The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Remnants of Early 20th-Century Japanese Temple Found in Far East Russia

April 29, 2025

A stone slab with Japanese characters. **Archaeologist Maria Safonova**

North Korean workers in Far East Russia's Sakhalin region have discovered remnants of an early 20th-century Japanese temple, local media reported Tuesday.

A stone slab with engraved Japanese characters was dug up during repair work at a kindergarten in the southern town of Korsakov, according to the Sakhalin region news website ASTV.ru.

The memorial sign was handwritten by the temple's priest and erected in July 1931 on behalf of its wealthy donor Toyojiro Kihara, the outlet said, citing archeologist Maria Safonova.

Southern Sakhalin was ceded to the Japanese Empire in 1905 after the Russo-Japanese War. Known as the Karafuto Prefecture between 1905 and 1945, the territory was captured by the Soviet Army during World War II and incorporated into the U.S.S.R.

Related article: Russia Bans Japanese NGO Amid Dispute Over Kuril Islands

Safonova noted that a small area where the discovery was made is home to at least three Japanese temples.

One of the temples was later occupied by the Russian Orthodox Church, while the other housed a Soviet army barracks. The third site where the stone slab was found became a kindergarten in 1992.

Safonova decried the local authorities' indifference toward the historical significance of local artifacts, describing the area as a "completely destroyed and neglected site."

She noted that the North Korean workers who made the discovery had also allegedly dug up dishware they took for themselves.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/04/29/remnants-of-early-20th-century-japanese-temple-found-in-far-east-russia-a88900