,” which was intended to share a single language and culture.

Therefore, it can be assumed that during the process of repatriation there

4 This number exceeded 6.6 million as of December 1961 and is unofficially estimated to be over 7 million, or approximately 10% of the Japanese population at the time.

5 Hikiage (“repatriation” or, literally, “pulling up from low to high”), which targeted civilians, and jukuin, which targeted soldiers, were strictly separated until the repatriation duties of the Kōseishō Gaikyoku (an institution founded in March 1946 that administrated the hikiage support project) were transferred to the Hikiage Engōchō (an institution founded in January 1948 that oversaw the hikiage support project managed by the Kōseishō Gaikyoku and jukuin work managed by the Fukuinchō). Thereafter, more general reconstruction and recovery tasks were considered matters of “repatriation” as well (Tanaka 2010).
was an emphasis on fostering a sense of fellowship among compatriots, both inside and outside the country. In particular, the stories of the ordeals of Japanese war victims, spread by their recorded repatriation experiences, acted as an effective mechanism for the reintegration of the Japanese people.

Up until now, “repatriation” has been glorified in the name of Japan’s national history of suffering. However, it has been simultaneously criticized in both Korea and Japan as the foundation of its postwar racial nationalism, as seen in the arguments of Narita Ryūichi, Asano Toyomi, and Kim Kyōng-nam. As recent studies of the specific events of 1945 have begun to address the collapse of the empire and the repatriation of citizens, the true condition of the Japanese living in the colonies is again being explored. In this vein, two Korean studies have a thematic resemblance to this paper: Ch’oe Yong-ho’s study of the repatriation of the Japanese living in Korea and their perception of colonial rule, and Yi Yŏn-sik’s analysis of the process by which the Japanese who had lived in Korea returned to and settled in Japan after the war and their double status as both colonial rulers and members of a neglected class in postwar Japan (Ch’oe 2013; Yi 2012). Moreover, Pak Yu-ha points out that modern postwar Japanese literature has not evaluated the importance of writers who were returnees (2009, 2013). O Mi-jŏng has examined the influence of Abe Kōbō’s experiences in Manchuria on this modern Japanese author’s literary works and also highlights the connection between Abe’s colonial identity and his thought (2009). The studies above do not, however, adequately address the identity of the repatriates themselves. They only reflect on the historical fact that the returnees were intruders in the colonies, criticizing their colonial attitudes, and do not address the forced nature of repatriation and the consciousness of the repatriates. Additionally, the studies refer to the repatriates’ sense of losing their homes only within the limited scope of the American occupation and not from the perspective of their treatment by fellow Japanese (Pak Yu-ha 2009, 128-29).

Nationalism tends to foster the consciousness of victimhood and urge the memories of the survivors in one direction. Individual histories are judged according to the criteria of the greater national cause and overshadowed by its more prevalent themes. Judged on their own, however, personal memories, such as the individual histories of repatriates, which were subsumed under the national (group) memory, reveal the crack in Japan’s myth of homogeneity. The purpose of this paper is to study this “crack” by examining the accounts of repatriates that were assimilated into postwar Japanese society; it reveals how the returnees were treated in postwar Japan and how they perceived themselves; it thereby sheds new light on the nationalism of postwar Japan. This study also considers the existing discourse surrounding repatriation, along with its hidden side, and examines the existential consciousness and experiences of repatriated Japanese in postwar society.

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6 Articles in the mass media on the repatriation project at the time, depict “crowds welcoming compatriots who returned to the bosom of their motherland” in repatriation harbors, such as Maizuru and Sasebo.

7 Please see the works of Katō Kiyofumi, Araragi Shinzō, and Takasaki Sōji in the References.
The “Double Portrait” of the Repatriation Experiences of Repatriates

Differences in gender, generation, and areas from which they were repatriated led to diverse experiences for the Japanese people living outside of Japan. For example, those who had lived in the south or the north of Korea were greatly influenced not only by the routes that they took to Japan but also by differing regional circumstances (Yi 2009, 139-87). Their experiences in at times life-threatening situations were later recounted in various repatriation memoirs, which are today shared as “stories of the nation” (Pak Yu-ha 2009, 128-29).8

Narita Ryūichi, who studies the experiences of repatriates distributed throughout postwar Japanese society, classifies the discourse on repatriation into three phases, from 1945 to 1965, 1965 to the 1970s, and after 1990 (Narita 2010). His analysis views repatriation testimonials as historical records of the war and characterizes the memories of the three periods as of “war as experience,” “war as testimony,” and “war as memory.” Repatriation testimonies appeared en masse especially around 1970. This is because repatriates who had suffered extreme poverty began to settle socially and find stability. Moreover, they could expose the history of the Japanese from the colonies,9 which had been a taboo, thanks to the resumption of diplomatic relations that followed the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan (1965) and the Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China (1972). Narita Ryūichi analyzes this phenomenon as the beginning of the emergence of a consciousness of the pre-1945 Empire of Japan, which had previously been sealed off, as postwar Japan began to argue about the significance of the Empire's experiences. Additionally, discourse surrounding the repatriates became a major social topic beginning in the 1980s, leading to academic research and issues of political compensation for the surviving wives and orphans in China who were not repatriated. At this time, a movement also developed around compensation claims for the violence inflicted by the Japanese nation, such as in the Manchurian migration project between 1932 and 1945, when the Japanese Empire sent 270,000 people to Manchuria as agricultural immigrants.10 At last, a national awareness of the relationship between the empire and the colonies began to form.

However, the accounts of repatriation experiences that spread throughout Japan are not really different from the memoirs published around 1950, that is, from the stories of refugees undergoing adversity and detainment. The Heiwa no ishizue (Foundation of Peace) series of books, published since 1988 by the Peace

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8 Pak says that the repatriates’ experiences do not automatically warrant status as “national stories,” but rather need to be evaluated. Pak goes on to criticize how the war history of the Japanese Empire that was the ultimate cause of repatriation has been hidden, with the focus placed on the national ordeal of the “war victims.” This criticism coincides with my view, but I add that, as representative narratives of the war, Japanese repatriation experiences have been converted into “national stories.”

9 It might seem that repatriates started a new life, forming a strong bond with the mainland Japanese, but that is not the case at all. The mainland Japanese people’s scorn for and discrimination toward repatriates was a problem that will be discussed further in this paper. Politically treated as refugees, they completely hid their pasts so that their history would not become a barrier to their new lives. In other words, they tried to be “real Japanese.”

10 Refer to the various works of Araragi Shinzō, as cited in the References.
Commemoration Special Fund, the independent administrative institution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), describes to this day the violence and depredations carried out by the Soviet army and of the Chinese and Korean people. Moreover, it is dominated by a narrative of the history of the national ordeal.\(^1\) In other words, repatriation testimonies, including those recently published, do not differ from the mass produced statements produced around 1950, which in fact established a pattern that influenced later works. Thus, the memories of adversity and the detention of refugees in temporary concentration camps conceal the consciousness of the Empire as an aggressor of the colonies (Narita 2010, 105-06). The best-known repatriation story is Fujiwara Tei’s *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru* (The Streaming Stars are Alive),\(^2\) which was also published in Korea. This book first appeared in May 1949 and was republished in 1971 and 1976. By 2013, sixteen revised editions had appeared. It was made into a movie almost immediately after its publication in 1949; the film was released in September of the same year, and it was also made into a TV drama series in 1982.

Thirty years have already passed since then, but the wounds of the repatriation are never-ending in my mind, pestering me for days in my dreams. I think to myself, *after so long a time,* but still, I was afraid of the coming of night. I scream in fear of being chased by someone, and experience despondency and sorrow as I am shocked awake by my own voice. I feel great sadness as I wipe away the cold sweat from my face and try to sleep. (Fujiwara 1976, 317)

The above quotation is from the epilogue of the 1976 edition. Such memories are not unique to Fujiwara. That her experiences won the sympathy of postwar Japanese can be seen in her acknowledgements in the 1994 edition: “As the author, I appreciate the fact that so many people have read this book though almost half a century has passed since the end of the war” (1976, 360). The first autobiographical story describing the process of repatriation, the book became a template for the “repatriation narrative” (Pak Kwang-hyon 2010). Its description of a woman parting from her husband during the war and returning to Japan with her children has become a trope frequently repeated in later repatriation narratives.

Stories like Fujiwara’s spread as positive examples of overcoming the adversity of devastated lives and seeking solace in the bosom of the motherland, and their message was read by the Japanese people with a sense of solidarity (Narita

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\(^1\) *Heiwa no ishizue* is a series of books that has been continuously published for over twenty years. There are dozens of volumes on the adversities faced by military and civilian repatriates, and even some non-Japanese. The series also includes a children’s book. To give an example of their contents, one volume contains sixty-six experience stories, mostly about people from Manchuria. In another volume, there are stories from Manchuria, Sakhalin, Korea, and Taiwan. More than anything, this collection is characterized by the fact that it records the lives of repatriates from the time of their births.

\(^2\) This story was introduced in Korea in 1950, under the title “Naega nömün samp’alsón (The 38th Parallel I Crossed)” (translated by Ch’ong Kwang-hyon and published by Sudo Munhwasa), and republished in 2003 with the title “Hurumin pyŏl ŭn saru itta” (The Streaming Stars are Alive) (translated by Wi Ki jông and published by Ch’ongmirae).
2010, 84-109). This contributed to the development of the national consciousness that perceived the Japanese as war victims. Asano Toyomi, who studies the memories of the repatriates, contends that the “public memory” of repatriates in the process of the national reintegration of postwar Japan has elided the image of colonizers, which has been concealed by the scars of the Japanese victims (2004). It is well known that the public memory formed by national reintegration is based on the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, as well as the merciless bombing of other major Japanese cities, including Tokyo. Nosaka Akiyuki’s Hotaru no haka (Grave of the Fireflies)\(^\text{13}\) achieved recognition and public acclaim by garnering the Naoki Literary Prize in 1967 and in 1988 was made into an animated film that was regularly aired on TV around August 15, the date of Japan’s surrender. It was also produced as a “Sixty Postwar Years Special Drama” in 2005,\(^\text{14}\) contributing to the solidification of Japan’s national identity as a victim of the war. The narratives of national ordeals in the form of repatriation memoirs, such as Fujiwara’s Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru, were also appropriated as part of the national integration ideology.

This passage is from the memoirs of a repatriate. Like other such accounts, it portrays the Japanese people being raped and violated by the Soviet army or robbed by Chinese and Koreans. It compares the Japanese army with the Soviet army, something that had not been done before, showing how the writer understands the violence of Japan against the colonized from the victims’ perspective. The self-consciousness of Japanese as “aggressors” appears as a standard element in the experiences of repatriates. As they degenerated into famished refugees upon the withdrawal of the Japanese Kwantung Army, they realized that they belonged to the “invaders”; they expressed hostility toward their government, stating, “When thinking of how Japan trod the path of militarism under the guise of national policy, the responsibility falls on all those in power. We must never take part in becoming invaders” (Shimazaki 1976, 175).

However, these memories disappeared in postwar Japanese society, as if there were no conflict or resistance at all. In the atmosphere of national reintegration and the building of New Japan, the stories of the repatriates only focused on the “public role” of what was recorded, portraying the Japanese people as war victims who require peace. As a result, the true nature of the repatriates’

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\(^{13}\) An antiwar novel based on the actual experiences of the author who lost his family during the Kobe blitz of 1945. It was produced and exported as a movie later, spreading the image of “Japan as a victim of the war” worldwide.

\(^{14}\) The show was aired every year from 1989 to 1991 and every other year since 1992 on Nippon TV Friday’s Roadshow.
stories was slowly diluted and subsumed under the concerns of postwar Japanese society in general. Regarding their public role, Pak Yu-ha points out that postwar Japan desperately needed such experiences in order to manufacture a public image of victimhood and solidarity. Pak thus criticizes the perception of postwar Japan that treated the experience of repatriation merely as a part of the total war experience (2009, 121-23).  

It was not easy for repatriates who had barely escaped with their lives during the war to start a new life in a Japan which lay in ruins. “Once we return to our homeland, all these nightmares will end,” they chanted over and over; however, when they finally arrived in Japan, before they had a chance to feel any relief over the end of their ordeals, they faced anxiety, disappointment, and frustration. The Japanese people, who had lived a miserable life of poverty and chaos because of the enormous destruction of the war, threw them reproachful looks that seemed to say, “Why did you come back when we’re already facing such difficulties?” They despised the fact that they had come from the colonies, calling them “filthy repatriates.”

“I am a repatriate, and I couldn’t get along well with people around me. Since it was the countryside, people would give me cold stares; and my mother was worried that no one would arrange a marriage with me. People would treat me somewhat differently once they found out I used to live in Korea, which made me feel alienated. (Tabata 1996)

“Mother, there goes a Japanese woman!” shouted Masahiro loudly. There was a woman walking by wearing a full kimono, complete with maruobi. I thought I was as naïve as Masahiro. That’s because I thought the women of Japan’s defeat would all look as shabby as us. I myself am a Japanese woman, and the young woman with a backpack walking right in front of me was also a Japanese woman, but we were completely different from the Japanese woman Masahiro saw; we were filthy repatriates. (Fujiwara 1976, 299)

The confession of the woman who was worried that she could not get along well with others and that she would have no offer of marriage since she was a repatriate shows the sense of alienation experienced by the second generation of colonists who returned to postwar Japan (Nin 1978, 133). In the second quote, the mother had finally felt the relief of returning to the homeland after the ordeal of evacuation, but her happiness was marred by the perception of her own appearance as a “filthy repatriate” when she saw a woman wearing a fine kimono. This feeling is accentuated by the child’s cry of surprise, as if seeing a foreigner: “There goes a Japanese woman!” The sense of difference actually experienced by the second generation of colonial returnees in postwar Japan was more intense than that experienced by their parents. “I thought it would all be over once we repatriated

Pak points out that there are many authors who cover the topic of repatriation experiences or their after effects in Japanese postwar literature and raises the question of defining their work as “repatriation literature.” Pak also introduces writers who were repatriates born between 1928 and 1937 and who lived in Japanese colonies.
and made it to Yamaguchi where my parents were. But on seeing the homeland for the first time, I just stood there crying because I didn’t know anyone wherever I went,” said a boy remembering his first impression of Japan (Miyahara 2002). “The homeland was nothing more than a foreign country to us,” confessed the second generation of former colonists (Itsuki 1973). These statements show the position of repatriates in postwar Japan as “foreigners in their own homeland,” even among those of the second-generation. In addition, life in postwar Japan, which was quite different from that of the colonies, resulted in complex emotions, such as a sense of inferiority because repatriates were “extremely poor” and “foreign.” Thus, the consciousness of repatriates could not solidify as a group memory, making it difficult to obtain a determinant position in the contemporary historical perspective (Pak Yu-ha 2009, 128-29).

The experiences of repatriates maintain a powerful atmosphere of suffering and mostly focus on the hardships of evacuation and the sense of anxiety and fear; they are also limited by the absence of historical perspective that comes with the nostalgia for life in the prewar colonies (Ishida 2000). However, these records also reveal the dual identity of the repatriates. First, the awakening of the identity of the “Japanese as invaders” appears in the experience of a repatriate quoted above. In addition, there is the new identity of being “outsider Japanese,” created by the sense of difference or alienation from Japan or other Japanese people after repatriation.

The Engagement of Repatriates
In the dual identity that emerged through the repatriation experience, there was a contrast between the history of the colonial Empire of Japan and the true picture of postwar Japan after its defeat. Between these two oddly conflicting images, the thoughts of the repatriates about their lives are narrated as a conflict of self-consciousness and incorporated into essential existential questions. The writer, Abe Kōbō, himself a repatriate to post-war Japan, confronted in this situation his existence through the process of engagement.16

Engagement is an attitude by which human beings face their own situations, perceive their responsibilities, and decide to act in order to change, maintain them, or to make them known. The key concept of engagement simultaneously captures the relationship of the individual and the entire human race; and this engagement is formed through existential conditions such as “anxiety” (angoisse), “being abandoned/solitude” (délaissement), and “despair” (désespoir).

After Japan’s defeat, Abe Kōbō moved from Fengtian (currently Shenyang) in Manchuria to Dalian, where he boarded a repatriation ship in September 1946. Although his return was delayed by the outbreak of disease aboard the ship, he finally disembarked in Japan in October by way of Sasebo Harbor near

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16 Engagement is used here as an existentialist term, meaning both social participation and self-imprisonment. It was first conceptualized in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness, which shows the method of existence as “a recognition of the subjectivity in others” (Sartre 1943/2003). In literature, it indicates the propagation of social and political positions rather than the principle of art for art’s sake (Sartre 1943/2007).
Nagasaki. He created a literary work, *Nendobei* (The Mud Wall), which is based on his experience in Manchuria, where he had spent his childhood. This work was published as *Owarishimichi no shirubeni* (At the Guidepost at the End of the Road, February 1948) and is widely acknowledged as the work that earned Abe fame as a writer. Published in a revised edition in 1965, it is significant in the discussion of the Manchurian experience, as it focuses, along with *Kemonotachi wa kokyō wo mezasu* (Animals Are Going to Their Home, 1957) on the perception of his homeland. Analyzing the portrayal of his experiences in Manchuria in the novel, this study seeks to grasp Abe’s consciousness of his homeland through the actions of the protagonist who wanders through a desert-like wilderness. The world, symbolized by “sand, dry wind, and wilderness,” is presented as a literary “primal scene,” designed to reflect the frustration and self-consciousness felt in the rootless wandering that follows the loss of home.

Abe Kōbō’s work raises a question: Is “home” represented by Manchuria, or Japan? This question is linked with the birth of Abe Kōbō as a “Japanese person” and his subsequent connection to the rulers and invaders of the colony. Critics have questioned his ambiguous depiction of home, arguing that it fails to recognize that Japan was a colonizer in Manchuria (O Mi-jong 2003; Tsuruda 1974). Moreover, this perceptional ambivalence is deeply related to Abe’s literary themes of anti-collectivism and rejection.

However, it is difficult to find sufficient explanation of Abe’s consciousness of existence in the previous discussions. While it is presupposed that Abe Kōbō is “Japanese,” his own identity as a Japanese and his belongingness to the ethnic community have been overlooked. Historically, the mental links of “Japanese = invader = aggressor” have influenced the consciousnesses or subconsciousnesses of earlier researchers. Therefore they have blamed Abe for the lack of historical awareness. Hence, it is necessary to examine Abe’s existential thought after his own experience of defeat and repatriation, his decision to become a writer and create a novelistic primal scene, and how his existential consciousness touched upon postwar Japanese society at the time. Thus, this study will examine *Zōō* (Hatred, March 1948) and *Itansha no kokuhatsu* (Prosecution of a Heretic, April 1948), works he created shortly after his return to Japan.

The novel I am designing in my head...is an extremely realistic story, nothing more than what happened in that village as described before...So to speak, it is the experience itself, what I actually saw and heard...I am going to write a novel about myself; what happened in the house in which you died. But wait a minute, because you tend not to accept a novel without asking about its reason and purpose, let me clarify that first. The purpose of my novel coincides with the reason of it as well; in short, it is hatred toward you and your kind. You are free to sneer, as you have always done so. But beware, because you will soon know how deep my

17 In addition, Arimura Takahiro, who compares Abe’s works with Kafka’s, states that Abe experienced the collapsing nation and people where he was living in Manchuria under the historical circumstances of World War II and understands the experience of defeat as parallel to the experience in Manchuria, where the descriptions of the ruins and burned villages in his work portray that brutal experience (Arimura 1997).
hatred is. Yes, I cannot resist killing you. I will kill you no matter what. (Abe 1948b/1997, 442)\(^{18}\) [Emphasis mine]

The quotation is from Hatred, written in March 1948,\(^{19}\) which develops a story in the first person as a confession, as can be seen from the words, “the novel I am designing in my head” and “I am going to write a novel about myself.” It is mainly based on the elaborate feelings that depict the psychological state of the protagonist, “I,” in a speculative format. Hatred, written immediately after the publication of At the Guidepost at the End of the Road, which was based on Abe’s experiences in Manchuria, displays the same ideological and philosophical thematic consciousness as that work. Hatred, however, expresses the protagonist’s more intense inner conflicts. Rather than following a typical model of novelistic composition, such as the phased development of the storyline or the organic development of events and conflicts, it focuses on the enraged psychological state of the protagonist through the use of thought fragments, such as the author’s compositional notes. The obsession and hatred of the protagonist, “I,” toward “you” is especially impressive. The novel, written about “the experience itself, what I actually saw and heard,” is based on the main motif of hatred toward “you,” whom the protagonist abhors with homicidal rage. What then was it about the relationship between “you” and “I” that led to such extreme conflict? Let us begin by focusing on the identity of “you.”

The Hated Existence
In Hatred, “you” runs away from a certain place referred to as that village in order to survive, and currently lives in “the place you call mother earth,” no longer able to return to the village. Moreover, as can be seen from the words, “I hate you not because you deserve to be hated; it is just my excess (1948b/1997, 441),” “you” is not portrayed as a villain whom it is natural to hate. Nevertheless, “I” describes a scene in which a crowd kills a foreigner and says that he wants to kill “you” in the same way.

There was a man who began to laugh uproariously at the back of the crowd. Among the crowd, which even the magician’s magic could not stir, a sudden uproar started for some reason. Outraged and humiliated by the laughter, the crowd attacked the man at once. When I went over to take a look after the crowd had slowly dispersed, I saw that the man was a neatly dressed foreigner. Judging by the fact that he did not even emit a groan when he was roughly handled by the tramp that came over to strip off the bloody clothes from him, he might be dead already. Yes, I thought I would like to kill you like that. (1948b/1997, 440)

The collective behavior of the crowd killing the man in this piece can be understood in relation to the crowd in Karasunuma (Swamp of the Crow), published in August 1948. Karasunuma describes the Chinese people, who, like ants, had been

\(^{18}\) Hereafter, the citation of this work will display only the title and page number.

\(^{19}\) Hatred was not published at the time, but was later included in the collected works of Abe Kōbō.
merely peripheral before, changing completely and turning into a violent mob who begin to riot (1948c). Abe depicts their nearly mad actions not simply as the result of a violent disposition but as the common image of the Chinese in Manchuria, who demanded liberation from political repression by the aggressor-nation Japan. In fact, Abe revealed that this image of the Chinese people whom he had seen in Manchuria after Japan’s defeat was the source of the main motif in his creation (1948d). He states that although he and other Japanese experienced anarchy after their defeat, it came as a new frontier; he did not see the collapse of the invader and the ruling class merely as the destruction of power, but thought of it as the independent recovery of rights of the oppressed class seeking hope to be free from oppression. Therefore, judging by Abe’s motivation in writing Karasunuma, one can see where Abe’s interest lay when he wrote Hatred five months earlier. The crowd’s behavior in that story reflects the behavior of the Chinese in Manchuria who wanted independence and freedom.

Moreover, as it can be seen from the fact that Abe actually gives “you” his own personal history in details such as “being from Manchuria and born on March 7, 1924,” the “you” that had run away from “that village” tends to overlap with Abe’s reality. Through the set-up of “you” and “you people” as the object of hatred, it can also be seen that Abe views the Japanese people as “others.”

“You once sneered at my ideology and origin. It does not matter, because you are just the kind of person to laugh noisily. In other words, I am lonely, but you are so alone that you cannot even be lonely. The group of those outsiders is what you call compatriots. Think hard about which side will die...Looking at you and your people’s gestures of commenting on love, behavior, creation, and despair, I am disgusted. Much less society, and the people...What justification do you have for your behavior? (1948b/1997, 440-41)

“I” feels disgusted by the comments of “you” on “love, behavior, creation, and despair” that “sneer at my ideology and origin.” At the time, fraternity encouraged at the national level originated in group identity that excluded people from countries outside Japan, that is, the “different races from other areas” identified by Nanbara Shigeru. People with so-called “national purity” were qualified to be reintegrated into the New Japan. Needless to say, this denies the personal history of repatriates who considered themselves Manchurians or of those who were born in a colony, such as Abe Kōbō. It shows the one-sidedness of the national reunification

20 Abe made such a comment at the symposium of Yoru no kai (Association for research on avant-garde art, established in June, 1948), which led to criticism from other members. Namigata Tsuyoshi points out that Karasunuma could not be published in Sōgobunka, the literary coterie magazine of Yoru no kai, because of what Abe had said (Namigata 2005).

21 Abe Kōbō inserts his own date of birth [“March 7, 19[○○]24” (1948b/1997, 442)] in the personal history of the protagonist. As shown by Yi-jin Park (2009), this projection of his personal history onto the protagonist while portraying a repatriate can also be seen in his representative works, such as Itansha no kokuhatsu, Suna no onna, and Hakootoko.

22 “Boku wa Manshū umarete soko wa fuyu ga totemo kibishii tokoro deshita” (Hardin 1973). Abe considered himself as being from Manchuria, since he had grown up there, having moved to Manchuria...
policy for reintegration of postwar Japan. The identity of “you” as the target of hatred signals that Abe’s own identity was not unified but split.

Abe paradoxically expressed that the desperate wish of “I” to kill “you” is actually the longing for that village, stating, “I cannot be free from this derangement of longing for that place” (Abe 1948b/1997, 445), as long as “you” exists. It seems that Abe felt unbearable nostalgia for Manchuria at the time. Moreover, that nostalgia included his longing for that place, which was forbidden to a Japanese person and an invader, as seen in the expression “derangement.” Thus, the confession of “I” who hates “you” to death is the exposure of Abe’s own divided existential reality, in which the consciousness of being “Japanese from Manchuria” collided with the identity of the “pure Japanese.” The confrontation of “I” and “you” in reality was the engagement of individual repatriates like Abe Kōbō with “the world,” the collective identity of postwar Japan.

The Heretic, the “Unpatriotic Person”

Hatred has the same village descriptions and character conflicts (with an “I” who wants to kill a person who is an equivalent of “you”) as Itansha no kokuhatsu, published in April of the same year. It follows the same plot development as Hatred, revealing at the end that the “you (=X)” whom the protagonist “I” tried to kill was actually himself.24 Previously, Hatred revealed that the object of hatred, “you,” represents Abe’s consciousness of existence as being from Manchuria and that such hatred connotes the conflict that Abe faced because of his reluctance to accept his current circumstances. Keeping in mind the hostility of “I” toward “X” in Itansha no kokuhatsu, Abe’s critical mind as reflected by “I,” who obsesses over killing “X,” becomes clearer.

“X” is the mayor of a village, and that village embodies Abe’s hometown—Fengtian in Manchuria—as it does in Hatred. “X” symbolizes the Japanese as the rulers and invaders of the colony Manchuria. “I” asks “X” why he forces the restraints of Japan and the Japanese on “I.” “I” has no choice but to kill “X” in order to be free from those restraints. Then how could “I” kill “X”?

As you wish, I will tell you about the weapon that can kill me. But it actually does not exist ...

... Do you believe that there exists something that no human could ever name? If you find something that humans have forgotten to name, stab my heart with it. And if I still cannot name it, then I will truly die. (Abe 1948a/1997, 471)25

“X” says that something human beings “have forgotten to name”; in other words,

eight months after his birth. The self-awareness of being from a foreign land is a form of consciousness that commonly appears in the works of writers who are repatriates, such as Uno Kōchiro and Itsuki Hiroyuki.

23 “You” is designated in the work as “X” and hereafter will be referred to simply as “X.”

24 Itansha no kokuhatsu was published in April, and Hatred was written in March; but considering that Hatred was unpublished, it may be considered the original version of Itansha no kokuhatsu.

25 Hereafter, the citation of this work will display only the title and page number.
that which does not exist in the human world, is the weapon that can kill him. The only way to be free from the forced mechanism of becoming “Japanese” is through self-awareness as “an existence that cannot be named” and “does not exist among humans.” Thus, “I” decides that his current being is sufficient to make him such a weapon and declares himself to be the enemy of the human race. He is “the heretic,” “the guilty,” the “villain,” and the “enemy of the human race” who “hates all villages and does not have any home or nostalgia” (1997, 449). In other words, accusing him and regarding him as the heretic is no different from “I” proving his own existence.

The protagonist’s consciousness of existence in considering his own indefinable identity as a heretic reflects a layer of consciousness in Abe’s thinking that had caused a crack in his own existence. What quality does the heretic have, as presented by Abe? Is being a heretic a by-product of Abe’s own existential thought functioning within an extremely ontological consciousness? I will focus on the intention of the accusation of heresy, with the contents of his own chronology as a hint:

The cruel human race, perhaps to make up for its faults, has prepared an entirely different door for the free man who, solely relying on his existence, speaks of his own heterogeneity and disqualification. The treatment is too cruel and unjust. Whether you know it or not, they are not given the chance to obtain the dangerous weapon of speech. There are no doors leading to any court, only prison. And men were respectfully hanging the sign of philanthropy in front of the door, which read “Mental Hospital.” (1997, 448)

In short, the human race prepares to consign to the “mental hospital” those who confess to being different, while pretending that doing so is an act of philanthropy. Here, we must think about the context in which the relationship between philanthropy and the mental hospital appeared. Abe’s 1943 handwritten notes tell us that he entered the Medical School of Tokyo University at the time, but rarely went to school, as his mental state and his memory gradually degenerated as the war went on. In the meantime, he followed his friend to Matsuzawa Hospital and received an examination from Dr. Saitō Mokichi (Abe 1998, 464).

Built in 1879, Matsuzawa Hospital is Japan’s leading mental hospital, and Saitō Mokichi was a famous psychiatrist. We can determine the reason why Abe precisely remembered this hospital, if we think about the role Matsuzawa Hospital played for the Japanese at the time of World War II. In 1940, the Japanese government enacted two pieces of legislation to examine and improve the physical health of the Japanese people. One is the National Eugenics Act, under which all people under the age of twenty had their health checked for physical fitness, tuberculosis, venereal disease, and mental illness through a physical examination. If determined to have a hereditary disease, a person and his or her relatives were subjected to sterilization. The implementation of this system enabled the physical management of the Japanese on the basis of wartime needs. Patients with mental illnesses were diagnosed as “unhealthy” and were kept under public surveillance at Matsuzawa Hospital to recuperate “thanks to the grace of the Emperor.” Here, those
with able bodies that were of use to the country were classified as “loyal subjects of the Empire” and those without them as “non-subjects,” who were managed separately.

It might be difficult to argue that the experience of receiving treatment in Matsuzawa Hospital during the war acts as a literary motif, but the role of this hospital at the time—the control of those who did not have the nation's desired qualifications and could not adapt to society—also appears in another work, *Bokusō* (Herbage), the story of a woman suffering from hereditary schizophrenia. Her doctor, who is also her husband, locks her up, and then kills her with a deliberately administered drug overdose. The plot of taking care of a woman with hereditary mental illness, as if granting her a favor, and then killing her is not completely unrelated to Abe's depiction of Matsuzawa Hospital in his notes. It may suggest the control system in *Prosecution of a Heretic*, in which a person with a different form of existence is forced to stand before the allegedly philanthropic sign proclaiming, “Mental Hospital.”

Through the protagonist, “I,” Abe refuses the notion of “Japanese as a national people.” He questions why “you” (the nation), which has conquered the human race with “naming” as a weapon, forces upon “me” (him) certain human rights and qualifications. Moreover, he embodies the “non-national people,” contrary to the true “national people,” through the image of the mental hospital functioning under the conditions of war. Abe uses heretics, which are “unnamed and unidentified” beings, as the image of resistance against the nation that names the national people.

**Postwar Experiences of Repatriates**

For people from the colonies, like Abe, who grew to have deep nostalgia for the places they left because of the strangeness of their new lives, what would it be like to suddenly be categorized as “pure Japanese”? Existential confusion is a natural response to this challenge. The gaps that appeared between repatriates and the “pure Japanese” in daily experience placed an even greater strain on the identity of those who were required to become pure Japanese. Repatriates, discriminated against by the mainlanders, referred to the mainlanders as “others,” and because of this disharmony, the repatriates faced a greater burden in becoming “pure Japanese” (Yi Yŏn-sik 2009, 144). The repatriates chose to hide their past and their existence behind silence and adjust by becoming “real Japanese” as much as they could. The silence chosen by the repatriates under the myth of homogeneity shares the same context with the confusion of identity of the repatriates that Abe tried to convey through the protagonist “I.” In reality, their existence was dissolved and incorporated into postwar Japanese society.

Abe Kōbō’s return experience was determined by the repatriation plan of the Japanese living in Manchuria that was called “the first repatriation.” Under the slogan “a million repatriates” most of the Japanese in China (1,046,954 people)

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26 “Mainlanders” was a term used to refer to those who lacked colonial experience and were in Japan when the war ended.
were repatriated by 1948 (Yamamoto 2007). However, at the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949, approximately forty to fifty thousand Japanese were still left in Manchuria. Repatriation continued through the diplomacy of the two nations, which resumed in 1953, but was stopped in July 1958, after the repatriation of approximately nine thousand people, because of the “Nagasaki flag incident.” Later, the issue of Japanese living in China disappeared from the public eye, until the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two nations in 1972. In the meantime some of them were struck from the records. According to the data of the Repatriation Relief Bureau, non-repatriates whose life or death could not be verified ten years after the beginning of repatriation were declared dead as of October 1, 1957 with the justification that their chances of having survived were low.

There was social pressure for the nation to declare the deaths of these non-repatriates; since it was impossible to submit data to prove death, this gave rise to the Civil Act promulgated on December 17, 1957, which introduced special measures for non-repatriates (Kōseishō 2000). In October of 1961, after a three-year period in which to see if these Japanese were still missing, their existence was officially and completely erased. With tacit approval, along with the existence of repatriates, the Japanese Empire’s history of invasion also disappeared into oblivion.

In the meantime, Japan achieved a high level of economic growth in the 1960s, wherein various “Japanese cultural discourses” (Nihonjinron) all equally emphasized the uniqueness of Japan and assumed the unity of the Japanese people, the unity of culture, homogeneity, and racial purity (Pak Chin-u 2010, 12-15). This theory of homogeneity of the “Japanese people” as one has acted as a strong contributing factor for integrated nationalism from the 1990s to the present. The national attitude has also changed. With the formation of a type of collective victimhood, in which people identify with the Japanese from the colonies, whom they had called “filthy repatriates” and previously despised, the sense of homogeneity has had the effect of making postwar generations feel as if the war experiences were their own. Thus, the consciousness that postwar Japanese are eternal victims instills deep existential fear, leading them to desire not to repeat the mistakes of their ancestors and resulting in the logic that they need a strong nation, for which anything can be justified.

The significance of the term “refugees,” commonly used to refer to repatriates in Japan, supports this worldview. “Repatriation” in the case of Japan, is based on the guidelines enacted in 1946 by the International Refugee Organization. Proposed by the United States, the Soviet Union, England, and China, these guidelines focused on “refugees,” who, according to the guidelines, were mostly prisoners of war or exiles when mass Japanese repatriations took place from 1946.

27 There was a “Chinese Postcard/Letter Exhibit” hosted by the Nagasaki branch of the Japan-China Friendship Association on May 2, 1958. The flag of the People’s Republic of China that hung from the ceiling of the entrance to the building where the exhibit was housed was damaged by a young Japanese man, leading to the degeneration of the relationship between the two nations.
to 1951. However, as mentioned above, the emphasis shifted as the repatriation project moved forward. At the time, the concept of refugees was quite unfamiliar in Japan, but the term was widely used to refer to “Manchurian refugees,” conjuring up an image of “helping people in difficult situations to be repatriated back to their homeland.” Therefore, the image of the repatriates furnished appropriate material to visualize the history of sorrow faced by the postwar Japanese.

As such, the postwar experiences of repatriates are remembered only in the history of ordeals of the war victims, with a suppressed sense of the loss or existential anxiety they experienced. The more these memories are suppressed, the more their trauma is vividly reproduced and repeated, being ever on the lips of postwar generations, turning into another form of victimhood. In real life, the Japanese from the colonies, categorized as “repatriated Japanese,” had to follow the path of reintegration as “Japanese,” eliminating from their identity their personal histories of “repatriation” and colonial life. This repression aligns with a reality of postwar Japan that has been concealed under the veil of homogeneity and the distorted historical consciousness of its society. Therefore, recalling the postwar situation of repatriates and shedding new light on the social aspect of a postwar Japan whose disunity has led to chaos questions the delusion of collectivism that exacts sacrifices within the closed system of the nation-state’s strict nationalism, while clarifying the reasons for the alienation of the repatriates.

**GLOSSARY**

| Abe Kōbō 安部公房 | Itansha no kokuhatsu 異端者の告発 |
| Bokusō 牧草 | Itsuki Hiroyuki 五木寛之 |
| Dalian 大連 | Karasunuma 烏沼 |
| Fengtian 奉天 | Kemonotachi wa kokyō wo mezasu けものたちは故郷をめざす |
| Fujiwara Tei 藤原てい | Köseishō Gaikyoku 厚生省外局 |
| Fukuincho 復員庁 | maruobi 丸帯 |
| fukuinsha, fukuinhei 復員者、復員兵 | Matsuzawa Hospital 松沢病院 |
| Hakootoko 箱男 | Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru 流れる星は生きている |
| Heiwa no ishizue 平和の礎 | Nanbara Shigeru 南原繁 |
| Hikiage Engochō 引揚援護庁 | Nendobei 粘土塀 |

28 The first Japanese translation of “refugee” in 1862 was “escapee, evacuee”; there was no other translation of “refugee” in Japan until World War II (Ichinokawa 2007).
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