

8 The Birth of a “Small” Japan: Postwar Migration to South America

Japan's defeat in World War II marked a sharp turning point in the history of Japanese overseas migration. As Japan lost most of its colonies and imperial territories beyond the archipelago, colonial migration came to an abrupt end. The GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied occupation of Japan) not only cut off most of the contact between ordinary Japanese and people living in other parts of the world,¹ but also dismantled the set of mechanisms that was responsible for relocating Japanese overseas during the past decades. It abrogated the Overseas Migration Cooperative Societies Law that had turned prefectural governments into engines of emigration; it also disbanded the migration companies, including the *Kaikō*, which had relocated most of the migrants from the archipelago to South America and the South Seas since the mid-1920s.²

However, Japanese overseas migration quickly began anew following the end of the occupation, with Malthusian expansionism continuing to serve as its central justification. During the 1950s, a prime decade for overseas migration, over ten thousand Japanese annually settled overseas. In 1957, when overseas migration was at its postwar zenith, the Federation of Japanese Overseas Associations (*Nihon Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōkai*), a government proxy organization in migration management, issued a pamphlet vowing to further expand emigration in the years to come. Titled *Japan and Emigration (Nihon to Ijū)*, the pamphlet outlined the government's view on migration. It began with familiar rhetoric, presenting a sharp contrast between the spacious and empty Americas and the small and overpopulated Japan. While Japan's territory was halved after the empire's collapse, the pamphlet continued, its population continued on a path of rapid growth. In 1956, Japan's population exceeded ninety million, making the country one of the five most

¹ Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racism and the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 125.

² Nagata Shigeshi, *Kankō Imin to Min'ei Ijū: Keikaku Imin to Yobiyose Ijū* (Tokyo: Nippon Rikkō Kai, 1954), 8.

populated nations in the world. In terms of population density, Japan climbed up to claim the third place, behind only the Netherlands and Belgium.³ In the cities, with an estimated 670,000 people entering the job market annually, Japan had to keep its economic growth at a rate of 6 to 7 percent in order to accommodate new job seekers every year. This goal appeared impossible to achieve. Meanwhile, in the countryside, more than a decade of land exploration had failed to provide sufficient new land to accommodate all the surplus people. The reason for this failure, argued the pamphlet, was not that Japanese people did not work hard enough but that the archipelago no longer had extra farmland available.⁴

Overpopulation, the pamphlet lamented, had devastated Japan: people from all walks of life had to struggle to survive the unhealthy competition, students had to quit school in order to get into the queue for jobs early, while millions of the second and third sons of farming families were bereft of land – and along with it, a future.⁵ The only remedy, the pamphlet concluded, was overseas migration. It would not only reduce the population pressure within the archipelago but also bring benefit to Japan via remittance and international trade, thereby creating more job opportunities at home.



Figure 8.1 This world map, titled “*Sekai no Jinkō*” (The Population of the World), appeared on the first page of the book *Japan and Emigration*. It recalculated the land sizes of the major countries and continents based on the sizes of their populations. It thus emphasized the unbalance of population distribution vis-à-vis land in the contemporary world.

³ Nihon Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōkai, *Nihon to Ijū: Naze Ijū wa Sokushinsareneba Naranaiika* (Tokyo: Nihon Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōkai, 1957), 2–3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4–6. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

Overseas migration, the pamphlet further claimed, was crucial to the construction of Japan’s new national identity. Standing at the crossroads of history and living in a time of the two Cold War superpowers, Japan would follow the path of pacifism and democracy; it was destined to share these blessings with the rest of the world. Exporting migrants would help Japan to achieve this mission by eliminating poverty and food shortage at home while exploring untapped wealth in other parts of the world.⁶

The Federation of Japanese Overseas Associations was directly funded by the Japanese government, and it took primary responsibility in migration promotion and management during the postwar era. As the pamphlet demonstrated, just like in the decades before 1945, overpopulation served as an easy explanation for deeply rooted social tensions. It highlighted overseas migration as a panacea to the existing social issues that appeared otherwise unsolvable. Once again, the promoters of migration did not cast it in a light of casting off dead weight – instead, they urged prospective migrants to embrace the noble goal to glorify their nation from afar.

This chapter examines the history of Japanese overseas migration from the end of World War II to the beginning of the 1960s, when it began to decline following Japan’s economic boom. It highlights the similarities between postwar Japan’s overseas migration and the migration-based expansion that came before it. These similarities, the chapter argues, were rooted in institutional and discursive continuities that survived Japan’s defeat. After the occupation ended, institutions and personalities formerly in charge of the empire’s migration matters found themselves once again playing vital roles to steer the ship of postwar migration, and they continued to embrace Malthusian expansionism to legitimize their agendas. This continuity in the history of Japanese overseas migration, maintained through both defeat and the occupation, is crucial for our understanding of the trans-Pacific legacies of Japanese settler colonialism in the postwar era.

From War to Peace: The Birth of a “Small” Japan and the Resurgence of the Discourse of Overpopulation

The end of the war led to a sudden increase in the archipelago’s population. The empire’s collapse brought 5 million civilian and military repatriates back to Japanese shores by the end of 1946.⁷ Long-absent peace also stimulated a baby boom that peaked between 1947 and 1949, producing 7.5 million new citizens within three years. The mortality rate, on the other hand, dropped to the lowest point in Japanese history.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18–20. ⁷ Watt, *When Empire Comes Home*, 2.

⁸ Yukiko, *Trans-Pacific Racism*, 126.

These demographic changes were also accompanied by the immediate territorial change of Japan. The defeat and decolonization of the empire ushered in the rise of the discourse of “small” Japan among the Japanese intellectuals and policy makers in the postwar era. Only a few days after Japan’s official surrender, wartime bureaucrat Ōta Masataka published an article in *Asahi Shinbun*, titled “Seven Million People in a Small Territory.” Ōta claimed that the defeat had imposed a formidable challenge that Japan had never faced before: the nation had to accommodate an unprecedented size of population in a substantially reduced territory.⁹ Also reminiscing about the empire, Sugino Tadao, a member of the think tank behind the wartime Manchurian migration, lamented that before the defeat Japan’s territory was much larger than its current size, with a smaller population in it. But now, it not only lost much of its previous territory but also gained more population. As such, Sugino argued, it was impossible for the nation to sustain the livelihood of its population with the limited resources in this small archipelago.¹⁰

It is in this context that the anxiety of overpopulation quickly reemerged in Japanese public discourse right after the war. But more significantly, behind the anxiety of overpopulation lay the government’s inability to provide livelihoods for people whose lives were completely upended by the war. The total war had led to the creation of a welfare state in Japan that introduced both national health insurance and labor pensions, thereby assuming unprecedented responsibilities for the well-being of its people. Reforms during the occupation years further cemented the scope of this welfare state,¹¹ even as it found itself increasingly unable to adequately address the human costs of the war.

Soldiers needed pensions, the injured needed care, the homeless needed shelters, and everyone needed food. The return of the repatriates was joined by an even larger flow of people within the archipelago due to wartime evacuations. From December 1943 to June 1945, following government mandates, approximately 7.7 million residents in thirteen major Japanese cities such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Kobe, and Nagoya left their homes to flee from American air attacks.¹² They relocated to either the countryside or other

⁹ Ōta Masataka, “Semai Kokudo ni Nana Sen Man Nin,” *Asahi Shinbun*, August 21, 1945, 2.

¹⁰ Sugino, *Kaigai Takushoku Hishi*, 36.

¹¹ For example, Article 24 of the New Constitution requires the Japanese government to provide social welfare, freedom, and democracy to its people by protecting children, promoting public health and social security, standardizing working conditions, and fixing wages and working hours. Laws established following the constitution include the welfare law for children, promulgated in December 1947, followed by the welfare law for the physically handicapped, in effect in 1949, as well as the law on social welfare work of 1951 and the law on the promotion of social welfare work of 1953. See Mutsuko Takahashi, *The Emergence of Welfare Society in Japan* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997), 64–65.

¹² Yasuoka Ken’ichi, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi: Zainichi Chōsenjin Sokaisha Kaitaku Nōmin Kaigai Imin* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2014), 111–112.

small cities, and a majority of them remained jobless until the end of the war.¹³ Japan’s defeat also crushed the empire’s military industry, creating a large number of laid-off workers.¹⁴

Terming the archipelago as “overpopulated” was an easy way to reconcile the growing responsibility of the Japanese government for social welfare and its inability to effectively help the people in its charge. The claim of overpopulation also provided justification for the government to limit the scope of its welfare policy, by excluding the unwanted and the disqualified. The empire’s Korean and Taiwanese soldiers, for example, were stripped of their Japanese citizenship immediately after the war, which allowed the Japanese government to deny these colonial soldiers their veteran pensions.¹⁵ When the comprehensive national welfare system was implemented in 1959, the government further excluded former colonial subjects (Koreans and Taiwanese) residing in Japan by defining them as foreigners. In the same year, the Japanese government and civic groups began to repatriate the Koreans residents of Japan on a mass scale, sending them to North Korea in order to reduce the population of Koreans in Japan.¹⁶

The claim of overpopulation was also used by Japanese eugenicists to advance their agendas on the issues of abortion and birth control. Japan, they argued, had turned into a militant empire primarily because of its uncontrollable population pressure at home. To avoid the same mistake, the new nation should lessen the population pressure by introducing birth control regulations and legalizing abortion.¹⁷ These views were well received by a government that desperately sought to bridge the gap between its welfare obligations and its constrained financial capacity. The enactment of the Eugenic Protection Law in 1948 made Japan one of the first countries in the world to legalize abortion, while the law’s 1952 revision further loosened the requirement for abortion, allowing women to conduct legal abortion because of “economic hardship and difficulty,”¹⁸ which became the number one reason for abortion conducted in the decades to come. From the beginning of the 1950s, birth control also became a part of Japanese public health administration.¹⁹

Though many promoters of unlimited population growth during wartime Japan quickly turned into postwar advocates of birth control,²⁰ there remained opponents to birth control in both government and civic society. Seeing population as the crucial source for national strength, opponents of contraception

¹³ Ibid., 138. ¹⁴ Ibid., 148. ¹⁵ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 379–380.

¹⁶ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Exodus to North Korea Revisited: Japan, North Korea, and the ICRC in the ‘Repatriation’ of Ethnic Koreans from Japan,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 9, Issue 22, no. 2 (May 30, 2011): 7–8.

¹⁷ Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 371–372; Takeda, *Political Economy of Reproduction in Japan*, 109.

¹⁸ Takeda, *Political Economy of Reproduction in Japan*, 103. ¹⁹ Ibid., 106–107.

²⁰ Fujime, *Sei no Rekishigaku*, 361.

worried about the long-term damage of slowing population growth. The minister of health and welfare, Ashida Hitoshi, argued that it was difficult for any nation to reverse the trend in birth rate once it began to drop.²¹ Nagata Shigeshi, the president of the Japanese Striving Society, had an even stronger opinion. India and China, he contended, survived the tyranny of Western colonialism because of their huge populations. Similarly, Great Britain's rise as the most powerful colonial empire should also be attributed to its strength in numbers. France, on the contrary, was plagued by a succession of problems both at home and abroad ever since its government adopted the policy of birth control. For Nagata, population was not only crucial for a nation's survival but also its most important source of strength. The white hegemony in the United States, Nagata warned, was in danger due to the insidious influence of Margaret Sanger. The birth rate of white people in America dropped quickly while that of black people continued to climb. Based on this observation, Nagata made a splendid prediction that within a hundred years the United States would be led by a black president. Japan was indeed an overpopulated country, but such a big population was precisely the foundation of Japan's national wealth. The practice of birth control, he warned, was like another nuclear bomb that would ultimately destroy Japan's national strength.²²

For Malthusian expansionists who, like Nagata Shigeshi, continued to strive in the postwar era, overseas migration undoubtedly remained the best course of action for the overpopulated archipelago. In 1947, only two years after the end of the war, the leaders of the Japanese Striving Society and other pre-1945 migration organizations formed the Overseas Migration Association (*Kaigai Ijū Kyōkai*), vowing to start sending Japanese migrants abroad again. To this end, the association began to hold public gatherings and publish journals to promote overseas migration among the general public and frequently appealed to the government calling for its action.²³

However, the Japanese government was initially hesitant to endorse overseas migration. Such a response was natural, as the policymakers in Kasumigaseki were fully aware that due to the close tie between migration and colonial expansion in the preceding years, getting the green light from the United States would be no easy matter. Their concerns were well founded: under pressure from the SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers), Kagawa Toyohiko, a symbolic figure of Japanese pacifism, withdrew his commitment to serve as the first director of the Overseas Migration

²¹ Tama Yasuko, "Shōsanka to Kazoku Seisaku," in *Gendai Shakaigaku: 19: Kazoku no Shakaigaku*, ed. Inoue Shun, Ueno Chizuko, Ōsawa Masachi, Mita Munesyke, and Yoshimi Shun'ya (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 159–187.

²² "Imin Chūshin no Jinkō Mondai," *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 628 (July 1957): 5.

²³ Wakatsuki Yasuo and Jōji Suzuki, eds., *Kaigai Ijū Seisaku Shiron* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1975), 97; Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racism*, 129–131.

Association.²⁴ Moreover, even after the United States changed its stance, Australia proved to be an intransigent opponent on the issue.²⁵ It was the project of domestic land exploration that eventually brought overseas migration once again to the forefront of policy debates in Japan.

Domestic Land Exploration, Land Reform, and the Discourse of Overpopulation Transformed

The domestic land exploration project was the linchpin of the Japanese government's efforts to assist people who had lost their homes and livelihoods due to the war. Land exploration was not a new policy: during the war, the government had already adopted it to utilize those who were evacuated from the major cities. Under the slogan of “returning to farming” (*kinō*), the government encouraged these evacuees to take up farming to increase the food supply for the empire.²⁶ In this way, the evacuation-driven migration in the wartime archipelago was closely tied to farming, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) playing a leading role in the process.²⁷

Even after the war ended, the archipelago remained in dire need of food. The countryside continued to see inflows of displaced people, though this time mainly those returning from the empire's colonies and overseas territories.²⁸ The new government responded to this situation in an extension of wartime policy, with the intention of turning the homeless returnees into productive subjects. In November 1945, the cabinet passed the Guidelines of Conducting Emergent Land Exploration (*Kinkyū Kaitaku Jigyō Jisshitsu Yōryō*) to provide more food and build new villages following the return of the military and civilians from overseas. These guidelines stipulated that the government would mobilize the repatriates to conduct a massive campaign of land exploration (*kaitaku*) and improvement (*kairyō*) throughout the archipelago. The goal was to create 1.55 million hectares of new land (either unclaimed or previously in use by the military) and settle one million new farming households within five years,²⁹ an ambitious agenda that dwarfed even the state-led wartime migration to Manchuria in its size. Notably, this new campaign was mainly staffed with the same bureaucrats who orchestrated the Manchuria migration project and the “returning to farming” campaign during the war, and the MAF continued to play a crucial role in the postwar land exploration program. In October 1945,

²⁴ Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racism*, 129. ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁶ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 130, 136–137. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁸ Many evacuees in the countryside eventually returned to their original homes after the government removed the ban that prevented them from returning to their cities in March 1947. The majority of the people to be resettled in the countryside after the war were repatriates who came back to archipelago from overseas. *Ibid.*, 164–165.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

the Bureau of Land Exploration (Kaitaku Kyoku), the organ directly in charge of the land exploration program, was established as a part of the ministry.³⁰ From the end of 1946 onward, the MAF also took over the responsibility of settling the repatriates from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³¹

The campaign of emergent land exploration took place around the same time as postwar land reform, another nationwide policy initiative. Beginning at the end of 1946, under the supervision of the GHQ, the Japanese government began to nationalize land throughout the archipelago by purchasing private land from landlords and confiscating lands used by the imperial military before 1945. It then redistributed land by selling it at low prices to the landless people in the countryside.³² As was the case for land exploration, MAF bureaucrats, many of them carry-overs from wartime, played a central role in implementing the reform. Adherents to agrarianism and faithful disciples of Ishiguro Tadaatsu, the actual executors of the reform Wada Hiroo and Tōbata Shirō saw this campaign as a golden opportunity to realize their pre-1945 dream of creating an owner-farmer society.³³ Land reform dramatically transformed the landscape of land property distribution within Japan: tenant farming rate plummeted from 46 percent in 1941 to 14 percent in 1949,³⁴ and the class of big landlords quickly faded out from view.³⁵

The campaign of land reform was also closely intertwined with that of emergent land exploration. The agrarianist bureaucrats of the MAF, figures who had orchestrated the wartime migration to Manchuria, were now central architects of both campaigns. They carried out both to turn Japan into a nation of owner-farmers by redistributing land to the formerly landless. The repatriates were among the intended beneficiaries of both campaigns, which expected to resettle them in the archipelago by land grant. However, even as the reform did quickly create a society of owner-farmers and the land exploration campaign quickly increased the size of arable land in the archipelago, neither of these campaigns was successful in settling the repatriates. As the following paragraphs illustrate, the Japanese government's failure to resettle the repatriates in these two campaigns moved the issue of overpopulation from cities to the countryside, turning the primary source of overpopulation anxiety from the shortage of food and jobs into the shortage of land.

The primary beneficiaries of the emergent land exploration and land reform campaigns, in reality, turned out to be local farmers, not the repatriates. While

³⁰ Ibid., 147. ³¹ Ibid., 185. ³² Ibid., 245.

³³ Shōji Shunsaku's study shows that the Japanese bureaucrats were more radical than the GHQ in terms of the goal of the reform. The GHQ saw the land reform as a means to achieve the goal of Japan's democratization and had sympathy toward the property loss of the landlords. In contrast, the Japanese bureaucrats targeted an overhaul of the system of land ownership itself. Shōji, *Kingendai Nihon no Nōson*, 194.

³⁴ Shōji, *Kingendai Nihon no Nōson*, 185. ³⁵ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 246.

the Bureau of Land Exploration initially sought to settle the repatriates back in their home prefectures, this plan did not work as expected. The case of Shimoina County in Nagano prefecture shows that the local farmers had formed ties with each other through the Village Renewal Cooperative (Nōson Kōsei Kumiai), a nationwide network composed of village-level branches established throughout the archipelago in the 1930s, while most returnees did not have such connections. During both land exploration and land reform campaigns, properties were distributed to farmers through this network. Returnees without the cooperative’s membership, accordingly, were excluded from obtaining a share in the redistribution of local land.³⁶ As a result, after temporarily returning to their home prefectures, many repatriates had to remigrate elsewhere with assistance from their home prefectures. Ibaraki and Hokkaido became the two prefectures that received the biggest numbers of the repatriates from other prefectures.³⁷ However, many repatriates had difficulties in settling in their nonnative prefectures as well. With strong resentment, local farmers treated them as outsiders who would steal their ancestral land, and local governments also had imposed policies aimed at reducing the number nonnative repatriates that they had to accommodate. Even Hokkaido, the prefecture that had been a destination for Japanese migrants ever since early Meiji, imposed requirements on the amount of start-up fund and farming equipment each farmer should possess before they could settle in, the responsibility of providing which then fell onto the shoulders of the repatriates’ home prefectures.³⁸ With their own budget limitations, however, many prefectures quickly ceased their support for the remigration of repatriates. It was reported that in 1948 alone, with no hope of acquiring land, thirty thousand households quit the land exploration campaign.³⁹

Sensing insurmountable difficulties to reach the goal set up by the Guidelines of Conducting Emergent Land Exploration on time, the government reduced the expected number of household resettlement from 1 million to 0.34 million in 1947. It abandoned the emergent land exploration project entirely in the next year, and then disbanded the Bureau of Land Exploration in the year after that. By 1950, the efforts to relocate repatriates within the archipelago had ended in failure.⁴⁰ The campaign moved on to a new stage, focusing on assisting existing landowners to expand and develop their existing land. During this stage, the campaign sought to provide land to a small and selective

³⁶ Aoki Takeshi, “Gaichi Hikiagesha Shuyō to Sengo Kaitaku Nōmin no Sōshutsu: Nagano Ken Shimoinagun Igaryōmura no Jirei,” *Shakai Keizai Shigaku* 77, no. 2 (August 2011): 99–100.

³⁷ Nagano Ken Kaitaku Jikōkai Manshū Kaitakushi Kankōkai, *Nagano Ken Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, 741.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 742. ³⁹ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 167.

⁴⁰ Nagano Ken Kaitaku Jikōkai Manshū Kaitakushi Kankōkai, *Nagano Ken Manshū Kaitaku Shi*, 743.

group of people, primarily the second and third sons of owner-farmers who did not have the right to inherit land. The repatriates ceased to be beneficiaries – even if in name only – of the land exploration campaign.⁴¹

The emergent land exploration and land reform campaigns brought dramatic changes to the Japanese countryside. They turned the majority of the rural population into owner-farmers and eliminated the landlord class from Japanese society. However, local farmers who were not displaced during the war refused to share their newly gained land with the repatriates. Local protectionism also limited the capacity of prefectures to accommodate repatriates who remigrated from their native prefectures. As a result, the short-lived emergent land exploration campaign failed to provide farmland to a majority of the repatriates, leaving a significant number of landless people in the countryside even after land reform. In addition to fueling further Malthusian anxiety, this development would transplant the primary focus of such anxiety from the cities to the countryside, from the supply of food and jobs to the supply of arable land.

The discourse of overpopulation was a boon for the Japanese government in general and the agrarianist MAF bureaucrats in particular: it allowed them to celebrate the achievements of land reform while excusing themselves for the failure to provide land to most of the repatriates. Ishiguro Tadaatsu, the doyen of state agrarianism, claimed that the fundamental problem of the Japanese rural economy was overpopulation that led to a shortage of farmland.⁴² The current land holdings by owner-farmer households were already modest enough; any further division would lead to overintensive farming and production inefficiency. The question, therefore, had morphed into how to provide sufficient land to each household in order to maintain a healthy agricultural economy.

The discourse of land shortage emerged from the failure of the emergent land exploration program. Not only did it change the nature of overpopulation anxiety in postwar Japan, it also legitimized the Japanese government's official resumption of its promotion and management of overseas migration. In 1949, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a report, claiming that there was little hope for Japanese economic development to reach a level that could provide livelihood for all people in the archipelago in the foreseeable future.⁴³ In the same year, the House of Representatives issued a plan that was endorsed by all parties, vowing to take action against Japan's current population pressure, and overseas migration was listed as one of the three proposed measures.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*; Zenkoku Kaitaku Nōgyō Kyōdō Kumiai Rengōkai, *Sengo Kaitakushi*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Zenkoku Kaitaku Nōgyō Kyōdō Kumiai Rengōkai, 1967), 8.

⁴² Ōtake Keisuke, ed., *Ishiguro Tadaatsu no Nōsei Shisō* (Tokyo: Nōsan Gyoson Bunka Kyōkai, 1984), 340.

⁴³ Wakatsuki and Jōji, *Kaigai Ijū Seisaku Shiron*, 84.

⁴⁴ The other two plans were the continuation of land exploration and the promotion of birth control. See Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 285.

Together, these two events signaled the Japanese government’s readiness to embrace Malthusian expansionism once again, a decisive step leading to the resumption of state-sponsored overseas migration right after the end of the occupation.

The Remarriage of Agrarianism and Malthusian Expansionism and the Rebirth of the Migration State

Like overseas migration campaigns conducted by the Japanese empire between the late 1920s and 1945, Japanese migration during the 1950s and 1960s was primarily funded and managed by the state. In 1952, the first group of postwar Japanese overseas migrants left the archipelago for the Amazon Basin in northern Brazil. A few government-led migration projects that resettled Japanese to different parts of Brazil soon followed. Japanese migrants had set their feet again in the Americas and Southeast Asia. Between 1952 and 1962, when the number of overseas migration began to drop sharply, over twelve thousand Japanese migrated overseas every year. Among them, approximately 40 percent settled in Brazil.⁴⁵ In many ways, the 1950s and 1960s saw the reemergence of the same migration state from the prewar era, and at the center of this organizational continuity was the MAF’s leadership in migration management. When mass migration to Manchuria in the late 1930s was presented as the cure for Japanese rural depression, it was the MAF, led by agrarianist bureaucrats that recruited, trained, and resettled the migrants.⁴⁶ Though mass migration came to an end after the collapse of the empire, the MAF had survived in the postwar government, and the agrarianist bureaucrats managed to weather the political purges during the occupation years with their control of the ministry intact.

The drive of MAF bureaucrats and nonstate actors during these campaigns – land exploration and land reform at first, then the promotion of overseas migration – was closely tied to their design for postwar Japan. Remaining loyal to their pre-1945 dream, they believed that the new Japan should become a model nation of owner-farmers. However, whereas Japanese agrarianism between the 1920s and 1945 presented a fundamental challenge to modern capitalism, Western imperialism, and white racism, most of the postwar agrarianists had revised their ideas in response to Japan’s defeat and the US occupation. This revised postwar version of agrarianism imagined the

⁴⁵ The annual number of overseas migrants between 1952 and 1962 was around 12,013, while the annual number of those who settled in Brazil around the same time period was 4,816. These numbers are calculated based on data provided by Itō Atsushi. See Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 216.

⁴⁶ Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 127. The Ministry of Colonization (Takumushō), which also played an important role in migration to Manchuria, was disbanded in 1942.

construction of an owner-farmer society in Japan as an ideal way for the nation to embrace American global hegemony as a surrogate of the West during the Cold War. Ishiguro Tadaatsu, that spiritual leader of the state-led anticapitalist agrarianism before 1945, was quick to refer to the United States as an ideal example for Japan to emulate. The splendid capitalist civilization and democracy of the United States, Ishiguro argued, was solidly rooted in an own-farmer economy originally established by Thomas Jefferson. As the Japanese nation was striving to catch up with the progress of Western democracy, the American example demonstrated that owner-farmers were the indispensable foundation of postwar Japanese society.⁴⁷

Though overseas migration was suspended during the occupation years, the sections of the MAF that concerned themselves with migration matters continued to function by facilitating the repatriation and resettlement of Japanese settlers living in the former colonies. The Bureau of Land Exploration that took the primary role in attempting to turn the repatriates into land-owning farmers was staffed with many of the same people who had orchestrated the mass migration to Manchuria.⁴⁸ To the agrarianists, both domestic land exploration and land reform campaigns were important steps in creating their ideal farming society. Katō Kanji, one of the central architects of mass migration to Manchuria, wholeheartedly dedicated himself to mobilizing the repatriates from Manchuria to explore new lands in the archipelago. Back in 1927, Katō had founded an educational institution known as the Japanese National High School (Nihon Kokumin Kōtō Gakkō) to cultivate colonial farmers who later migrated to the Asian continent. During the postwar era, Katō repurposed the same institution to prepare the repatriates for domestic land exploration.⁴⁹ By “maximizing the labor of the people who came back to the countryside and returned to farming (*kinō*),” Katō claimed, Japan could create the most ideal agricultural society in the world.⁵⁰ The land reform represented another major endeavor of the Japanese agrarianists, and it indeed eliminated the landlord class, a chief barrier in Japan’s path to an owner-farmer society before 1945. However, as explained previously in this chapter, the campaigns of land exploration and land reform failed to provide land and livelihood to the majority of the repatriates.

Overpopulation was a handy explanation for such a failure. As Ishiguro reasoned in 1950, as it was during the prewar era, it was impossible for Japan to become a true owner-farmer society as long as surplus population existed in the countryside. As a result, these surplus people had to find alternative livelihoods.⁵¹ As it was in the pre-1945 era, Ishiguro and his loyal followers

⁴⁷ Ōtake, *Ishiguro Tadaatsu no Nōsei Shisō*, 335. ⁴⁸ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 183.

⁴⁹ Kitasaki Kōnosuke, *Sengo Kaitakuchi to Katō Kanji: Jizoku Kanō na Nōgyō no Genryū* (Tokyo: Nōrin Tōkei Shuppan, 2009), 37.

⁵⁰ Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 75. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 267–268.

within and outside of the MAF saw overseas migration as the best solution. They expected that migration would ease the domestic population pressure, enabling Japan to finally transform itself into an ideal owner-farmer society with a perfectly balanced population/land ratio.

The marriage between the anxiety of overpopulation and the discourse of land shortage brought the MAF again to the forefront of migration promotion and management. In December 1952, the ministry took primary responsibility in sending a group of government-sponsored migrants abroad, for the first time in the postwar era, to northern Brazil’s Amazon Basin. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided lodging and training for the migrants when they stayed at the Kobe Migration Center (Kobe Ijū Assen Sho) before departure, the MAF was in charge of the promotion and recruitment of these migrants by working closely with prefectural governments.⁵² During the next year, the MAF established its own facility to train migrants in a farm in Fukushima as its answer to the Kobe center managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The farm was previously used to train farmers for domestic land exploration.⁵³

As the postwar migration tide began to rise, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to further its influence by extending control over the project. In 1953, it established the Department of Migration (Imin Ka) under the Bureau of Euro-American Affairs (Ōbei Kyoku). The department assumed the responsibility for conducting investigations into overseas migration in South America and mediating the relationship between social groups and the government in migration-related matters.⁵⁴ In the same year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to revive the prefecture-based overseas associations – the same institution that had played a vital role in migration promotion and recruitment at the local level in previous campaigns of migration to Brazil and Manchuria. In 1954, the ministry sponsored the formation of the Federation of Overseas Associations (Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōkai, or Kaikyōren for short) to coordinate the activities of all local overseas associations and place them under its own direction. Through this move, the ministry aimed to expand its power in migration management by monopolizing the process of migrant recruitment.

Naturally, the MAF strongly opposed the attempted power grab of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Pointing out the fact that the majority of the migrants were farmers, the leaders of MAF argued that it was crucial for the selection and recruitment of migrants to be performed by the MAF, a matter in which they had both expertise and experience.⁵⁵ A 1954 cabinet decision put the contention to rest; it decided that while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would take charge of overseas migration-related affairs, the domestic selection and recruitment of migrants would be conducted under the

⁵² Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 10–11. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19–20. ⁵⁵ Yasuoka, *Tashatachi no Nōgyōshi*, 295.

cooperation of both ministries.⁵⁶ Even after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the central state organ in charge of migration management, the MAF continued to play an important role in promoting and managing the migration of Japanese farmers to the Americas. The MAF's involvement in overseas migration was mainly through two proxy organizations, the Association for International Collaboration of Farmers (AICF; Kokusai Nōyū Kai) and the National Federation of Agricultural Migration Cooperative Associations (JATAKA; Zenkoku Takushoku Nōgyō Kyōdō Kumiai Rengōkai), respectively in charge of farmer migration to North America and South America.

In sum, the Japanese overseas migration trend that resumed in the 1950s was managed by a migration state that mirrored its pre-1945 incarnation. Like its imperial counterpart, the postwar government tasked itself with managing the selection, recruitment, and training of migrants; it also provided subsidies for their transportation and settlement. This similarity sprang from a striking institutional and personnel continuity between the two governments despite a crushing defeat in World War II. The MAF, the state organ that played a central role in the mass migration to Manchuria during the war, had led the resettlement of the repatriates and the domestic land exploration project immediately after the war, and now it was initiating overseas migration for the new Japanese nation.

Farmer Migration for a New Nation: Representing Past for Future

The central role of the MAF revealed the farmer-centered nature of the Japanese overseas migration in the postwar era. During the 1950s and 1960s, as from the 1920s to 1945, tensions rising from land shortage continued to be the main fuel that powered the migration machine. Though usually self-proclaimed as the migration of technicians and developers (*gijutsu imin* and *kaihatsu imin*), postwar Japanese overseas migration remained, like it was for Brazil and Manchuria, predominantly an agricultural one that focused on land acquisition. Most migrants were those who were denied access to land, such as repatriates, urban war evacuees, and sons without inheritance rights from farming households.

Once again, the migration state did not plan to simply transplant these people and leave them to their own fates abroad. The postwar agrarianists, still adherents of Malthusian expansionism, believed that migration would fashion these surplus persons, potential sources of unrest at home, into model subjects of the new nation – only now instead of the Empire of Japan, the object of their allegiance was a democratic state. By taming lands of wildness in underdeveloped countries, these

⁵⁶ Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 81.

consummate farmers were expected to bring the blessings of modernization to backward people around the globe and present Japan on the international stage as a splendid proxy nation of the free world. This postwar reinvention of Japanese national identity as well as its representation through farmer migration were made possible by the legacy of Japan’s migration-driven expansion in the previous decades. The following paragraphs take a closer look at how leaders of the postwar Japan legitimized overseas migration by reinterpreting the history of Japanese expansion before 1945.

Eulogizing Colonialism as Modernization

Immediately following Japan’s surrender, the Allies’ International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the purge of hundreds of thousands of politicians and public figures, as well as the censorship policy imposed by the occupation authority together set the tone on how World War II should be understood and remembered in Japan. However, how the history of Japanese colonialism should be remembered remained a contested topic. While the United States and its allies termed the pre-1945 Japan as an evil empire of invaders, the Americans nevertheless understood that an all-out attack on Japanese colonial expansion would leave the United States itself vulnerable to similar criticism.⁵⁷ Moreover, with the consent of the occupation authorities, many wartime politicians, intellectuals, and bureaucrats quickly returned to government service after the temporary purge, giving rise to a rose-tinted perspective of Japan’s colonial history in the public sphere. As a result, the denunciation of wartime fascism and militarism right after the war emerged hand in hand with the acknowledgment and even celebration of the colonial expansion of the empire in Japanese public discourse.

In September 1946, one year after the collapse of the Japanese empire, the Ministry of Finance began a comprehensive investigation of Japanese activities beyond the archipelago from the beginning of the Meiji era to the end of World War II. The result of this investigation was a thirty-volume collection that documented the details of Japanese overseas communities around the Pacific. With the majority of the volumes dedicated to the experience of the settler communities inside the empire, the immediate goal of this investigation was to allow the Japanese government to claim ownership of Japanese colonial assets in lost imperial territories.⁵⁸ In keeping with this purpose, the Japanese

⁵⁷ Marlene J. Mayo, “Literary Reorientation in Occupied Japan: Incidents of Civil Censorship,” in *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, ed. Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 147.

⁵⁸ Paku Kyonmin, “Kaigai Jigyōsha no Zaigai Zaisan no Hōshō Yōkyū to Shokuminchi Ninshiki, 1945–1948 Nen: Chōsen Jigyōshakai o Chūshin ni,” *Hōgaku Seijigaku Tōkyū: Hōritsu, Seiji, Shakai*, no. 108 (Spring 2016): 24.

government argued that the Japanese assets in the colonies were obtained not through military invasion but accumulated, over a long period of time, by the efforts of hardworking Japanese people. In order to persuade the GHQ and the allied powers, the collection was not only rich in details but also written by specialists of different fields citing meticulous studies.⁵⁹ It could be considered the first comprehensive history of the Japanese empire compiled in the post-war era.

A careful look at the narrative of the collection reveals how the new government chose to represent Japan's colonial history immediately after the war. The Japanese empire, the collection emphasized, was extraordinarily successful in transplanting Western civilization onto the archipelago, and Japan's population explosion was a result of such success. As the population continued to grow, the existing territory's resources proved to be too limited, which left the empire no choice but to conduct territorial expansion. The expansion of the empire, in other words, was primarily driven by the desire to gain additional land and other resources to accommodate the ever-growing Japanese population.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the collection described Japanese expansion as a successful process of transplanting progress and modernization from the archipelago to the colonies, something mutually beneficial to both the Japanese and the local populations.⁶¹ The Pacific War, the collection argued, had unfortunately terminated this process and destroyed much of the achievement accomplished by the Japanese empire.⁶²

The Japanese Overseas Migration as a Story of Cosmopolitanism

Postwar Japanese elites also linked the presentation of Japanese colonial expansion as a project of modernization and the colonial settlers as modernizers with the virtues of altruism and cosmopolitanism, two traits that Japanese overseas migrants were believed to possess in abundance. Sugino Tadao, the brain behind both Japanese wartime migration to Manchuria and the postwar South American migration campaign, argued that Japanese migration to Manchuria was driven by neither imperialism nor colonialism. Instead, it was a part of Japan's effort to establish a new world order under which all people could coexist and coprosper. Such a spirit of altruism, Sugino intoned, should continue to buttress Japan's overseas migration in the postwar era.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁰ Ōkurashō Kanrikyoku, *Nihonjin no Kaigai Katsudō ni Kansuru Rekishi Teki Chōsa*, vol. 1, *Sōron*, edited by Kobayashi Hideo (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2002), 151–152.

⁶¹ Ibid., 269–270. ⁶² Ibid., 184–185.

⁶³ Yamamoto Yūzō, *Manshū Kioku to Rekishi* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2007), 312.

They also reinterpreted the history of Japanese migration to the United States as an example of cosmopolitanism. In 1950, Japanese singer Yamaguchi Yoshiko came to the United States as a member of a Japanese cultural delegation. This delegation was a part of the effort made by the postwar Japanese government to rehabilitate Japan’s international image, presenting Japan as a close American ally rather than the evil enemy from an all too recent past.⁶⁴ During the visit, she performed for Japanese American communities in Sacramento, California.⁶⁵ More famously known by her Chinese name, Li Xianglan, Yamaguchi was one of the most popular singers in Manchukuo and Japanese-occupied China during the war, singing songs in Chinese to propagate Pan-Asianism as well as Sino-Japanese coexistence and coprosperity. For her Sacramento audience, Yamaguchi performed two of the most popular songs from her wartime repertoire, “Ye Lai Xiang” (“The Night Willow”) and “Suzhou Yequ” (“Nocturne of Suzhou”), in both Japanese and Chinese. Through these performances, the delegation expressed gratitude on Japan’s behalf to the Japanese Americans for their sufferings and hardships during the war.⁶⁶

Tokyo interpreted the Japanese American experience as a resounding success of Japanese overseas migration. Japanese Americans endured unbearable but necessary difficulties rising from decades of institutionalized racism that culminated in wartime internment. They also successfully proved their loyalty to their host country through the heroism of nisei soldiers in the European theater of World War II, which eventually won them true membership of the white men’s society when the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952 granted Japanese immigrants the right of naturalization. The cultural delegation’s expression of gratitude connected the experience of the Japanese Americans with the fate of Japan, as if the Japanese Americans, by bearing the unbearable in the past, earned not only their citizenship in the United States but also the eventual acceptance of Japan into the Western world after the war. Yamaguchi Yoshiko’s performances to the Japanese Americans also brought the experiences of Japanese migration to Asia and to the United States before 1945 together to construct a coherent story of Japanese migration on both sides of the Pacific, marked by altruism and cosmopolitanism. The overseas Japanese in any part of

⁶⁴ Michael Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 58–59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁶ “Moto Joyū no Yamaguchi Yoshiko San 1950 Sengo Bei Kōen no Ōngen wo Kakunin,” *Hokukoku Shinbun*, Yūkan (August 18, 2012): 1; “Yamaguchi Yoshiko San Bei Kōen no Ongen,” *Shinano Mainichi Shinbun*, Yūkan (August 18, 2012). I would like to thank Professor Michael Bourdaghs at the University of Chicago for generously sharing with me the information regarding Yamaguchi Yoshiko’s tour in Sacramento and related newspaper clips.

the world, as this logic implied, were neither invaders nor spies, but hearty contributors to the progress and prosperity of the host societies.

This perceived happy ending for the Japanese American story was celebrated by migration promoters as a testament to the cosmopolitan nature of Japanese migrants, who would give their wholehearted loyalty to whichever country they migrated to.⁶⁷ Nagata Shigeshi, the president of the Japanese Striving Society, looked at the history of Japanese Brazilian migration through the same lens. Recycling the discourse of coexistence and coprosperity that guided Japanese settlement in *Aliança*, Nagata argued that Japanese Brazilian migration in the postwar era would continue to prioritize the cultivation of people instead of the cultivation of crops, encouraging Japanese immigrants to assimilate into their host societies.⁶⁸ Sugino Tadao also concluded that the experience of Japanese migration on both sides of the Pacific before 1945 proved the Japanese to be cosmopolitans; he called the Japanese postwar migrants “international farmers” because they were willing to plant down their roots wherever they migrated to in order to bring peace and mutual understanding to the entire world.⁶⁹

*Reembracing White Racism and Cold War Colonialism
and the Making of New Japanese Frontiers*

In addition to modernizers and cosmopolitans, the postwar migration promoters also strived to portray the Japanese as frontier explorers, thereby reinserting Japan into the global racial hierarchy as a colored proxy of white supremacy. The claim of Japanese as frontier explorers emerged during the period of US occupation as migration promoters in Japan attempted to persuade the United States to rescind the ban on overseas migration and to open the doors of the countries under American political influence in South America and Southeast Asia to Japanese migrants. Being a master race like the Anglo-Saxons, the migration promoters argued, the Japanese deserved the privilege to explore the underdeveloped world for the good of all human beings.

In the postwar era, as Japanese Malthusian expansionists strived to restart Japanese overseas migration by embracing a US-centered world order, they saw the American West as a particularly important frontier of the new Japan. In their minds, it was a perfect place for the Japanese to be reimbued with “the vigorous pioneer spirit” of the Americans.⁷⁰ They saw Japanese migration to the United States as a shortcut to relocate the Japanese to the top of the global racial hierarchy under the umbrella of white supremacy.

⁶⁷ Nagata, *Shinano Kaigai Ijūshi*, 244.

⁶⁸ Nagata Shigeshi, “Zahaku Dōhō no Shinro,” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 563 (February 1952): 1.

⁶⁹ Sugino, *Kaigai Takushoku Hishi*, 100–101.

⁷⁰ Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 156.

A telling example was the decade-long Japanese Agricultural Workers Program (Nōgyō Rōmusha Habei Jigyō, or Tannō). Launched by the Association for International Collaboration of Farmers (AICF), the Tannō program brought forty-one hundred Japanese to rural California as fixed-term farm workers. AICF was led by Ishiguro Tadaatsu and Nasu Shiroshi,⁷¹ and a substantial part of its founding members were brains and arms of Japanese wartime migration campaigns. Many AICF members, in their official positions, also worked on postwar repatriation of overseas Japanese.⁷² Established only a few months before state-sponsored migration officially began, the AICF quickly became a proxy for the MAF to carry out its programs of overseas migration and training. Aside from running the Fukushima migration training center and exchange programs between Japanese and American farmers,⁷³ the main undertaking of the AICF during the 1950s and 1960s was the Tannō program. It shows the unexpected ways in which Japanese postwar agrarianists reimagined the American West as a new frontier of postwar Japanese migration. In the mind of these expansionists, Japanese farmer migration to the United States would regain Japan a desired location in the global racial hierarchy, which would in turn legitimize Japan’s own agricultural expansion in backward countries in South America and Southeast Asia.

While the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 reopened American doors to Japanese immigration, the annual quota assigned for Japan was only 185.⁷⁴ Though the fixed-term agricultural workers program was not subject to the quota limit, it was not intended for immigration. Nevertheless, in the mind of the AICF leaders, the program could temporarily relieve rural population pressure and provide landless farmers with opportunities to gain a livelihood. They further claimed that Japanese farmers’ participation in postwar agricultural development in the American West would allow them to once again bask

⁷¹ Eiichiro Azuma, “Japanese Agricultural Labor Program: Temporary Worker Immigration, U.S.-Japan Cultural Diplomacy, and Ethnic Community Making among Japanese Americans,” in *A Nation of Immigrants Reconsidered: US Society in an Age of Restriction, 1924–1965*, ed. Maddalena Marinari, Madeline Y. Hsu, and Maria Cristina García (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 162; Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 113–114.

⁷² Nasu Shiroshi, the first president of the association, Ishiguro Tadaatsu, a key member in the advisory board, and Sugino Tadao and Kodaira Gon’ichi, on the council of directors, were central architects of migration to Manchuria. In addition, many other founding members of the association were previous members of the Association of Exploration and Self-Striving (Kaitaku Jikō Kai), an association established right after the war to facilitate the repatriation of Japanese settlers in Manchuria and to resettle them in Japan through domestic land exploration. See Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 113–114; Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 4–5.

⁷³ The farm training program in Fukushima offered by the MAF to the selected farmer migrants was managed by AICF. Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 18.

⁷⁴ Azuma, “Japanese Agricultural Labor Program,” 162.

in the light of democracy after postwar land reform.⁷⁵ The AICF members expected that with their natural industriousness, honesty, and talent, Japanese farmers would be welcomed by white American farm owners as superior to Mexican *bracero* workers.⁷⁶ The perception of Japanese farmers as model minority workers in California, they envisioned, would help Japan to join the US-centered world order as a model-minority nation.⁷⁷ Ultimately, this would help Japan to secure US permission to export migrants inside the American sphere of influence to South America and Southeast Asia.⁷⁸

The AICF's programs of Japanese farmer migration and exchanges in the United States were thus intertwined with the ideas and activities to reopen the doors of South America and Southeast Asia for Japanese expansion in the postwar era. In 1958, Ishiguro visited Brazil as the head of the Japanese farmers' delegation to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Japanese migration to Brazil. Believing that Japanese farmers' achievements in the United States had won them respect from white Americans and Brazilians alike, he happily noted that the Japanese were now welcomed in Brazil as highly civilized people who were also humble, hardworking, and willing to bring progress to the most primitive land of the country.⁷⁹

The postwar reintegration of South America and Southeast Asia as frontiers on the map of Japanese expansion was best represented by the ideas and activities of Sugino Tadao and Nagata Shigeshi. Sugino, an AICF leader who brought a Japanese farmer delegation to California in 1953,⁸⁰ became the founding professor of the degree program of colonial agriculture (*nōgyō takushoku gakka*) at Tokyo Agricultural University (Tokyo Nōgyō Daigaku) in 1956.⁸¹ Under his guidance, the school trained the leaders of Japanese farmer migration to both South America and Southeast Asia.

Like Ishiguro and Nasu, Sugino was a passionate supporter of the Japanese agrarianist movement in the 1930s and 1940s who embraced migration to Manchuria as a way to create an owner-farmer society. After the war, Sugino also quickly reemerged as an advocate of farmer migration overseas, for he still regarded it as the ultimate remedy for the ills that haunted an overpopulated Japan. As demonstrated by the modern history of

⁷⁵ For the statement of Ishiguro Tadaatsu, see Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 155–156. For the statement of Nasu Shiroshi, see Azuma, “Japanese Agricultural Labor Program,” 171.

⁷⁶ Azuma, “Japanese Agricultural Labor Program,” 163. Growers in California, too, embraced these Japanese agricultural workers as the foil for the “inconvenient” *braceros*. Mireya Loza, “The Japanese Agricultural Workers’ Program Race, Labor, and Cold War Diplomacy in the Fields, 1956–1965,” *Pacific Historical Review* 86, no. 4 (2017): 671–675.

⁷⁷ To borrow a word from Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 211.

⁷⁸ For the statement of Ishiguro, see Nōgyō Takushoku Kyōkai, *Sengo Kaigai Nōgyō Ijū no Shokan to Kikō*, 157. For the statement of Nasu, see Azuma, “Japanese Agricultural Labor Program,” 163.

⁷⁹ Sugino, *Kaigai Takushoku Hishi*, 4. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

European expansion, Sugino argued, frontiers were pivotal for a nation’s fate, for nations that had conducted frontier expansion emerged stronger than others. When the metropolis began to decline, the frontier would fill up the void and become a new – and better – home for the people in the former metropolis. He saw the relationship between the United States, a shared frontier of the Europeans, and the European metropolis as a living example.⁸² As the Northern Hemisphere now was caught in the confrontation between two nuclear superpowers, Sugino predicted, it was doomed to decline. With spacious, unexplored land and abundant natural resources, the peaceful Southern Hemisphere would become the new frontier of the entire human race. As a master race in agricultural production, the Japanese were eminently suited to become the leaders of the mission to conquer the virgin forests and tap the natural wealth in this new frontier.⁸³

Nagata Shigeshi supported Sugino’s view by arguing that Japanese farmers, superior to the white people in agricultural undertakings, could offer a unique remedy for the crisis of Brazilian agriculture. The traditional mode of agriculture, introduced to Brazil by the European settlers who exploited the farmland without a long-term vision, he argued, had been turning Brazilian farmland into deserts.⁸⁴ In contrast, the Japanese mode of intensive farming, which featured frequently fertilizing the land, improving crops, and preventing and controlling pests, could revitalize Brazilian agriculture.

Restarting Japanese migration to Brazil in the postwar era, Nagata further argued, was also crucial to sustain the prosperity of the existing Japanese communities in Brazil. As an adherent of agrarianism, Nagata was worried that as more Japanese immigrants left their rural homes for urban areas amid the process of rapid urbanization in postwar Brazil, Japanese Brazilians were losing their farmland, the foundation upon which their lives were built. He expected that postwar Japanese migration would reverse the decline of the farming population in Japanese Brazilian communities.⁸⁵ In this endeavor, the migration of well-trained women was especially important. These female migrants would balance the gender ratio in Japanese Brazilian communities and give birth to more members of the next generation. As mothers, they would also pass down their

⁸² *Ibid.*, 223–226. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁸⁴ Nagata argued that previously agriculture in Brazil was primarily managed by European immigrants, who knew only large-scale farming. They first burned the forests and planted coffee trees in the ashes. After planting coffee without fertilizing the land for twenty-five years, they chopped down the coffee trees and planted cotton instead. After four or five years, when the land could no longer sustain cotton, they would use the weeds to feed cattle. After the land was completely exhausted and could not even support animals, they would sell it. See Nagata Shigeshi, “Hakkoku Nōgyō no Shūyakuka,” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 665 (August 1960): 1.

⁸⁵ “Burajiru ni Okeru Hōjin Nisei no Rison Mondai,” *Umi no Soto*, postwar, no. 17 (October 1952): 1.

passion for farming to their children,⁸⁶ ensuring that agriculture would continue to be the foundation of Japanese Brazilian communities. Under his leadership, the Japanese Striving Society established the Association of the Southern Cross (Minami Jūji Kai), a reincarnation of the Striving Society's Women School and Women Home before 1945. The association facilitated the migration of Japanese women to South America as brides of male migrants and provided these women with migration-related training before they left Japan.⁸⁷

In a similar way, Japanese expansionists applied the trope of frontier to other countries in South America and Southeast Asia. In 1956, the MAF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly initiated a failed attempt that aimed to relocate ten thousand Japanese men and women to Cambodia each year for five years. The plan was a close copy of the land-acquisition-centered Japanese migration programs in Brazil. Calling Cambodia Amazon of the East (*Tōyō no Amazon*), it once claimed to turn the surplus people in the “fully packed Japan” (*man'in Nihon*) into trailblazers of the nation's new frontier, this time in Asia.⁸⁸

The Decline of Japanese Overseas Migration and the Demise of Malthusian Expansionism

Throughout the 1950s, though Japanese overseas migration was not impressive in terms of its absolute size, its annual numbers did steadily grow as more countries opened up their doors to Japanese migrants. At the end of the 1950s, Malthusian expansionism continued to serve as a guiding principle for the policymakers in Tokyo, who relied on overseas migration to both relieve population pressure and explore new frontiers of the new nation.⁸⁹ In 1958, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a plan to relocate 101,000 Japanese overseas in the next four years.⁹⁰ However, to the surprise of many, the annual numbers of Japanese overseas migration did not grow but plummeted at the beginning of the 1960s.

A few events in 1961 jointly marked the turning point of postwar Japanese migration. In that year, migrants who participated in the failed 1956 to 1959 migration campaign to the Dominican Republic began to return to the archipelago.⁹¹ Around the same time, the migration project in Guatapara, Brazil, managed by JATAKA, also ran into trouble.⁹² These failures, caused

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1; “Ijū Undō kara Tori Nokosaru Musume Tachi Yō, Ijū Seyō,” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 662 (May, 1960): 4; Nagata Shigeshi, “‘Hito o Tsukure’ kara ‘Haha o Tsukure e,’” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 677 (August, 1961): 1.

⁸⁷ Nippon Rikkō Kai, *Nippon Rikkō Kai*, 373.

⁸⁸ “Kanbojia Imin: Raishun Sōsōni Chōsadan Mazu Hitsuyōna Shikin no Enjo,” *Asahi Shinbun*, December 19, 1955, 7.

⁸⁹ Nihon Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōka, *Nihon to Ijū*, 18–20.

⁹⁰ Wakatsuki and Jōji, *Kaigai Ijū Seisaku Shiron*, 106. ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 779.

⁹² Nagata Shigeshi, “Imin Saiaku no Sai,” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 684 (March, 1962): 1; “Postwar Emigration Agencies,” in *100 Years of Japanese Emigration to Brazil*.

by poor planning and management on the Japanese government’s part, triggered a substantial change in the image of overseas migration in public discourse. Japan’s mass media not only were increasingly critical of the government’s migration management ability but also became pessimistic about the outlook of Japanese overseas migration itself.⁹³ However, while a future in foreign lands looked increasingly uncertain, things were looking up at home: Ikeda Hayato’s cabinet set a plan to double Japanese national income within the next ten years; implemented in 1961, this goal was reached in as few as six years, marking the beginning of the period of Japan’s rapid economic growth (*kōdo keizai seichōki*) that lasted for more than two decades. As the fast industrial development began to demand an increasingly large labor force from the Japanese countryside, the anxiety of overpopulation quickly dissipated; starting in 1961, annual overseas migration numbers continuously declined.

The Japanese government tried to reverse this trend by unifying its proxy organizations in migration management, combining the Federation of Overseas Migration Associations (Kaigai Kyōkai Rengōkai) and the Japan Emigration Promotion Company (Nihon Kaigai Iju Shinkō Kabushiki Gaisha) into the Japan Emigration Service (Kaigai Ijū Jigyōdan) in 1963.⁹⁴ True believers of migration also pressed on with their campaigns. Nagata Shigeshi, for example, argued that further population increases should be implemented in tandem with the Ikeda cabinet’s plan to double the national income: Japan, he believed, needed to double the size of its population within ten years in order to export more migrants to occupy and utilize the wealth of undeveloped lands around the world.⁹⁵ However, none of these efforts were able to reverse the rapid decline of migration numbers.

In addition to the drop in numbers, as more and more rural people turned to cities for job opportunities and personal advancement, Japanese overseas migration in the 1960s also became less farmer centered. Urban-based skilled workers and specialists in science and technology began to constitute a greater portion of the migrants.⁹⁶ This change mirrored the overall decline of the previously farmer-centered Japanese communities in North and South America. As more second- and third-generation Japanese immigrants left the countryside for education and job opportunities in the cities, the Japanese

⁹³ See “Kyō no Mondai,” *Asahi Shinbun*, August 2, 1961; “Dominika Ijū no Kyōkun,” *Mainichi Shinbun*, April 12, 1962, cited from Wakatsuki and Jōji, *Kaigai Ijū Seisaku Shiron*, 779.

⁹⁴ Itō, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron*, 228.

⁹⁵ “Nihon Minzoku Nioku Gosenman ni,” *Rikkō Sekai*, no. 694 (January 1963): 6.

⁹⁶ As early as 1958, noticing the increase of urban skilled workers and technicians in the migration to Brazil, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs envisioned the establishment of several Tokyo villages (*Tokyo Mura*), new urban-based Japanese communities in Brazil. “Takamaru Imin Netsu: Burajiru e Tokyo Mura mo,” *Asahi Shinbun*, June 4, 1958, 10.

Table 8.1 Government-subsidized Japanese migration to Brazil, 1955–1965

Year	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Agriculture	2,620	4,335	5,132	6,251	6,939	6,691	5,010	1,745	1,127	445	201
Technology	37	35	17	50	92	123	122	71	89	108	169
Other			23	11	10	18	14	14	14	198	161
Total no.	2,657	4,370	5,172	6,312	7,041	6,832	5,146	1,830	1,230	751	531

This table shows Japanese-Brazilian migrants between 1955 and 1965 who received subsidies from the Japanese government. Based on data provided in Itō Atsushi, *Nihon Nōmin Seisaku Shiron: Kaitaku Imin Kyōiku Kunren* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2013), 223–224. It illustrates the sharp drop of migration numbers from 1962 onward and also the increase of urban, technology-related migrants since the turn of the 1960s.

communities in North and South America also became increasingly urbanized as a whole.

Japanese overseas migration experienced a further downturn in the 1970s. The Satō Eisaku cabinet extended the meaning of “overseas migration” (*kaigai ijū*) to Japanese citizens who stayed aboard only temporarily, such as short-term workers and students. This substantially broadened definition reflected changes to the mode of Japanese expansion itself – that is, from land-acquisition-centered farmer migration to investment- and trade-centered business expansion. The idea of relocating people overseas as a way of relieving domestic population pressure completely disappeared from the mission of this newly defined overseas migration.⁹⁷ The primary goal of the government’s new migration policy, as announced by the Satō cabinet, was to facilitate the expansion of Japanese companies overseas by providing them with a sufficient labor supply. In 1974 the government-affiliated organizations for overseas migration further merged with the government proxies in charge of international affairs, such as foreign investment and trade, cultural and educational exchange, and technological cooperation. The result was the formation of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA; Kokusai Kyōryoku Jigyōdan). The establishment of JICA demonstrated that overseas migration was no longer an independent field in the government’s policymaking process. Instead, it became submerged into the field of international cooperation (*kokusai kyōryoku*). While the term “international cooperation” gained increasing popularity, “overseas migration” (*kaigai ijū*) had faded out of public discourse by the 1970s.

The decline of Japanese overseas migration in the 1960s was also accompanied by the demise of Malthusian expansionism as an expansionist discourse around the world. World War II and the Cold War confrontation right afterward escalated the processes of technological development and the discovery of new energy sources. As material production was gradually separated from the soil, the association between land and limits to food production and life capability was no longer convincing. In 1969, British historical demographer E. A. Wrigley reasoned in his book *Population and History* that industrial development would eventually bypass “the bottleneck caused by the problems of expanding organic raw material supply.” As inorganic materials continued to replace organic materials, material production was increasingly less dependent on the fertility of soil.⁹⁸ Malthusian expansionism, which justified overseas migration as a solution to the overpopulation issue at home, had lost its logical foundation. In the 1960s and 1970s, the distribution of land versus population continued to be sharply unbalanced in the postwar era, and many societies

⁹⁷ Wakatsuki and Jōji, *Kaigai Ijū Seisaku Shiron*, 856–857.

⁹⁸ E. A. Wrigley, *Population and History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 57, cited from Bashford, *Global Population*, 14.

continued to struggle against food shortages. However, overpopulation could no longer stand as a cogent explanation for social poverty. The pre–World War II call for redistribution of land around the world had been replaced by the two Cold War superpowers’ competition in exporting technology and ideology to the Third World.

Conclusion

In many aspects, overseas migration in postwar Japan was a continuation of Japan’s migration-driven expansion before 1945. The anxiety of overpopulation right after the war emerged in a context very different from the pre-1945 era, but the government’s failure to provide farmland to the millions of repatriates directly resulted in the remarriage of overpopulation anxiety and the discourse of land shortage. As a result, Malthusian expansionism continued to serve as the primary justification for postwar overseas migration that began in 1952 until Japan’s economy took off in the 1960s.

As it did during the migration campaigns to Brazil and Manchuria between the 1920s and 1945, the Japanese government took a central role in postwar migration management. The similar functions that it performed grew out from an institutional and personnel continuity that survived Japan’s defeat in World War II. The MAF, the headquarters of pre-1945 agrarian expansionists that led the project of mass migration to Manchuria, continued to play a central role in orchestrating the campaigns of land exploration and land reform. Its leadership in these two domestic postwar campaigns also turned the ministry into one of the central sections of the government that oversaw overseas migration management during the 1950s and 1960s. Pre-1945 agrarian bureaucrats retained their influence in the ministry during the postwar era, and they once again became the engines of farmer migration projects.

Although the Japanese empire had given way to an avowed democratic state, an ideological continuity could also be traced in this new state’s approach to migration: Japanese policymakers and advocates did not consider overseas migration simply as a solution to overpopulation; they saw it as a critical opportunity for postwar Japan to reimbrace the world with a new identity: a pacifist, altruistic, and loyal member of the Western bloc. They expected the migrants, the model subjects of this new nation, to bring the blessings of Western modernization and progress to the backward countries around the globe during the Cold War.