**Liberty Osaka**

Translated by Samantha Chen, March 26, 2016

Full Translations from original Japanese materials from Liberty Osaka

**Japan and its Colonies**

In the modern era (after the Meiji Restoration), Japan as a nation continued expanding its territories. North of the main islands, in 1869 a majority of the territory that had been called Yezo became Hokkaido, and Hokkaido was proclaimed to be the upper limits of Japan’s dominions. South of the main islands, in the year 1872 the Ryukyu domain was set up to incorporate the Ryukyu island kingdom as Japanese territory. In 1879 with backing from entities like police and the army, the Ryukyu domain was abolished and Okinawa prefecture was established. Furthermore, in the course of the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Taiwan in 1895, Sakhalin in 1905, and Korea in 1910 all became Japanese colonies. Pre-war Japan was an empire that possessed a great number of colonies, with Japanese (also known as ethnic Japanese and Yamato people) at the pinnacle of the empire, as well as various ethnic groups. One might say that Japan today suffers from many minority problems stemming from this historical background.

**Zainichi Koreans**

At the end of 2009, there were about 580,000 individuals holding South Korean or North Korean citizenship who were registered as foreigners staying longer than 90 days. Of these individuals, there were 490,000 permanent residency holders, and within those about 400,000 are Special Permanent Residents, nearly all of whom are second generation onward and born in Japan. In the exhibition in this building, in addition to “Special Permanent Residents,” we refer to “Permanent Residents,” “spouses of Japanese,” “Spouses of Permanent Residents,” and “Long-Term Residents.” These residency holders all make their livelihoods in Japan, so it is believed that the likelihood that they will return to their country is very low, therefore they are known as Resident Koreans.

“Special Permanent Resident” is a type of residency exclusively granted to those people originally from a colony (Korea, Taiwan) who lived in Japan prior to September 2, 1945, or their descendants. One might also say that Resident Koreans are those who have a historical background of Korean colonial rule under Japan. Also, in recent years, the number of Resident Koreans who have been naturalized or have acquired Japanese citizenship by being born to parents who have Japanese citizenship has been increasing, yet the exact numbers are unknown.

**Okinawa**

Since the reversion of Okinawa back to the mainland on May 15, 1972, Okinawa’s American military bases have continued to be used through the renewal of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security without the consent of Okinawans. Though a consolidation of bases was carried out, only 15% of those lands was actually returned [to Japanese control]. Okinawa makes up 0.6% of the total area of Japan, and the population of Okinawa constitutes only 1% of the nation, yet even today 74% of the American military bases in Japan are on the islands of Okinawa - the training area includes land, sea, and air forces. Damage such as noise pollution, environmental damage, as well as American involvement in accidents and crimes, is unceasing. For the Okinawans, the American military forces based in Okinawa due to the Ampo treaty are a threat to their lives and human rights. Regardless of before the war or after the war, those Uchinaanchu (Okinawans) who experienced the Battle of Okinawa, then governance under the American army as the government’s military priority, continue to sincerely wish for a decrease in the heavy burden of accommodating the American military bases. What kind of response will both the Japanese and American governments give to the Okinawans who have questioned the presence of the bases for over 60 years?

**Ainu**

In June of 2008, the Resolution on Recognition of Ainu as Indigenous People was unanimously adopted by the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary [Nobutaka Machimura] made an announcement reiterating the same points. Up until now, even though the Japanese government has recognized the Ainu people as one of the few minorities, it had not recognized them as indigenous people, therefore this resolution was reported as a groundbreaking event. The reason why the Japanese government did not recognize the Ainu as an indigenous group is because there was concern that this would raise the problem of guaranteeing rights.

Then, what is considered to be indigenous rights? In the 2007 UN General Assembly, the Japanese government supported the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Also known as the “Constitution of Aborigines Around the World”, the declaration is composed of these following elements:

1. the right to self-determination
2. the right to pass on and to revive culture
3. the right to land and resources
4. the right to compensation for past land/resource appropriation

In Japan, the Ainu Culture Promotion Act came into force in 1997. However, compared to the UN Declaration, it leaves many issues unresolved.

**Burakumin**

If one were to speak of the industries by which Buraku people support themselves, the foremost industries called to mind are possibly leather, leather-made goods, and the like. The Naniwa [[1]](#footnote-1)area of Osaka in early modern times [roughly 1600-1868] was called Watanabe village, and it was known nationwide for its leather and taiko [drum]-making. Its trade partners were not limited only to suburbs of Osaka, but extended to the entirety of western Japan, and there were wealthy merchants who were able to establish an enormous fortune through the leather and taiko trade, much like the middle palace guards of old. This tradition continues today, and even now there are still four taiko establishments in the region.

In addition to such industries from early modern times, with the leather industry which began long ago as a basis, new jobs arose in accordance with the demands of the modern era, such as shoemaking and glove-making, as well as jobs having to do with meat. In modern times, as Western-style shoes entered Japan, the Buraku who had skills in leatherwork were the first to make shoes, and gloves were made by applying the techniques of shoe-making.

Similarly, there were those who put time and effort into manufacturing and selling products made with straw, cloth and other comparatively easily available materials. Within local Buraku in Osaka, in the modern era they made things like Japanese sandals, rice baskets, and brooms made of straw, as well as dusters made out of old clothing and scraps of cloth. Around the year 1930, these central industries reached the point of prosperity, and subsequently in the chaotic period of the middle and end of the war these industries became very prosperous. At its peak, 70% to 80% of people within the region were pursuing such jobs.

On the other hand, there were also industries such as Izumi glass that became prosperous from the modern era onward. Buraku of Izumi that became engaged in glass making had made leather-soled sandals in early modern times, so glass-making was an occupation that had no direct connection to their livelihoods in the early modern period. In neighboring villages, glass-bead making got its start as a secondary occupation to agriculture, and gradually the Buraku also came to have glass-making as an occupation, and they further developed glass craftsmanship and the making of man-made pearls.

The wire drawing, etc that flourished in Sennan is also an industry that was not limited to the Buraku. However, the Buraku people who went to work in newly established factories in the suburbs were the ones who began this work by returning to the region and setting up such machines in their barns. Therefore, one cannot say that wire drawing is strictly a Buraku industry, but it is said that the majority of the region was engaged in the wire drawing industry in various ways, for example by manufacturers who would melt down and recycle scrap wire that could not be sold by the wire drawing factories in the vicinity of the Buraku. In this sense, for Sennan Buraku, this wire drawing profession is without a doubt an industry that sustained the Buraku people’s livelihoods.

It’s said, “No matter what kind of work it is, look at the master and teacher, and watch and learn by example.” In the process one will accumulate a variety of ideas. Many Buraku industries were sustained in this way.

1. [the old name for the old outcaste area in Osaka] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)