

From “Convict” to “Victim”: Commemorating Laborers on Hokkaido’s Central Road

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Introduction: The UNESCO Heritage Controversy and Forced Labor in Japan

In 2015, the Japanese government applied to have UNESCO grant World Heritage status to “Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Kyushu-Yamaguchi and Related Areas.” The serial nomination was comprised of eleven key industrial sites related to iron and steel production, shipbuilding, and coal mining, all instrumental to Japan’s “rapid industrialization” during the Meiji period. The “Executive Summary” of the nomination file argued that those sites were deserving of World Heritage status because of their contribution to “Japan’s unique achievement in world history as the first non-Western country to successfully industrialize.”¹ The nomination document also attempted to link Japan’s modern industrial success to its current status as an economic superpower. The report begins with a letter by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, which claims that the Meiji era “reflect[s] that period of transformation, fundamental to the essence of Japan today and her position in global society.”²

Although UNESCO eventually granted World Heritage status to the nominated sites, Japan’s application brought Japan’s dark history of “forced labor” into the international spotlight. The Korean and Chinese governments criticized Japan’s omission of references to its use of forced labor (*kyōsei renkō* 強制連行 or *kyōsei rōdō* 強制労働 in Japanese) at many of those sites during the Asia-Pacific War. The Korean government, for instance, pointed out that nearly 60,000 Koreans were forced to work for Japanese companies at seven of the nominated

sites.³ In addition to Korean and Chinese laborers who were forcefully taken to Japan to work under appalling conditions, thousands of Allied POWs were also forced to work at many of the sites included in the Japanese government’s serial nomination.

American veterans’ organizations also protested and voiced their disapproval of Japan’s omission of its use of POW labor. In a letter dated June 22, 2015, Jan Thompson, the president of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society (ADBC-MS)—an organization that represents POWs of Imperial Japan during World War II and their families—explained to the director of the World Heritage Center that she and the ADBC-MC had “serious reservations about whether the application meets the UNESCO criteria of ‘universal value’ and meaning.”⁴ Thompson also wrote, “We do not object to Japan highlighting its modern history, but the story is incomplete without a full and complete history of the use of slave labor. Forced and conscripted labor was as much a convention in Meiji Japan as it was during World War II.”⁵

Thompson’s description of Japan’s modern history as a period characterized by a pattern of forced labor persisting from the Meiji period until the end of the Asia-Pacific War is significant because it demonstrates that an advocacy group for former American POWs sees the use of POW labor not only as one of Japan’s wartime abuses, but also as part of a longer process of labor exploitation.

Historical narratives celebrating the achievements of the Meiji era’s

industrialization and Japan's impressive economic recovery from the ruins of defeat after World War II, while omitting Japan's use of forced labor and POW labor during the wartime era, soon became the target of criticism among politicians and scholars around the world. In one of the many articles that he has recently written for *Japan Focus: The Asia-Pacific Journal*, William Underwood referred to this type of narrative as a "history in a box" approach, which "assumes contemporary observers can grasp the full meaning of key events that occurred at a particular location in the past while ignoring other key events that happened at the same place a couple of decades earlier."⁶

Approximately two years after the UNESCO controversy, Miyamoto Takashi wrote an article for the same journal on convict labor, another form of forced labor employed by the Japanese government, and later, the Mitsui Corporation in the Miike Coal Mine (a site that was also part of the serial nomination). The mine used convict labor from 1873 until 1931 (after the International Labor Organization's 1930 Convention on Forced Labor).⁷ Miyamoto points out that, "Although the connection between industrialization and the penal institution was not emphasized during the UNESCO registration discussion, it is widely acknowledged in the local community."⁸ During the 1960s, local residents interested in aspects of their history involving convict laborers in the mine created the Omuta Society for Prisoners' Cemetery Preservation. They repaired deteriorating graves that were thought to be those of deceased convicts, and constructed monuments to commemorate the victims of forced labor.

Such local efforts to confront the community's history of forced labor, and to commemorate the prisoners who died while working in the area were not unique to Omuta in the decades after World War II. Around the time when the Japanese government was preparing to

celebrate the centennial of the Meiji Restoration in 1968, residents in Abashiri and other places in the Okhotsk Subprefecture (*Ohōtsuku sōgō shinkō kyoku* オホーツク総合振興局) of Hokkaido (see Figure 1) began to take an increasingly critical view of the government's purported achievements in modernization and industrialization since the Meiji period. Many citizens in Abashiri were particularly concerned about the Abashiri Prison's history and the use of convict labor (*shūjin rōdō* 囚人労働) during the construction of the Central Road (*chūō dōro* 中央道路) from 1887 to 1891.



Figure 1: Hokkaido and Okhotsk Subprefecture (Google Maps)

In 1973, a local high school teacher, Koike Kikō 小池喜孝, became interested in promoting the study of local history after attending a memorial service for a worker whose body was discovered in the wall of the Jōmon Tunnel. Koike was shocked to find out that the folktales of laborers buried in construction sites were actually historical facts, and this realization made him suspect that previous histories "concealed the truth."⁹ He decided to organize a civic group called the Society for Discussing Kitami History (*Kitami rekishi wo kataru kai* 北見歴史を語る会). Soon, the group expanded to other areas in the Okhotsk region, including Abashiri, and the group was later renamed the

Okhotsk People's History Workshop (Ohōtsuku minshūshi kōza オホーツク民衆史講座).¹⁰ Koike was instrumental in the development of these local workshops, which sought to unearth hidden histories from Hokkaido's dark past.

The timing of this movement is significant because it coincides with the rise of "people's history" or *minshūshi* 民衆史 in Japan.¹¹ According to Carol Gluck, historians focusing on "people's history" often depicted the Meiji Restoration as a "failed revolution," and for many of these scholars, "The only bright time is the period of the people's rights movement when grass roots dynamism surfaced again."¹² Gluck suggests that the proponents of "people's history" saw the Meiji period as a "dark" time in Japanese history, and it is important to note that the exploration of Japan's "dark" and "troubled" past was one of the driving forces of this new type of history from the 1960s to the 1990s. In the case of Abashiri, members of the Rubeshibe Town Local History Society complained that scholars had focused exclusively on the "bright" or "light" (*hikari* 光) aspects of local history. It was thus necessary to confront their "dark" (*kage* 影) history, too.

This paper explores how local citizens dealt with the contentious history of Abashiri Prison, and how efforts to preserve the prison and commemorate the prison laborers as "victims" led to the development of Abashiri as a "prison town." This process included the construction of a number of memorial sites from the 1960s to the 1980s along the "Prisoner's Road" (*shūjin dōro* 囚人道路 - the part of the Central Road between Abashiri and Asahikawa where the number of convict deaths was especially high), and the preservation of the original Abashiri Prison in 1983 (See Figure 2). First, I examine how local residents came to describe the prison laborers who died building the Central Road as "martyrs" and later, "victims," and the debate among the people of Okhotsk over the most appropriate word to describe the dead in their commemorations. Next, I look at

how Abashiri Prison portrayed these victims in various versions of its Prisoner's Road exhibit. I argue that although the Japanese government has been the target of international criticism recently for failing to admit its use of forced labor in the past, examining how one local community dealt with its own "dark" history involving various forms of forced labor challenges the claim that Japan has suffered from historic "amnesia." It is true that Japanese politicians continue to deny that the government used forced labor, and that many Japanese corporations that benefited from the wartime government's actions have failed to take responsibility for their role in the forced labor controversy. But, some local residents in Japan have acknowledged that their government was guilty of forcing Japanese prisoners, Japanese people, Koreans, and Chinese to work against their will throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.

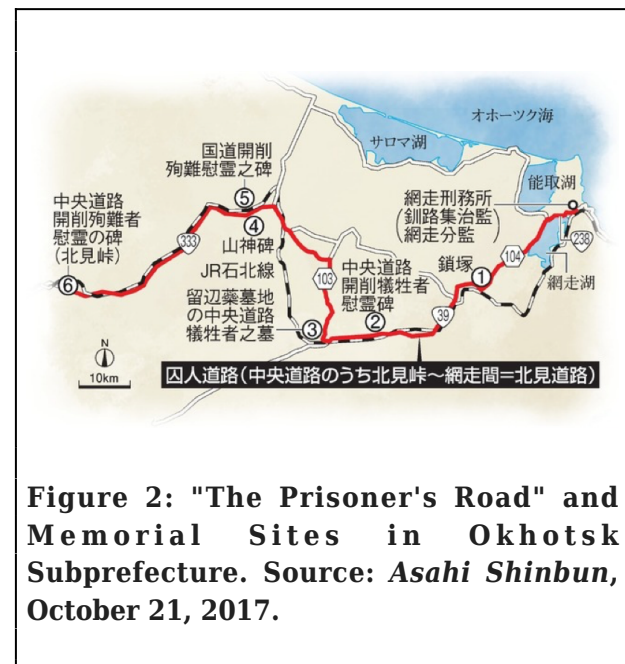


Figure 2: "The Prisoner's Road" and Memorial Sites in Okhotsk Subprefecture. Source: Asahi Shinbun, October 21, 2017.

Dark Tourism, Prison Tourism, and Public History

The Abashiri Prison Museum is a quintessential "dark tourist site." It encapsulates many of the

characteristics of “dark tourism” first proposed by Malcolm Foley and John Lennon in 1996. The historical prison and the Central Road were sites of “deaths, disasters, and atrocities,” and the prison museum today is a site “of interpretation of such events for visitors.”¹³ Lennon and Foley later added that sites of dark tourism must “posit questions, or introduce anxiety and doubt about modernity and its consequences.”¹⁴ Recently, Japanese authors have used dark tourism to examine issues related to Japan’s rapid modernization and its implications for modern-day Japan. A recent “magazine-book” (“mook”) published by Tōhō shuppan titled *Dark Tourism: Light and Shadow on Industrial Heritage* deals with the complex results of Japan’s rapid industrialization. One of Ide Akira’s articles featured in this “mook” touches on the subject of dark tourist sites involving Korean and Chinese forced labor. He argues that visiting such sites and gaining a better understanding of the conditions under which these laborers were forced to work forces us to reflect on our own lives.¹⁵ The way the Abashiri museum presents the experience of convict laborers, and the visitors’ reflection on this aspect of “dark history” are important parts of this study.

The Abashiri Prison Museum also poses questions about the development of modern prisons in Japan and how the government has dealt with criminals. The changes in incarceration practices, from the time of the historical prison to the modern-day prison in Abashiri, are one of the salient aspects of the narrative that the museum presents. After walking through the halls of the Meiji-era prison and seeing how prisoners lived in their cells, visitors can walk through the Prison Museum, which is dedicated to explaining how the Japanese prison system developed since the Meiji period. Tourists can step into authentic recreations of prisoners’ cells from the nearby operating prison in Abashiri, learn about the typical work shift of prison guards, and read about how prisoners spend their days. The

contrast between the harsh conditions of convict laborers and the more “humane” treatment of prisoners today suggests that the museum sees Japan’s penal history as one of “progress,” but the difficult history of convict labor, along with the contribution of former criminals to Japan’s modernization, might encourage visitors to think about the treatment of criminals in the past, and how society ought to deal with criminals today.

The study of “prison tourism” as a subcategory of “dark tourism” has drawn increased attention among academics. As Carolyn Strange and Michael Kempa explain in their article on Alcatraz and Robben Island, prison history tourism began to mushroom in the late twentieth century. Beginning in the 1980s, nineteenth-century penal institutions were deemed obsolete, and numerous abandoned prisons from that period were converted into museum and tourist attractions.¹⁶ The Abashiri Prison Museum opened in 1983, suggesting that the move to preserve the old prison in Abashiri was consistent with global trends. Strange and Kempa also argue that Hollywood movies such as *The Rock* have helped make Alcatraz a popular dark tourist destination.¹⁷ Similarly, some have attributed the popularity of the Abashiri Prison Museum to the success of the *Abashiri bangaichi* 網走番外地 series from the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ The first film in the series, *A Man from Abashiri* (1965), is considered the first great “yakuza film” hit.¹⁹ The storyline centers around a prisoner named Shin’ichi Tachibana, (played by Takakura Ken 高倉健) and his daring escape from Abashiri Prison with several dangerous inmates. The initial success of the films helped launch the careers of Takakura Ken and director Ishii Teruo 石井輝男.²⁰ Within two years, Ishii had completed directing a total of ten films in the series. After the completion of the series’ final film, several other Tōei directors began work on the *Shin Abashiri bangaichi* or the New Abashiri Prison series (1968-1972), which consisted of eight additional films.²¹

Daniel Botsman also sees similarities between Abashiri Prison and Alcatraz. In *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, he writes that Abashiri Prison “continues to hold a special place in the Japanese popular imagination not unlike that of Alcatraz in the United States.”²² There is no doubt that the Abashiri Prison and New Abashiri Prison film series have had a significant impact on the prison’s notoriety in Japan today.

The recent publication of *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism* (2017) is representative of the increased public awareness of and academic interest in prison tourism. The book contains forty-eight chapters on prisons from all over the world. Themes covered in these essays include colonialism, ethics, visitor experiences, human rights, prison labor, memorialization, and prison conditions. In the introduction, the authors argue that “Prison tourism is big business and has the potential to contribute to many facets of a community’s cultural understanding, children’s education, economic benefit, and even its international profile.”²³ As this paper will demonstrate, these aspects of prison tourism are all relevant to the role of the Abashiri Prison Museum.

Judah Schept and Jordan E. Mazurek’s “Layers of Violence: Coal Mining, Convict Leasing, and Carceral Tourism in Central Appalachia” is one of the few chapters that deals with how convict labor is presented and memorialized. Their main focus is the Brushy Mountain Development Group’s plan to turn the recently decommissioned Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary and the surrounding area into an “eco- and prison-tourism attraction.”²⁴ Since the Brushy Mountain Development Group is still in the processes of converting the prison into a prison museum, Schept and Mazurek rely on the group’s description of the prison and its use of prison labor from the Brushy Mountain Development group’s home page. Nevertheless, examining how the Brushy Mountain State

Penitentiary’s history is presented offers important points of commonality and contrast between the Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary and the Abashiri Prison Museum. First, both prisons were opened around the same time (Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary began operations in 1896, and the Abashiri Branch Prison was established in 1891), and in both prisons, the state played an important role in the decision to use prisoners for work projects. In the case of Brushy Mountain, the state was responsible for subleasing prisoners to work in the coal mines for the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI).²⁵ Schept and Mazurek argue that converting the prison into a tourist attraction has the possibility of “simultaneously memorializing and burying the violence of the state.”²⁶ A video featured on the group’s home page greets visitors with the following message:

Brushy Mountain was the damnation of many an evil man and it was the salvation of a humble few. This prison ate the sins of America so America could go on living. Out here in this beautiful, fearsome countryside was the anchor of this beautiful and fearsome country. So yeah, you can come and visit Brushy Mountain. You can pay for your tour, you can pay for your souvenirs, but above all you need to pay your respects, cause brother, we earned it.²⁷

Schept and Mazurek argue that this video contains a “double silence” since it fails to mention the prison’s history of convict leasing and the present-day carceral state.²⁸ The Central Road exhibit in the Abashiri Prison Museum, on the other hand, is not silent about Abashiri’s connection to convict labor during the Meiji period. It describes the dead convict laborers as “victims,” and encourages visitors to think about the suffering and harsh conditions that the prisoners were forced to endure.

Schept and Mazurek’s chapter also has implications for the global history of convict

labor. Even if the use of convict labor was a global phenomenon during the late nineteenth century, how these convicts were remembered and memorialized was far from uniform around the world. Comparing and contrasting the convict laborers from Abashiri Prison with those from other prisons allows us to understand the unique aspects of the movement to memorialize convict laborers as “victims” in the Abashiri area in the twentieth century. Such a comparison also reveals a more nuanced picture of how people understood the notions of “sacrifice” and “victimization.”

Finally, the field of public history intersects with many of the themes in this paper. Udo Gößwald’s account of how Germans faced their difficult past shares many similarities with how the people of Okhotsk dealt with their past. In both cases, at roughly the same time, the general public began to take more of an interest in their local and national histories. In Hokkaido, local history societies and “people’s history” courses grew in popularity in the 1960s. A similar movement, the History Workshop movement, became influential in England beginning in the 1960s. At first, this was mainly a British movement, but in the 1970s, sister workshops appeared in Germany, France, Italy, South Africa and America.²⁹ Gößwald explains that in Germany, the focus of this history “turned away from the history of the victors to the stories of the victims.”³⁰ It is significant that the “people’s history” movement in Japan was part of a larger global trend of reexamining the histories of victims and the oppressed.

The Abashiri Branch Prison and the Construction of the “Prisoner’s Road”

In 1874, the Meiji government opened Japan’s first modern prison in Kajibashi, Tokyo. The following year, the government built a similar prison in Sapporo, and later, other modern prisons in Urawa, Utsunomiya, Kumamoto, and

Hiroshima.³¹ The prison population skyrocketed after large numbers of people were arrested during the samurai rebellions of the 1870s, and during the government’s crackdown on violent rural protests in the 1880s. As a way of dealing with the excess prison population, Itō Hirobumi proposed sending prisoners to Hokkaido and putting them to work in mines or clearing land. The government began sending prisoners to Hokkaido in 1881, and soon after, the construction of the Kabato Prison was completed.³²

The Harvard-educated Kaneko Kentarō visited Hokkaido in 1885 while he was serving as Itō Hirobumi’s advisor. After returning to Tokyo, he submitted two reports to the government: “The Report on the Inspection of Hokkaido’s Three Prefectures” (*Hokkaidō sanken junshi fukumeisho* 北海道三県巡視復命書), and a supplementary report called “Secretary Kaneko’s Proposal” (*Kaneko taishokikan kengi* 金子大書記官建議). In the former, Kaneko called for the abolition of the three-prefecture system in Hokkaido, and in the latter, he advocated for the use of prison labor to build a road linking Sapporo to Nemuro, in order to aid in the development of Hokkaido’s resource-rich areas. Kaneko begins the second part of his report by pointing out that there were problems with using common laborers for such a project. According to Kaneko, the typical laborers would have a difficult time enduring the demanding task of clearing parts of Hokkaido’s difficult terrain, not to mention the fact that the cost of hiring such a workforce would be very high. A solution, therefore, was to use the dangerous criminals who were incarcerated in Hokkaido’s prisons instead. Kaneko argued that since these convicts were nothing more than “violent and wicked men” (*bōrei no akuto* 暴戾ノ悪徒), there was nothing wrong with overworking them to the point that they collapse and die from exhaustion. He also added that their deaths would actually benefit the nation because a decrease in the prison population would mean that the government

would have to pay less out of the national treasury's revenue for prisoner upkeep.³³

The seriousness of the prisoners' crimes was probably one reason why he described the prisoners during this time as "violent and wicked men." The convicts who were sent to Hokkaido to work were typically found guilty of felonies (*jūzaihan* 重罪犯), but the demographics of the prisons in Hokkaido varied slightly. The Kabato Main Prison was reserved for "extremely heinous criminals (*kyōaku jūzaishū* 凶悪重罪囚)." The majority of prisoners in Sorachi were political prisoners (*seijihan* 政治犯), and the Kushiro prison population consisted mostly of delinquent army veterans (*kyūgun furyō heisotsu* 旧軍不良兵卒).³⁴ Most of the prisoners in Abashiri had committed "serious crimes." Among the 1,200 prisoners in Abashiri in 1891, nearly half of them (628) were serving sentences for robbery. The crimes of the other prisoners included premeditated murder, attempted murder, rape, and arson.³⁵

Kaneko also claimed that while it would be a tragedy to bury the remains of a normal worker with a family in the field or mountains, these men were different. He implied that the government did not have an obligation to provide a proper burial for the deceased prisoners or return the remains of the dead to their hometowns. Scholars such as Botsman and Shigematsu quote the abovementioned section of Kaneko's proposal in their works about Japan's penal history,³⁶ but they omit the last few sentences regarding the burial of dead prisoners. As we shall see later in this paper, providing a proper burial for dead laborers along the old Central Road was one of the main objectives of the citizens' movements to memorialize these victims.

Kaneko is perhaps most well known for his role in drafting the Meiji Constitution, but his infamous report justifying the maltreatment, and even the death, of prison laborers earned

him another appellation: the author of the prisoner's "Constitution of Death" (*Shi no kenpō* 死の憲法).³⁷ When prisoners began constructing the Central Road, Kaneko's proposal had, indeed, turned into a death sentence for many prisoners. During the first stage of the road construction project in 1887, prisoners from the Kabato, Sorachi, and Kuchiro prisons constructed the road towards eastern Hokkaido. As their work progressed further from their home prisons, the government had to establish temporary work camps and branch prisons to house the prisoners.³⁸ In order to speed up construction, the Kushiro prison opened a branch prison in Abashiri, the end point of the Central Road, in 1891. The prisoners were ordered to construct the remainder of the road by starting at the easternmost portion of the road and progressing towards the interior of Hokkaido. The construction of the road between Abashiri and Asahikawa is also known as the "Prisoner's Road" (*Shūjin dōro* 囚人道路) or the "Prisoner's Road of Death" (*shi no shūjin dōro* 死の囚人道路) because of the high number of convict labor deaths.³⁹

The prisoners were forced to work under appalling conditions. The prison guards ordered them to work day and night, clearing some of Hokkaidō's most densely forested areas.⁴⁰ Such back-breaking work was exacerbated by the heavy ball-and-chain fetters attached to their ankles, a lack of medical care, and inadequate food supplies. Malnutrition caused the majority of prisoners to suffer from edema and beri-beri. The guards were ordered to "execute anyone who attempted to flee and to leave the dead bodies of prisoners who died from disease to rot away in the wind and rain."⁴¹

The extant records related to the Central Road project suggests that the majority of prisoner deaths during this time were due to disease and malnutrition. According to prison statistics, of the total 384 convict deaths from disease

from the Kabato Main Prison, Sorachi Branch Prison, Kushiro Branch Prison, and Abashiri Branch Prison, 188 (a little less than half) were from Abashiri.⁴² Considering that there were approximately one thousand prisoners incarcerated in Abashiri in 1891 (although there is no generally agreed-upon figure for the number of prisoner deaths), it is clear that the number of deaths was relatively high. Botsman puts the number at 186, and the Prison Museum's current exhibit on the "Prisoner's Road" in the Abashiri Prison Museum uses 211 as the number of deaths. Some citizens from Rubeshibe, a town in Okhotsk Subprefecture, argue that the number of victims was actually 238.⁴³ It is safe to say that around 20% of the prison population died building the Central Road.

Japan's One-Hundred Year History Boom and "People's History" in Hokkaido

During the 1960s, many scholars and citizens in Hokkaido began to challenge the celebration of Japan's modernization since the Meiji period, specifically by studying the development of Hokkaido in the nineteenth century from the perspective of local people (*dōmin* 道民). This emphasis on the history of local residents and non-elites was part of a larger development known as the "people's history" (*minshūshi* 民衆史) movement. *The One Hundred Years of the Workers' History in Hokkaidō* (*Hatarakumono no hokkaidō hyakunenshi* はたらくものの北海道百年史) exemplifies this trend of placing the "common people" at the center of the historical narrative.⁴⁴ Published in 1968, the Hokkaido Council for Historical Education and Takahashi Shin'ichi 高橋 碩一 (the lead editor) wrote this alternative history of the Meiji centennial by focusing on the role of labor (including forced labor), rather than Japan's adoption of Western-style technology. This book was a reaction against what many in Hokkaido called the "fabricated one-hundred year history" of Japan

(*gizō sareta hyakunen no rekishi* 偽造された百年の歴史), which celebrated Japan's rapid industrialization and the development of Hokkaido beginning with the Meiji Restoration.⁴⁵ In the introduction of the book, Takahashi states that this "false" history overemphasized the role of the Hokkaido's "great pioneers" (*kaitaku kōrōsha* 開拓功勞者), and ignored the contribution of prison laborers, who were the true "pioneers" (*senjin* 先人).

Throughout this "people's history" of Hokkaido, Takahashi characterizes the settlement of Hokkaido as a form of "internal colonization" (*kokunai shokuminchi* 国内植民地), which the government carried out in order to promote capitalism in Japan.⁴⁶ Takahashi criticizes the imperial government (*tennōsei seifu* 天皇制政府) for its exploitation of workers, beginning with the use of prison labor in Hokkaido's mines, and later, for the construction of the Central Road. He also describes the prisoners as "victims" (*giseisha*) throughout his book. In his concluding remarks at the end of the first chapter, Takahashi refers to these victims as "countless bloodstained human pillars" (*hitobashira* 人柱).⁴⁷ Although *hitobashira* usually refers to someone who sacrifices his or her life for a cause, it can also refer to the ancient practice of sacrificing people by burying them in the foundation of a building, castle, or bridge in order to appease the gods during a particularly difficult construction project.⁴⁸ Takahashi does not elaborate on his word choice, but it is possible that *hitobashira* refers to the abstract notion of "sacrifice" for the nation's "colonization" of Hokkaido, or the physical form of "sacrifice" involving the buried bodies upon which the "colony" was built. There were local rumors that there were "human pillars" buried within the Jōmon Tunnel walls, suggesting that Takahashi might have also been referring to the actual buried bodies at former construction sites.

In the subsequent chapter, Takahashi argues that the government's use of "forced" or

“slave” labor from the Meiji Restoration until the Pacific War was part of Japan’s long history of labor exploitation. In the chapter titled “The Fifteen-Year War and the People of Hokkaido,” he states, “The Imperial Japanese government’s use of prison labor and *takobeya* workers manifested itself again in the maltreatment and abuse of other ethnic groups. The Chinese and Korean workers who were forcefully brought to Japan [and forced to work] also became victims of Hokkaido’s development.”⁴⁹ In other words, Takahashi not only highlights the continuity of forced labor throughout modern Japanese history, but he also demonstrates that the victims of this exploitation included Japanese people, as well as people from China and Korea.

Takahashi’s books and other similar publications from the 1960s led to a “One-Hundred Year History” boom in Hokkaido. Many citizens in Hokkaido, as well as in other parts of Japan, started local history groups or “people’s history courses” (*minshūshi kōza* 民衆史講座). The influence of *The One Hundred Years of the Workers’ History in Hokkaidō* is obvious in many of the publications by these local citizen groups. Some local history groups also described the development of Hokkaido as an “internal colonization,” and called the historical narrative that focused exclusively on the “light” or positive aspects of Japan’s modernization as an “unforgivable fabricated history.”⁵⁰

Many of these groups in the Okhotsk region also confronted their difficult history of forced labor. Although the present-day controversy over the use of Korean and Chinese forced labor during the Asia-Pacific War revolves around the question of whether or not Korean and Chinese laborers were “forced” (*kyōsei* 強制) to work, or simply subjected to the same labor “conscription” (*chōyō* 徴用) as other “Japanese subjects,” many of the Okhotsk area residents acknowledged that the Japanese government used three types of forced labor

during the last hundred years: convict labor for the construction of the Central Road, *takobeya* labor⁵¹ for various construction projects in Japan (including the construction of the Jōmon Tunnel in 1912), and both Korean and Chinese forced labor in the Itomuka mine beginning in 1941.⁵² Rubeshibe’s history of forced labor even led the local history group to call Rubeshibe a “forced labor town.”⁵³

Similar to Takahashi’s narrative of forced labor in modern Japanese history, many residents also saw forced labor as part of a continuous process of exploiting laborers from the Meiji period until the Asia-Pacific War. Members of local history societies argued that this exploitation started when the Meiji government started developing Hokkaido’s infrastructure for economic and military reasons. Japan’s modernization project and military expansion eventually led to an “unjust invasion” of the Asian mainland, and then the forceful removal of colonized subjects to Japan for the country’s wartime labor needs. This, according to local residents, was Japan’s “double crime” during the war.⁵⁴

Digging into Abashiri’s Dark Past: The Commemoration of Convicts as “Victims”

In the mid-1960s, a growing awareness that forced laborers were victims of the state’s modernization project began to develop, and citizens started to make an effort not only to study the lives of these laborers, but also to commemorate them as “victims.” This major shift from viewing convict laborers as mere criminals to “victims” or “martyrs” of the Meiji government became apparent when the residents constructed the first memorial for the Central Road martyrs. From 1968 to 1985, local organizations constructed a total of five monuments for road construction “victims” or “martyrs” from Abashiri along the old Central Road (see Table 1). The citizens involved in the

construction of these monuments were typically members of local history societies or took “people’s history courses.” Many of them were inspired by the “One Hundred Years of the Workers’ History Boom,” and sought to become part of the “unearthing/uncovering people’s history movement” (*minshūshi horiokoshi undō* 民衆史掘り起こし運動).⁵⁵ The name of this movement was certainly apt since it had a dual meaning. First, it signified the “digging” or “searching” for the untold story of Japan’s “dark” history. Second, this movement in Abashiri also involved excavating the remains of convict laborers and providing them with a proper burial.

Year Constructed	Name of Monument (English)	Name of Monument (Japanese)
1905	Monument of the Mountain God	山神碑
1968	Memorial Monument for the Martyrs of the National Road Construction	国道創設殉難者慰霊の碑
1974	The Central Road Construction Martyrs' Memorial Monument	中央道路開削殉難者慰霊の碑
1976	Chain Mound Memorial	鎖塚供養碑
1976	The National Road Construction Martyrs' Memorial Monument	国道開削殉難者慰霊之碑
1985	Memorial Monument for the Victims of the Central Road Construction	中央道路開削犠牲者慰霊之碑

Table 1. Forced Labor Monuments in

Abashiri and the Surrounding Areas

The first monument for convict laborers was actually built decades earlier, in 1905 in Setose. After a major flood washed away the grave-post marking the final resting place of sixty-seven convict laborers, a local resident named Sato Tashichi replaced the original grave marker with a large stone inscribed with the two-character compound for “mountain god” (*yamagami* 山神).⁵⁶ Why did local residents carve the name of a deity, and avoid any hint that there were prisoners buried in the vicinity? According to local lore, the residents of Setose feared that if other people knew that the stone was a “memorial for prisoners” (*shūjin no ireihi* 囚人の慰霊碑), no one would “put their hands together and pray” there.⁵⁷ In other words, and an important point to note, prisoners had a bad image during the early-twentieth century, and they were certainly not viewed by the general population as victims or martyrs at the time.

Over sixty years later, in 1968, the image of prisoners began to change, as evidenced by the Society for the Realization of a National Road Martyrs’ Monument completing construction of the Memorial Monument for the Martyrs of the National Road Construction, located near Futamigaoka in Abashiri City. In the same year, the citizens of Oketo, a town in Okhotsk, built the Memorial Monument for the Chinese and Korean Martyrs (*Chūgokujin chōsenjin junnnanhi* 中国人・朝鮮人殉難碑) to commemorate the forced laborers who died working in the town’s mercury mine during World War II.⁵⁸

The second memorial for convict laborers, the Central Road Construction Martyrs’ Memorial Monument, was constructed in 1974. The trend of treating the convicts as “martyrs” continued through the 1970s. In 1976, the Setose Women’s Association helped mobilize the community to construct The Central Road Construction Martyrs’ Memorial Monument.

The commemoration of the prisoners as martyrs marks a major turning point in how forced laborers were remembered in Okhotsk. Prisoners who were once considered a danger to Japanese society were now remembered as “martyrs” whose deaths contributed to the development of the nation. Why these local citizens’ groups chose to commemorate forced laborers as “martyrs” rather than “victims” is unclear, but the use of the word “martyr” in the memorial monuments was probably a reaction against the government’s failure to acknowledge their sacrifice and contributions to Hokkaido’s development. By emphasizing their deaths and labor as “for the sake of the country,” the citizens of Abashiri challenged the elite, government-centered history that both the local and national government were celebrating during the 1960s, and in so doing, simultaneously tried to take back “ownership” of these actors.

In 1976, the citizens of Tano-chō, near Abashiri City, also constructed a memorial for convict laborers near a burial mound, which local residents called “Chain Mound” since an excavation of the site resulted in the discovery of human remains with chains and fetters attached to the leg bones.⁵⁹ The Chain Mound Memorial tablet does not contain the word “victim” or “martyr,” but the construction of the monument still reflects the shift in the perception of prisoners. As the case of the Monument of the Mountain God shows, the locals at the turn of the twentieth century had been reluctant to construct anything that clearly marked the burial site of criminals. The people of Tano-chō, however, constructed the memorial monument to mark the prisoners’ graves out of respect. Even if the monument does not explicitly refer to the dead as “victims,” the word “chain” in the monument’s name connotes victimization. The chains are indicative of their lack of freedom and the harsh conditions that ultimately led to their deaths.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Buddhist nun Hayashi Ryūkō 林隆弘 significantly impacted the debate over how to commemorate prison laborers. Her interest in convict labor can be traced back to her childhood in Rubeshibe. She later recalled that when she was around ten years old, she heard a loud *clink* as her dad was plowing their field. Her father reached into the ground, pulled a chain out of the earth, and said, “Buddha was also here...Long ago, prisoners from Abashiri Prison were rounded up and forced to work in extreme conditions. They were unable to endure it and they died. These chains were used as markers over the places where the dead are buried.”⁶⁰ Living near an area where convict laborers were buried had a tremendous impact on Hayashi during her childhood. Images of dead laborers haunted her dreams, and she believed that they demanded to be mourned and to receive proper burial rites. Later in life, she attempted to console the souls of these men by placing statues of *Jizō* (the Bodhisattva who protects the dead) around the unmarked graves of convict laborers near Abashiri.⁶¹ Hayashi also worked to remember and commemorate the dead laborers by calling for the construction of memorial monuments or the modification of existing monuments.

During the construction of the Memorial Monument for the Martyrs of the National Road Construction (*Kokudō sōsetsu junnansha irei no hi* 国道創設殉難者慰霊の碑), Hayashi tried to convince the city of Abashiri to use word *kōrōsha* 功勞者 (“person who rendered great service to the community/nation”) in the monument’s name instead of “martyr” (*junnansha* 殉難者). However, the city hall refused her request.⁶² In 1977, she tried again to commemorate the victims as *kōrōsha*, this time calling for the construction of a “monument in honor of those who rendered great service to the community” (*kenshōhi* 顕彰碑) in front of the Rubeshibe Town Hall.

In addition to building a monument for the

kōrōsha, Hayashi also wanted to recover the prisoners' remains and provide them with a proper burial. The Rubeshibe Town Local History Society and the Mizuho Town Local History Society joined her efforts in 1982. The historical societies went on several excavation trips along the old Central Road to locate the remains of convict laborers. On June 3, 1984, approximately 120 members of the historical societies set out on another dig. This time, they found the skeletons of two males who were around the ages of 19 and 25 at the time of their deaths. Members of the Rubeshibe and Mizuho societies set out on a total of three expeditions in areas where prisoners were rumored to have been buried, but the excavation in the summer of 1984 was the only one that was successful. After many years of tireless efforts, Hayashi's dream of constructing a monument and burial site was finally realized in 1985.

However, the monuments did not use the word *kōrōsha* as Hayashi had originally advocated. The community decided on using the word *giseisha* 犠牲者 and named the monument the Memorial Monument for the Victims of the Central Road Construction. Although previous monuments used the word "martyr," some argued that while the words "martyr" and "victim" both implied "sacrifice," the lack of volition is what distinguished a "victim" from a "martyr." Because the prisoners were forced to work, many community members felt that "victim" was a more accurate term.⁶³ They also felt that using *kōrōsha* was also inappropriate. One community member acknowledged that *kōrōsha* emphasized the "results" of the workers. However, the problem was that *kōrōsha* also implied that the worker gained satisfaction or that the work was meaningful to them (*hataraki gai* 働きがい). Such feelings, naturally, did not arise from being forced to work.⁶⁴

It is clear that the image of convict laborers in Hokkaido underwent a tremendous

transformation during the people's history movement in the 1960s. A century earlier, the Meiji state viewed these convicted felons as a danger to society and forcefully relocated them to Japan's periphery. Kaneko's suggestion – namely, that overworking convict laborers to the point of death could help the state to both develop Hokkaido's infrastructure and reduce the burden of the state's prison population – illustrates how some members of the Meiji elite believed that the felons were so wicked that they were undeserving of humane treatment while incarcerated. The issues related to the construction of the Monument to the Mountain God also show that a few decades later, even the general population held a fairly negative view of the prisoners who died building the Central Road. Such views changed when the citizens of Hokkaido challenged the elite-driven narrative of Japan's modernization. Elites like Kaneko became the villains, while the convict laborers became the victims of Japan's modernization project. This transformation from prisoner to victim, of course, was not a simple process. Citizens debated the most appropriate way of naming and memorializing these "victims" from the 1960s to the 1980s, but it is obvious that the people of Okhotsk sought to change the way the men who died creating Hokkaido's infrastructure were remembered.

Convict Labor and the Abashiri Prison Museum

After Abashiri Prison announced its decision to completely renovate the prison in 1972, Satō Hisashi 佐藤久, the owner of the *Abashiri Newspaper*, argued that the Meiji-era prison buildings should be preserved.⁶⁵ Other citizens soon expressed similar sentiments. Many emphasized that it was necessary to educate future generations about the role of the prison in Abashiri's history.⁶⁶ On May 28, 1980, the people of Abashiri established the Abashiri

Prison Preservation Foundation. Their efforts to save the prison were ultimately successful. They moved the original structures near Mount Tonto, across the Abashiri River (see Figure 2) and turned the group of prison buildings into a museum. The Abashiri Prison Museum opened to the public in 1983.⁶⁷



Figure 3: The location of the Abashiri Prison and the Abashiri Prison Museum (Google Maps)

For the people of Abashiri, the preservation of the old Abashiri Prison had educational, historical, and architectural significance. The prison was part of Abashiri's "dark" past involving convict labor, but residents confronted their difficult history by using the historical prison to educate people on the prison's role in Hokkaido's development. The buildings were also significant in terms of architectural history. Between 2012 and 2015, the Agency of Cultural Affairs designated four buildings in the museum as Important Cultural Properties and three other structures as Registered Tangible Cultural Properties. The Radial Five-Wing Prison House (*goyoku hōshajō hirayashabō* 五翼放射状平屋舎房), for instance, is the only surviving "radial-style" prison structure in Japan.⁶⁸

The historic buildings and prison cells in the

museum are currently occupied by dozens of life-size wax figures of prisoners wearing the infamous orange prison uniforms from the Meiji period. Visitors can see a prisoner reflecting on his punishment in a solitary confinement cell, or view the inmates as they eat in the prison dining hall. The Abashiri Prison Museum also used realistic-looking wax figures and scenery to recreate the convict labor experience in the museum's Penological Museum (*Gyōkei shiryōkan* 行刑資料館). In a diorama depicting the construction of the Central Road, two prisoners clear the ground with hoes and pickaxes, while another prisoner lifts a large rock with all of his might. Meanwhile, a nearby prison guard supervises their work and shouts orders (See figure 4).

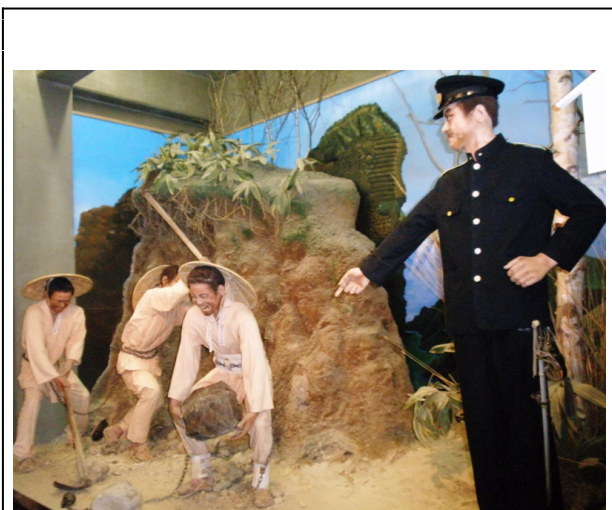


Figure 4: A diorama from the Abashiri Prison Museum's *Gyōkei shiryōkan*. Source: 4 for Travel (2009).

The convict laborers are also commemorated with two statues, which are on display in one of the outdoor exhibits. One is a statue of a shackled man who is hunched over as he tries to lift a rock. The other statue shows a prisoner leveraging his weight towards a large tree. Both arms are wrapped around the tree and he appears to muster all of his energy to pull the tree and its roots out of the ground. While

these statues might not commemorate the prisoners as victims of the Meiji state, they certainly emphasize their contribution to the development of Hokkaido's infrastructure. These statues also adumbrate an aspect of the Meiji era that was often left out: the fact that Hokkaido's development did not rely exclusively on technological advancement. It was the blood, sweat, and tears of these convict laborers that made the settlement of Hokkaido possible.

In 2010, the Abashiri Prison Museum finished renovating the *Gyōkei shiryōkan* 行刑資料館 and opened the new Prison Museum (*Kangoku rekishikan* 監獄歴史館) to the public.

The renovated museum features a 4D movie theater featuring "Forests Where Inmates in a Red Prison Uniform Worked" (*Akai shūto no mori* 赤い囚徒の森), a seven-minute video about the construction of the Central Road. The Abashiri Prison Museum homepage notes that the "images of grueling construction work give a realistic sensation, transporting you a century back in time." The movie shows computer-generated images of convict laborers toiling away in the forests of Hokkaido, many collapsing from exhaustion and malnutrition.

The theme of "victimization" runs throughout the short film. The film opens with a photograph of Kaneko Kentarō, the man responsible for writing the prisoner's "Constitution of Death." The narrator describes Kaneko's idea of using prison labor as a "reckless plan" (*mubō na keikaku* 無謀な計画), and paraphrases his famous words that "it's not a problem if the prisoners die working, since their deaths will help [the state] save money." In a scene when prisoners die of exhaustion or malnutrition, the narrator says, "Every day, there were victims." The video concludes with footage of the present-day Central Road and images of the six monuments for the "victims" and "martyrs" who died building the road. The narrator says that there were many "victims"

(*giseisha* 犠牲者) during the road construction, concluding that, "Prisoners made the development of Hokkaido possible."

Although the film uses the word *giseisha*, its contrasting of Hokkaido in the Meiji period and in the present day suggests that even though the museum acknowledges the prisoners as victims, its portrayal of prisoners is more closely aligned with the view of them as *kōrōsha* rather than *giseisha*. By emphasizing the results of their work and contributions to Hokkaido, the museum celebrates their "achievements." This narrative illuminates the "light" aspect of Hokkaido's "dark" history.

The museum's decision to replace the Central Road dioramas with a realistic video involving all five senses, together with an interactive corner of the prisoner's road exhibit, is part of what William F.S. Miles has called a "trend towards a more relevant and interactive museum pedagogy." Miles argues that this form of "empathetic travel" to sites that are considered "dark tourist" spots should be categorized as "darker tourism."⁶⁹ The interactive aspect of the exhibit has implications for the relationship between the "dark tourist" and the "victims" of Abashiri Prison. The 4D video not only attempts to transport the visitor back to the Meiji period, but it also attempts to recreate the physical environment of the time. Thus, the viewer is no longer an outsider looking into a window on the past, but he also feels part of the recreated historical moment.

The shift to a more interactive experience can also be seen in the renovated Central Road exhibit located next to the 4D movie theater. The dioramas of the prison laborers were replaced with an interactive exhibit where visitors can attach a replica of the heavy ball-and-chain fetters worn by the prisoners, and drag it for a short distance. Another part of the new exhibit allows visitors to lift up a *mokko* 畚 (a type of basket used to transport earth and

rocks) full of heavy stones. The figures from the previous dioramas are, in effect, replaced by actual museum visitors who now have the opportunity to not only see, but also feel exactly how difficult it would have been to work on the Central Road construction project. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, Ide argues that one of the functions of dark tourism is that it makes people reflect on their own lives by “feeling” (*taikan* 体感, lit. bodily sensation⁷⁰) the difficulty and harshness of the “dark” past. The Abashiri Prison Museum’s capacity to allow “dark tourists” to “feel” and “experience” the plight of convict laborers provides visitors with a better understanding of the Central Road construction project.

The interactive Central Road exhibit also features a panel explaining the history of the Central Road construction, and it highlights the local citizens’ efforts to excavate the remains of convict laborers and build memorial monuments for the victims. Although Abashiri Prison is considered Japan’s most infamous prison, the story of the monuments for convict labor victims is relatively unknown. Access to the monuments is somewhat difficult from Abashiri, as a visit to the sites requires an automobile and a map of the monuments. Tourists driving through Abashiri probably pass the monuments, unaware that such memorials exist in that area. The video and the new exhibit, however, bring this group of scattered monuments to thousands of tourists each year.

The “Light” in Abashiri’s “Dark” History: The Formation of the “Abashiri Prison Town”

The citizens of Okhotsk acknowledged their dark and troubling history during a time when the Japanese government was glossing over these aspects of Japan’s modernization, favoring the “light” and positive outcomes of the Meiji Restoration. Koike Kikō, one of the historians who was instrumental in organizing

“people’s history” courses and local history societies in Kitami, said that local efforts to memorialize forced labor victims allowed the town of Rubeshibe to take a negative part of their history and turn it into something positive. While reflecting on the outcomes of the people’s history movement, as well as of the movement to memorialize the victims of the “prisoner’s road,” he wrote, “I had a strong feeling that the dawn of Hokkaido started in Rubeshibe. It was like the sun rising from the Sea of Okhotsk.” Koike’s stance is representative of the other citizens who helped with the construction of the memorial and grave stone in Rubeshibe. They might have been extremely critical of the Meiji government, but they believed that by learning from the mistakes of the past, they would have the ability to make a new and better Japan.

Shigematsu Kazuyoshi, one of Japan’s leading legal historians and criminologists, also acknowledges Abashiri’s difficult history his book on Abashiri Prison, which he wrote for the twentieth-anniversary of the Abashiri Prison Museum. Shigematsu refers to the prison laborers as “victims,” and is also fairly critical of Kaneko Kentarō’s “Constitution of Death.” However, Shigematsu also points out that the harsh treatment of prisoners during the Central Road construction project occurred during a very short period in the prison’s history. When there was no longer a demand for road building, the prison converted its penal facilities into an agriculture prison, in which prisoners spent their days working in the prison’s field and orchards.⁷¹ Shigematsu concludes his brief history of the prison by stating that he hopes that the history of the Abashiri Prison Museum will help educate society about the history of prisons and crime in Japan. Thus, for Shigematsu, the opportunity to educate the public on the mistakes of the past, and by extension, the roles of prisons in contemporary Japan is the “light” or positive aspect of the otherwise “dark” history of Abashiri Prison.

There are also examples of Abashiri using its city's penal heritage to promote local products. The most famous being Abashiri Prison's own brand of high-quality *kuroge wagyū* beef called "Abashiri Prison Beef" (*abashiri kangoku wagyu* 網走監獄和牛), another product produced using prison labor. In this case, prisoners raise the cows in the Abashiri Prison Futamigaoka Farm, located approximately four miles from the current, operating prison. It is interesting to note that this particular beef is marketed using the name *abashiri kangoku* 網走監獄, the name for the historical prison, rather than the name of the current prison, *abashiri keimusho* 網走刑務所. Both names can be translated as "Abashiri Prison," but the two words have quite different nuances. The former was a Meiji-era neologism coined by Ohara Shigechika. After learning of Jeremy Bentham's "panopticon" during his mission to observe British colonial jails in Hong Kong and Singapore, Ohara combined the Chinese characters for "surveillance" (*kan* 監) and "jail" (*goku* 獄), to create "surveillance jail."⁷² The word *keimusho*, however, started to replace *kangoku* during the 1920s, and the word refers to the type of prisons that one would see in Japan today.⁷³ The use of *kangoku* was probably a deliberate marketing technique banking on the popularity of the historical prison.

Conclusion

Let us return to the UNESCO full report for the *World Heritage Nomination of the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Kyushu-Yamaguchi and Related Areas*. The "Executive Summary" describes the Meiji Industrial Revolution as "Japan's unique achievement in world history as the first non-Western country to successfully industrialize."⁷⁴ This statement echoes similar ones made by politicians who praised Japan's rapid rise during the hundred-year anniversary of the Meiji Restoration in 1968. Many of them proudly announced that,

"Such rapid development in a relatively short amount of time is extremely rare in world history."⁷⁵ Takahashi Shin'ichi, one of the scholars who was at the forefront of the "people's history" movement in Hokkaido, excoriated this characterization of Japan's rapid development as a great achievement. He argued that in order for lightning-speed development to occur in the first place, the state had to use coercive means to mobilize a large segment of the population. According to Takahashi, the people of Hokkaido, the *dōmin*, were the ones who suffered from the large burden that the state had placed upon them.⁷⁶

The burden of building roads in Hokkaido as quickly as possible was ultimately carried out by the prisoners, who were forced to work day and night, without adequate medical care or nutrition in 1891. Nearly two hundred prisoners perished under the state's development directives. In the 1960s, the people of Okhotsk began to uncover the history of these convicts, and they came to see these men not as dangerous prisoners, but as "martyrs" who contributed to Hokkaido's development, or as "victims" of the state's construction projects.

Was the "people's history" movement in Okhotsk nothing more than local residents claiming that they themselves were the victims, while ignoring the victims of Japanese atrocities in Asia? I would argue that it is too simple to cast these local historians as caught up in a "victimization narrative." Both scholars and non-academics have talked about forced labor as a key characteristic of Japan's modern history. They argued that it was necessary to understand and examine the use of forced labor as a practice that started during Japan's period of industrialization and persisted through World War II. During the 2015 UNESCO Heritage controversy, the Korean and Chinese governments complained that Japan failed to acknowledge forced labor practices in several of the nominated sites. This omission and the

government's lack of acknowledgement that Japan had used other forms of forced labor had already become points of contention between local residents in Hokkaido, and the national and local government during the Meiji centennial. The Rubeshibe Town Local History Society stated, "This year [1968] the "Meiji Centennial" and the "Hokkaido One-Hundred Year Anniversary" campaigns were ambitious undertakings, but they failed to shed light on the history of [Japan's] victims, such as the convict laborers who worked during the settlement of Hokkaido, *takobeya* workers, and the Chinese and Korean who were rounded up and brought forcefully to Japan."⁷⁷ In other words, whereas the Koreans and Chinese only mentioned the victims of wartime forced labor, the people of Rubeshibe extended the scope of Japan's victimization geographically and temporally in order to include convict laborers, *takobeya* workers, and forced laborers in their "people's history" of Hokkaido. Finally, the "people's history" movement in Okhotsk involved "digging" into the past to shed light on some of the dark events in Abashiri's history. This "digging"—both literally and figuratively—involved excavating the remains of the "Prisoner's Road" victims, and the creation of local history societies for learning about forced labor. When the Japanese government applied to have UNESCO award World Heritage status to the Meiji industrial sites, it, too, dug into its own past to excavate and bring to light the places and objects that made Japan's industrialization possible. This was, of course, a kind of selective digging, since the government examined certain parts of Japan's past, while leaving less pleasant periods enveloped in darkness. The criticism from the residents of Hokkaido during the 1960s, and the Chinese and Koreans in 2015 were attacks against the Japanese government's attempt to bury its dark history. These selective historical narratives that fail to show history's complexity, both the "light" and "dark" of past events, will continue to face challenges from those who are willing to dig into the past.

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Notes

¹ [Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining](#), UNESCO.

² Ibid, 1.

³ William Underwood, "[History in a Box: UNESCO and the Framing of Japan's Meiji Era](#)," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 13, Issue 26, No. 2, June 29, 2015, 1.

⁴ "[ADBC-MS letter to UNESCO](#)," "[Welcome to the American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society](#)," The American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society (ADBC-MS).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Underwood, 4.

⁷ Miyamoto Takashi, "[Convict Labor and Its Commemoration: the Mitsui Miike Coal Mine Experience](#)," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 15, Issue 1, No. 3, January 1, 2017, 5.

⁸ Ibid, 1.

⁹ Hiroshi Oda, "Unearthing the History of *Minshūshi* in Hokkaido: The Case Study of the Okhotsk People's History Workshop in Philip A. Seaton, ed., *Local History and War Memories in Hokkaido* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 134.

¹⁰ Ibid, 130.

¹¹ The key figures of the "people's history movement" included Irokawa Daikichi 色川大吉, Kanō Masano 鹿野政直, Haga Noboru 芳賀登, and Yasumaru Yoshio 安丸良夫. See Carol Gluck, "The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (November 1978), 26.

¹² Carol Gluck, "The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography," 45. As Gluck notes, according to some "people's history" scholars, such as Kano Masano and Sagara Sōzō (the leader of the "counterfeit imperialist army" who promised to halve taxes during the Meiji Restoration), this represented the first wave of grass roots dynamism.

¹³ Malcolm Foley and John Lennon, "Editorial: Heart of Darkness," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 4 (1996), 195.

¹⁴ John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (Andover: Cengage Learning, 2010), 12.

- ¹⁵ Ide Akira, "Dāku tsūrizumu, "Sangyōisan no hikari to kage," in *Dāku tsūrizumu japan henshūhen, Dāku tsūrizumu japan sangyō isan no hikari to kage* (Tōhō shuppan, 2016), 7.
- ¹⁶ Carolyn Strange and Michael Kempa, "Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2003), 388.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 398.
- ¹⁸ *Asahi Shinbun*, February 8, 1998.
- ¹⁹ Paul Schrader, "Yakuza-eiga: A Primer" in Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds., *Gangster Film Reader* (Pompton Plains, New Jersey: Limelight, 2007), 66.
- ²⁰ Mark Schilling, *The Yakuza Movie Book: A Guide to Japanese Gangster Films* (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 2003), 156.
- ²¹ Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 365-466.
- ²² Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 186.
- ²³ Jacquelin Z. Wilson et al., *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 4.
- ²⁴ Judah Schept and Jordan E. Mazurek, "Layers of Violence: Coal Mining, Convict Leasing, and Carceral Tourism in Central Appalachia," in Jacquelin Z. Wilson et al., *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism*, 172.
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- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid, 176.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 177.
- ²⁹ "[History of History Workshop](#)," History Workshop.
- ³⁰ Udo Gößwald, "Politics and Memory: How Germans Face Their Past," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, eds., James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 448.
- ³¹ Botsman, 162.
- ³² Ibid, 176.
- ³³ Kaneko Kentarō, "Kaneko taishokikan kengi," in *Hakubutsukan abashiri kenkyū kiyō "kaneko taishokikan kengi ni miru hokkaidō kaitaku oyobi dōro kaisaku*, ed. Zaidan hōjin abashiri kangoku hozon zaidan (Abashiri: Hokukensha, 2006), 16-17.
- ³⁴ Shigetatsu Kazuyoshi, *Shiryō hokkaidō kangoku no rekishi* (Hokkaidō, Abashiri-shi: Abashiri Kangoku Hozon Zaidan, 2004), 64.
- ³⁵ *Abashirishi-shi hensan iinkai, Abashishirishi-shi (gekan: kaitaku jidai hen)* (Abashiri: Abashiri shiyakusho, 1971), 275.
- ³⁶ See Shigetatsu, *Hakubutsukan Abashiri Kangoku*, 15 and Botsman, 189.
- ³⁷ Shigematsu Kazuyoshi, *Hakubutsukan abashiri kangoku* (Abashiri: Abashiri kangoku hozondan, 2002), 15.
- ³⁸ Botsman, 186.
- ³⁹ *Asahi shinbun*, June 7, 2017.
- ⁴⁰ Botsman, 186.
- ⁴¹ Chūō Dōro Kaisaku Giseisha Tsuitōhi Kensetsu Kiseikai, *Ru peshi pe no bohyō: Chūō dōro ni taoreta torawarebito eno chinkonfu* (Rubeshibe, Hokkadō, Chūō Dōro Kaisaku Giseisha

Tsuitōhi Kensetsu Kiseika, 1990), 34.

⁴² *Abashirishi-shi hensan iinkai*, *Abashishirishi-shi (gekan: kaitaku jidai hen)* (Abashiri: Abashiri shiyakusho, 1971), 118.

⁴³ Chūō Dōro Kaisaku Giseisha Tsuitōhi Kensetsu Kiseikai, 34 and 39.

⁴⁴ Takahashi Shin'ichi, *Hokkaidō rekishi kyōikusha kyōgikai, Hataraku mono no hokkaidō hyakunenshi* (Tokyo: Rōdō junpōsha, 1968), 2-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 59.

⁴⁸ *Dainihonkoku daijiten*, JapanKnowledge.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 144.

⁵⁰ Chūō Dōro Kaisaku Giseisha Tsuitōhi Kensetsu Kiseikai, 2.

⁵¹ *Takobeya* タコ部屋 were crowded barracks that housed workers who had been recruited by brokers to work in mines or remote construction sites. The exact etymology of the word is unknown, but there are various explanations of the word's origin. According to the *Dejitaru daijisen* dictionary definition, *takobeya* (蛸部屋) were “workers’ barracks near mines and other places in Hokkaido and Karafuto before World War II. The workers were forced to work under unduly harsh conditions, and once they entered (the barracks) they were like octopuses that are unable to escape from an octopus trap (*takotsubo* 蛸壺).” This etymology probably refers to the fact that workers were often beaten or tortured if they tried to escape the barracks. Tessa Morris-Suzuki gives the following definition: “*Takobeya*—literally ‘octopus pots’—were overcrowded, prison-like barracks, apparently so called because the octopus (like the occupants of the barracks) inhabits a space just large enough for its body.” Although the word *tako* was typically written with the Chinese character for octopus (蛸), in Hokkaido *tako* was sometimes written as 他雇 (literally, “people hired from the outside or other places”). The use of these two characters emphasized the fact that brokers recruited *takobeya* laborers from areas outside of Hokkaido. Although this form of labor had disappeared in most parts of Japan by the late 1930s, it was still used in some remote parts of Hokkaido during the war. See Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Letters to the Dead: Grassroots Historical Dialogue in East Asia’s Borderlands” in Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Morris Low, Leonid Petrov, and Timothy Y. Tsu. *East Asia Beyond the History Wars: Confronting the Ghosts of Violence* (London: Routledge, 2015), 92 and Takahashi Shin'ichi, *Hokkaidō rekishi kyōikusha kyōgikai, Hataraku mono no hokkaidō hyakunenshi* (Tokyo: Rōdō junpōsha, 1968), 49.

⁵² *Ibid*, 15-17.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

⁵⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, October 21, 2017.

⁵⁸ Hokkaidō sōgō bunka kaiatsu kikō, *Hokkaidō kaitaku junnansha chōsa hōkokusho* (Hokkaido: Hokkaidō Sōgō Bunka Kaiatsu Kikō, 1991), 259.

⁵⁹ Nishimura Hideo, *Hokkaidō keibatsu-shi* (Sapporo-shi: Miyama Shobō, 1988), 45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 22.

⁶¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Letters to the Dead: Grassroots Historical Dialogue in East Asia’s

Borderlands” in Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Morris Low, Leonid Petrov, and Timothy Y. Tsu. *East Asia Beyond the History Wars: Confronting the Ghosts of Violence* (London: Routledge, 2015), 98.

⁶² Nishimura, 23.

⁶³ Ibid, 68-69.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁵ Abashiri Prison Museum, “[Background to the Establishment of the Abashiri Prison.](#)”

⁶⁶ *Asahi Shinbun*, October 17, 2015.

⁶⁷ Shigematsu, 150.

⁶⁸ *Asahi Shinbun*, October 17, 2015.

⁶⁹ William F.S. Miles, “Auschwitz: Museum Interpretation and Darker Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1175

⁷⁰ Ide, 7.

⁷¹ Shigematsu, *Hakubutsukan abashiri kangoku* (Abashiri: Abashiri kangoku hozondan), 15-16.

⁷² Botsman, 150.

⁷³ *Kokugo daijiten*.

⁷⁴ [Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining](#), UNESCO.

⁷⁵ Takahashi, 21.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 27-28.

⁷⁷ Chūō dōro kaisaku giseisha tsuitōhi kensetsu kiseikai, rubeshibe kyōdo kenkyūkai, 4.