The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 was one of the most important events in twentieth century world history. The war did much to determine the further development of Russia and Japan, and was the most important factor in Russo-Japanese relations. In the last century a great number of historical works have been published on this theme, and researchers have raised and analysed the most diverse questions and aspects of this war. However, some questions concerning the history of the Russo-Japanese War have, to this very day, not only not been studied, but have also failed to attract sufficient attention from scholars and society as a whole. One of these questions concerns the Japanese deported to Siberia from the Far East or who were captured in the course of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. For example, Nakamura Shintarō, in his *The Japanese and Russians*,1 wrote about Russian prisoners of war, but made no mention of Japanese prisoners in Russia. In the works of Russian authors, on the whole, it is simply observed that significantly fewer Japanese were captured than were Russians, and it is usually only pointed out that ‘1,700 Japanese servicemen were taken by Russian forces’,2 though without reference to any sources. According to official Japanese statistics, the total number of Japanese prisoners of war during the conflict came to 2,104. It is clear that the first researcher who raised the issue of the history of the Japanese servicemen who were held in the Russian Empire was the well-known Sakona Takeshi.3 Observing that 1,776 Japanese servicemen and one woman were being held in the village of Medved, near Novgorod, and that 197 were being held outside Harbin in December 1905, he came to the conclusion that ‘the total number of prisoners of war was therefore 1,973’. It is clear, too, that the history of Japanese deportations from Priamuria during the Russo-Japanese war also remains underresearched.
Japanese Deportees and Prisoners of War in Siberia, 1904–05

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the official number of Japanese living within the borders of the Russian Empire was 3,953. The number of Japanese visiting the country each year was greater, for example, in 1900, 5,819 Japanese subjects entered Russia. The main body of Japanese in Russia lived in the Far East, and were rarely to be seen in Siberia itself, apart from in the Baikal region. A large number of the Japanese subjects who visited Siberia were connected with Japanese intelligence. Individually, Japanese could be encountered in a variety of walks of life. In 1903, a Japanese by the name of Yamaguchi graduated from the Troitskosavsk Training Institute, and went on to continue his education at Petersburg University. A Japanese language teacher from Japan worked at the Junker school in Irkutsk. In 1903, the owner of a sawmill in Chita, D.F. Ignatiev, invited four lacquerers from Japan. As the newspapers reported, the items produced by the Japanese craftsmen were immediately in great demand among the local people. A review appearing in the *Yeniseiskie gubernskie vedomosti* in 1902 bears witness to how often Japanese performers came to Siberian towns: ‘The performance by a Japanese troupe which took place on 24 September at the Chernie Circus Theatre . . . this time failed to attract a large audience . . . people had seen enough of them already. The performers, as usual, performed all their numbers perfectly conscientiously.’

Prior to the very beginning of the war, the Japanese began to leave the Russian towns. The editor of the *Vostchnoe obozrenie* newspaper, Ivan Ivanovich Popov, wrote in his memoirs: ‘from the letters of my mother-in-law, my son and V.S. Efremov, I heard that all the Japanese – cigarette-sellers, launderers and others, had already rushed away from Irkutsk . . . People had also written from other parts of Siberia, saying that the Japanese have disappeared.’ But before the very beginning of the war, Siberian society maintained extremely good relations with all Japanese who visited the region. In the Tomsk newspaper, *Sibirsii vestnik*, in a column entitled ‘Local Chronicle’ on 22 January 1904, an article entitled ‘The Japanese Takeshi Inakowa’ was published, which stated: ‘At the present time in our town, there is a young, well-educated Japanese, Takeshi Inakowa, from the town of Hakodate in Japan. He is staying with us for only the shortest time while on his way to European Russia.’ The newspaper reported that this 27-year-old Japanese was going to St Petersburg, and then on to Astrakhan in order to study the fishing industry.

At the onset of the war, the Japanese, as representatives of a state that had invaded Russia, were stripped of their rights of residence and travel within the country. Moreover, they feared that the Russian people would take vengeance on them, though this in fact did not happen. Their fears were not groundless, however, if one takes into consideration the anti-Chinese mood during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, from which the Japanese also suffered. For example, a Japanese circus performer was killed by a mob in the town of Biisk having been mistaken for a Chinese. It is possible that similar events led to a Japanese man being stabbed by unknown assailants in Irkutsk. In 1904 the authorities employed more