

Japan and the Antarctic Treaty after World War II

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On behalf of my friends, colleagues, and predecessors, please allow me to share my sincere gratitude on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty that was signed in Washington, D.C., on 1 December 1959.

The government of Japan decided in 1955 to participate in the cooperative Antarctic investigations organized during the International Geophysical Year (IGY). Among the 12 nations who were conducting Antarctic research at that time, Japan was the only one who had been defeated during World War II. We also were the only Asian nation with a history of active interest in Antarctica, going back to the 1910–1912 expeditions of Nobu Shirase (Shirase, 2011).

The international scientific community and victorious governments warmly accepted Japanese collaboration in Antarctic research during the IGY. The station for the first Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE) was established in January 1957 at 69°00'S, 39°35'E on East Ongul Island, Lützow-Holm Bay, East Antarctica, and has been occupied ever since.

I was on the replacement team (JARE-2) on February 1958, and our team was forced to abandon 15 Sakhalin sled dogs at the unmanned Syowa Station because of the poor sea ice conditions. Upon their 14 January 1959 arrival, the JARE-3 team was surprisingly greeted by two of the huskies— Taro and Jiro—who had survived on their own for 11 months, possibly living on seal dung and penguins. I then served as the geomorphologist and dog handler during the 1960/1961 seasons, working with Taro and Jiro along with the 11 other dogs that we brought to Syowa for the winter. Over the years, it has been amazing to watch these two sled dogs become heroes in the hearts of the Japanese people as symbols of courage and survival, with museum statues and feature movies to their credit, awakening a national sense of pride in Antarctic research.

Japan formally abandoned all territorial rights in Antarctica (based on the early twentieth century exploration of Shirase) on the occasion of signing the Treaty of Peace with Japan on 8 September 1951 in San Francisco. Thus, as a nonclaimant nation, Japan contributed to the Antarctic Treaty negotiations in Washington, D.C., with Minister T. Shimoda as the first secretary of the Japanese Embassy (Sugihara, 1988).

In 2008–2009, an international team of scientists led by the National Institute of Polar Research participated in JARE-50. Throughout, Japan has been a

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strong supporter of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the Antarctic Treaty System. For example, Japan hosted the 6th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Tokyo in 1970 and the 18th ATCM in Kyoto in 1994 as well as the Special Meetings on Antarctic Mineral Resources in 1984 and 1986 in Tokyo. Similarly, Japan hosted the SCAR General Assembly in 1968 and 2000 in Tokyo as well as various SCAR symposia over the years (e.g., Yoshida et al., 1991).

Over the past half century, Japanese scientists and the general public as well as decision makers have learned much about the importance of science as well as international cooperation. I recall the determination of our leading scientists and the statesmen who promoted these Antarctic research opportunities during a very hard time for Japan, only 10 years after the Second World War.

Antarctic research in Japan during the first 50 years of the Antarctic Treaty has built bridges of cooperation with the world. I hope the experience of Japan will help those developing countries that will participate in Antarctic research in the future.

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