

War Experiences and the Japanese Movement for Veteran Pensions

Eri Matsuda

This paper analyzes the Japanese movement that sought pensions for disabled veterans without them. Based on this analysis, it clarifies that the war experience of these veterans had an impact on their movement.

My analysis indicates the following conclusions. First, the pension scheme of Japan incorporated several standards that restricted compensation. Many mildly disabled veterans did not meet these standards and were unable to receive pensions. Thus, although they had served the nation during WW II, they remained without pensions. Consequently, these disabled veterans began a movement requesting payments in recognition of their service during wartime. They claimed that since they fought for the state, they should receive special economic and social privileges from the government. They pressured the government and society, both of which were reluctant to make payments to such veterans, to recognize their stance. Therefore, the movement of disabled veterans without pensions sought real compensation from the state.

However, the Japanese pension scheme had a structure that stirred up continuous dissatisfaction with the state. Some disabled veterans without pensions thus decided to confront the state and win compensation for their national service. In this confrontation, the self-confidence that these veterans had achieved in the war supported them in their new struggle. The movement managed to win pensions for protesting disabled veterans a real achievement. However, as long as the pension scheme could restrict compensation, the possibility that other veterans would be denied continued to exist, as did the possibility of future confrontations with the state. The Asia-Pacific War was a total war, and the damage that it caused was on a national scale; thus, the inconsistency of the pension scheme is glaring in that it excluded so many of the men who had fought for Japan in this conflict.