



# Japan's Island Territories

The Senkaku Islands, Takeshima, and The Northern Territories



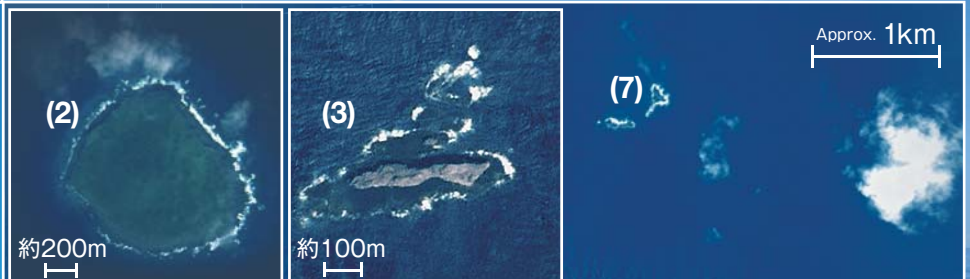
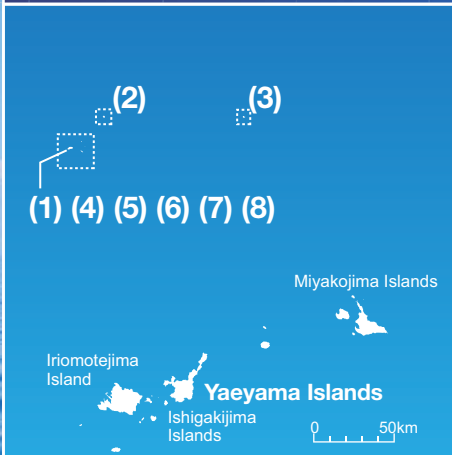
Uotsuri Island  
(Senkaku Islands)



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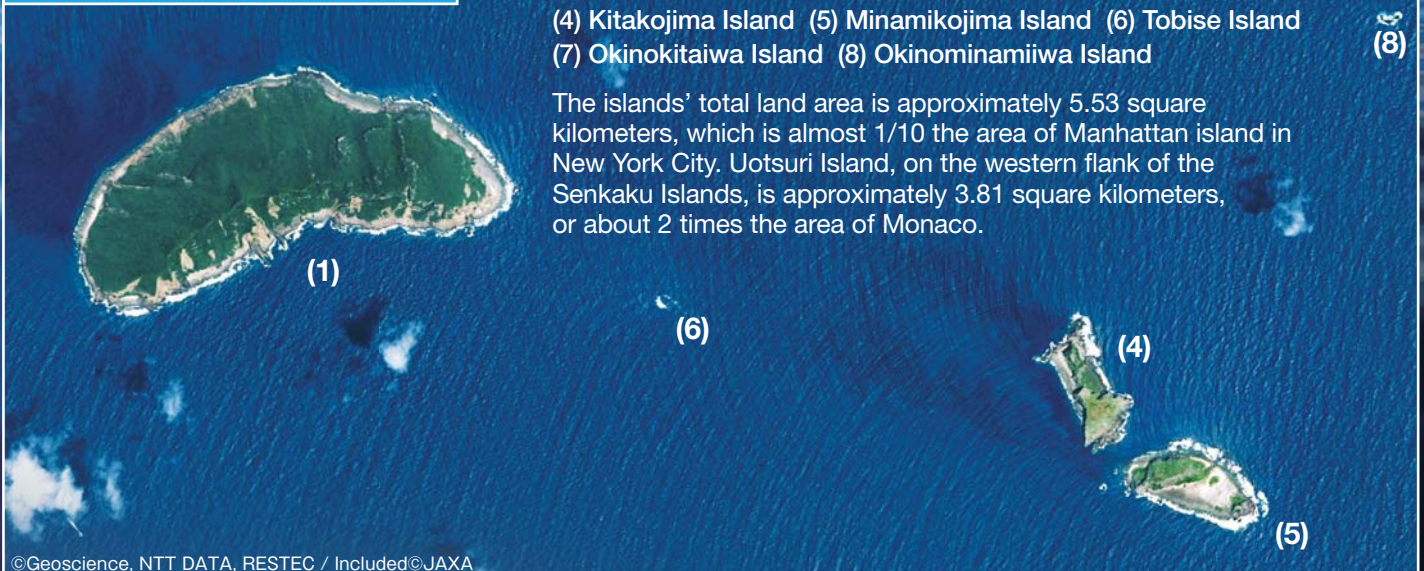
## THE SENKAKU ISLANDS



Japan's island territories located in the East China Sea, approximately 170 km north of Ishigakijima Island, Okinawa Prefecture, consisting of these islands.

- (1) Uotsuri Island (2) Kuba Island (3) Taisho Island  
(4) Kitakojima Island (5) Minamikojima Island (6) Tobise Island  
(7) Okinokitaiwa Island (8) Okinominamiwa Island

The islands' total land area is approximately 5.53 square kilometers, which is almost 1/10 the area of Manhattan island in New York City. Uotsuri Island, on the western flank of the Senkaku Islands, is approximately 3.81 square kilometers, or about 2 times the area of Monaco.



## TAKESHIMA

Japan's island territories located in the Sea of Japan, approximately 158 km northwest of the Oki Islands, Shimane Prefecture, consisting of these islands.

- (1) Mejima (Higashijima) Island
- (2) Ojima (Nishijima) Island and surrounding rocks

The islands' total land area is approximately 0.20 square kilometers, which is almost the half size as the Vatican City.

Approx. 200m

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## THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES

Japan's island territories close to Hokkaido, located south of the Kuril Islands, consisting of these islands.

- (1) Habomai Islands
- (2) Shikotan Island
- (3) Kunashiri Island
- (4) Etorofu Island

The total land area of The Northern Territories is approximately 5,003 square kilometers, which is almost the 3.2 times area of the Island of Oahu in the state of Hawaii.

Approx. 50km

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Nemuro

# THE SENKAKU ISLANDS

Japan's island territories for which China/Taiwan suddenly began asserting a territorial claim 75 years after the islands' incorporation into Japan



Workers drying bonito in Uotsuri Island after incorporation of the territory  
Photo provided by Ms.Hanako KOGA, in the possession of the Naha City Museum History

## Japan's Basic View

- (1) There is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands.
- (2) Japan will act firmly and calmly to maintain its territorial integrity.
- (3) Japan continues to strive for peace and stability in the region, which is to be established through the observance of international law.



The January 14, 1895 Cabinet Decision to Erect Markers

## Historical facts

- (1) From 1885, the Government of Japan thoroughly conducted surveys of the Senkaku Islands and confirmed that the Islands had been not only uninhabited but showed no trace of having been under the control of the Qing Dynasty of China.
- (2) Based on this confirmation, the Government of Japan made a Cabinet Decision on January 14, 1895, to erect markers on the islands to formally incorporate Senkaku Islands into the territory of Japan. These measures were carried out in accordance with the internationally accepted means of duly acquiring territorial sovereignty under international law (occupation of terra nullius).
- (3) After the incorporation, Japanese civilians (Tatsushiro Koga and his followers) settled on the previously uninhabited islands, having obtained permission of the Government. The government entered each island into the national land registry and managed the islands through the dispatching of government personnel to the islands and conducting of scientific surveys on and near the islands.
- (4) The Senkaku Islands were placed under the administration of U.S. after World War II. Following the entering into force of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty on May 15, 1972, however, the administrative rights over Okinawa Prefecture, including the Senkaku Islands, were reverted to Japan.



Left: Works taking the break in Uotsuri Island after incorporation of the territory (photo provided by Ms.Hanako Koga, in the possession of the Naha City Museum of History)

Right: A Warning Notice placed by the Government of the Ryukyu Islands in 1970  
(photo provided by the Okinawa Prefectural Archives)

## China / Taiwan's assertions and Japan's refutations

### China/Taiwan's assertion (1)

China/Taiwan asserts that the Senkaku Islands have been inherent part of the territory of China/Taiwan from ancient times. During the Ming Dynasty, the islands were already discovered and recognized by imperial envoys and that these islets belonged to Taiwan.



### Japan's refutation (1)

None of these arguments presented by China/Taiwan is valid evidence under international law to support the Chinese/Taiwanese assertion of its territorial sovereignty over Senkaku Islands. Under international law, discovery of an island or geographical proximity alone does not evidence the assertion of territorial sovereignty.

### China's assertion (2)

China asserts that as a result of Japan's acceptance of the Cairo Declaration of 1943 and the Potsdam Declaration of 1945, the Senkaku Islands, as islands appertaining to Taiwan, reverted to China along with Taiwan.



### Japan's refutation (2)

It was the Treaty of Peace with Japan that legally defined the territory of Japan after the war. Neither the Cairo Declaration nor the Potsdam Declaration had the ultimate legal validity on the treatment of Japan's territory.

# TAKESHIMA

**Japan's island territories that the Republic of Korea has continued to occupy illegally by force since 1954**



Takeshima (Photo taken by Mr. Ono in 1906, provided by the Shimane Prefectural Library)

## Japan's Consistent Position

- (1) Takeshima is indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based on international law.
- (2) The Republic of Korea has been occupying Takeshima with no basis in international law. Any measures the Republic of Korea takes regarding Takeshima based on such an illegal occupation have no legal justification.
- (3) Japan will continue to seek the settlement of the dispute over territorial sovereignty over Takeshima on the basis of international law in a calm and peaceful manner.



A government notification giving Takeshima Island's name and jurisdiction (Shimane Prefecture Notice No. 40, February 22, 1905 Provided by the Shimane Prefecture Public Records Center)

## Historical facts

- (1) In the early 17th century, the Japanese government formally granted its people the right of passage to Utsuryo Island, and they used Takeshima as a ground on which to hunt and gather marine resources such as sea lions and abalone. Japan had established sovereignty over Takeshima by the mid-17th century.
- (2) In January 1905, the government stipulated, through a Cabinet decision, that the islands would come under the jurisdiction of the Oki Islands branch office of the Shimane Prefectural Government and that the islands would be officially named "Takeshima." This was communicated to the Governor of Shimane Prefecture by the Minister of Home Affairs. With this Cabinet decision, Japan reaffirmed its sovereignty over Takeshima.
- (3) The Treaty of Peace with Japan, which established the international order post-World War II, lists territories that Japan must renounce, while intentionally excluding Takeshima, and affirms that Takeshima is Japanese territory.
- (4) In July 1953, a Japanese patrol ship, attempting to control the seas adjacent to Takeshima, was shot at from the Republic of Korea side. Shortly after, the Republic of Korea stationed marine police personnel on Takeshima and has continued to occupy the islands illegally up to the present day.



Workers engaging in the fishery near by Takeshima in 1934 (Photo provided by the Osaka Asahi Shimbun newspaper)

## Republic of Korea's assertions and Japan's refutations

### Republic of Korea's assertion (1)

The Republic of Korea asserts that "Usan (do)" appearing in ancient Korean documents and maps corresponds with "Dokdo" (Japan's name for "Takeshima") and "Dokdo" has been historically part of Korean territory.



### Japan's refutation (1)

The Korean "Usan(do)" is either name for "Ulleungdo" or a small island adjacent to "Ulleungdo" is not "Dokdo". Furthermore, no basis has been found in ancient Korean documents and maps for Korea's assertion that "Usan(do)" corresponds with "Dokdo" (Japan's name for Takeshima).

### Republic of Korea's assertion (2)

The Republic of Korea asserts that the Korean Imperial Edict 41 in 1900 placed "all Ulleungdo as well as Jukdo and Seokdo" under the jurisdiction of Uldo-gun (Uldo county), and "Seokdo" in this reference corresponds to "Dokdo."



### Japan's refutation (2)

Even if for argument's sake "Seokdo" corresponds to "Dokdo," the Korean Empire after issuing the edict No. 41 did not exercise effective control over "Takeshima" of Japan's territory, and hence that title of the Republic of Korea over the island was not established.

### Republic of Korea's assertion (3)

The Republic of Korea claims that Takeshima was separated from Japanese territory by SCAPIN (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Instruction Note) 677 and SCAPIN 1033.



### Japan's refutation (3)

Paragraph 6 in SCAPIN 677 and Paragraph 5 in SCAPIN 1033 explicitly state: "The present authorization is not an expression of allied policy relative to ultimate determination of national jurisdiction, international boundaries or fishing rights in the area concerned or in any other area."

# THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES

**Japan's island territories that the former Soviet Union occupied in 1945 and that Russia continues to occupy illegally today**



A cannery on Shibotsu Islet in the Habomai Islands  
(Photo provided by the League of Residents of Chishima and Habomai Islands)

## Japan's Basic Position

- (1) On February 7, 1855, Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation, which confirmed the boundary between the islands of Etorofu and Uruppu.
- (2) The Northern Territories, consisting of four islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai, are an inherent part of the territory of Japan, which have never been held by foreign countries.
- (3) The Northern Territories have been under illegal occupation by the Soviet Union, and then Russia, since the Soviet Union occupied them in 1945.
- (4) The Government of Japan has energetically been continuing negotiations with Russia based on its basic policy of resolving the issue of the attribution of the four Northern Islands and concluding a peace treaty with Russia.

## Historical facts

- (1) In 1855, The Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation between Japan and Russia confirmed the already established natural boundaries, drawing the boundary between the islands of Etorofu and Uruppu.
- (2) In the Treaty of Saint Petersburg Russia of 1875, Russia and Japan agreed that Japan would give up all rights to Sakhalin in exchange for Russia giving up all rights to the Kuril Islands in favor of Japan.
- (3) Nearing the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union, in violation of Neutrality Pact that was still in force between Japan and the Soviet Union, opened the war with Japan.
- (4) Even after Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration, Soviet forces continued their offensive against Japan and occupied all of the Four Northern Islands from 28 August 1945 to 5 September 1945.
- (5) Japan did renounce "all rights, title, and claim" to the Kuril Islands in the 1951 Treaty of Peace with Japan, but the Northern Territories have never been part of the Kuril Islands. Furthermore, the Soviet Union refused to sign the Treaty.
- (6) On 19 October 1956, the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration which was signed in place of a peace treaty, stipulated the termination of the state of war and resumption of diplomatic relations. However, the peace treaty negotiations is not concluded and the Northern Territories have been under illegal occupation by Russia.

## Russia's assertions and Japan's refutations

### Russia's assertion (1)

Russia (and the former Soviet Union) asserts that, based on the Yalta Agreement in 1945, the Kuril Islands, including the Northern Territories, were handed over to the Soviet Union with the conclusion of World War II.



### Japan's refutation (1)

The Northern Territories are not a part of the Kuril Islands, which Japan renounced under the Treaty of Peace with Japan, and, moreover, the Yalta Agreement was not the ultimate determination by the Allies regarding territorial issues.

The United States, which signed the Yalta Agreement with the Soviet Union, has acknowledged that the agreement has no legal effect on the transfer of territory.

### Russia's assertion (2)

Russia asserts that, with the 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, Japan accepts the return of two islands (Habomai Islands and Shikotan Island), not four islands, after the conclusion of a peace treaty.



### Japan's refutation (2)

The Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration stipulates the end of the state of war between the countries and Russia has acknowledged the existence of a territorial dispute over the Northern Territories and has agreed to negotiate toward concluding a peace treaty.



An elementary school athletic meet in Shanamura Village on Etorofu (Iturup) Island



Tomarimura Village, Kunashiri Island



Workers drying codfish in the Shikotan Village are on Shikotan Island

\*Provided by the League of Residents of Chishima and Habomai Islands

For more details, see the Northern Territories Facts & Figures information library on the Center's website  
[https://www.spf.org/islandstudies/info\\_library/northernterritories/](https://www.spf.org/islandstudies/info_library/northernterritories/)

# The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation addresses the diverse and complicated issues that human society is encountering in the 21st century. In order to respond to increasing natural disasters and social crises, we implement and support a variety of necessary programs and projects.

We strive to strengthen cooperation between Japan and countries abroad. We make use of our freedom as a private Japanese foundation to effectively promote activities, proposals, and exchanges in the search for a new governance model for human society

## Ocean Policy Research Institute (OPRI)

The Ocean Policy Research Institute make necessary proposals for seas and oceans as the Common Heritage of Mankind. With international cooperation and coordination, we promote research and studies aiming for comprehensive ocean management and sustainable development of the oceans.

We, as an organization of a country surrounded by the seas and oceans, pursue a model of a new Ocean State that maintains a balance between development and utilization of marine resources and protection of the marine environment. We make efforts to enhance cooperation with the international community to establish the ocean governance of the future.

## OPRI Center for Island Studies

Recent years have seen the rise of confrontations between Japan and its neighbors regarding legal status of some of Japan's island territories. The nations involved are disseminating a wide range of information to the global community based on their own claims, and historical factors are contributing to an increasingly murky international view of the situations being discussed.

This has at times even threatened to undermine relations among the nations in the East Asia region. If nations in the region are to enjoy stable development into the future, they will need to reach a shared understanding of the facts on these island territory issues that are shared not just among Japan and its neighbors but by the international community as a whole. Careful examinations of the questions of international law and historical record will be particularly central to achieving this shared understanding.

The OPRI Center for Island Studies is collecting and organizing historical materials and relevant literature on various issues related to Japan's island territories.

## REVIEW OF ISLAND STUDIES / Facts&Figures

### Publicity of articles on legal status and situation analysis and "Facts and Figures"

OPRI Center for Island Studies publishes "Review of Island Studies" twice a year which contains international legal status and historical explanation of Japan's island territories concerned, analysis of international situation of the oceans in the Asia Pacific region, and various arguments about island related issues.

And the "Facts and Figures" categorized international law and history, topography, ecological system and industry based on a scientific basis on Japan's island territories concerned are uploaded in our web site.



<http://www.spf.org/islandstudies/>

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Minamikojima Island  
(Senkaku Islands)



Kuba Island  
(Senkaku Islands)

