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BOOK REVIEW

Japan Marches South: Pioneer Emigrants in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, 1940–1945

(「大東亜共栄圏」における南方国策移民—「南方雄飛」のゆくえ). By Yuri Okubo. Kyoto: Kōyōshobō, 2023. 204 pages. ISBN: 9784771037205.

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The year 2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Asia-Pacific War, also known as World War II. While war survivors have virtually disappeared, there still remains a number of people who believe that Japan's war "liberated" Asia from Euro-American imperial powers. Yuri Okubo's *Japan Marches South: Pioneer Emigrants in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, 1940–1945* offers a powerful conduit for critically thinking about this historical, yet still influential, ideology rooted in the Japanese empire and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (GEACPS).

From the late 1930s to 1940s, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs (Takumushō) established several vocational schools to train Japanese youth, mainly men, in their teens and twenties to be the leaders and "liberators" of people in Asia. These state-led training institutions were tasked with sending the graduates to *nanpō* (literally "the southern region" that refers to Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands), deeply tied to Japan's state emigration policy. The author Okubo focuses on the two institutions for young men, Takunan School (Takunan Juku) and Takunan Training Center (Takunan Renseijo), which sent their graduates to the Philippines and Guåhan (Guam) respectively. The Japanese term "takunan" was a contemporaneous coined word combining "taku," which means "colonization" as seen in the Japanese name of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs taku-mu-shō, and "nan," which signifies the south or *nanpō*. Through the case studies of the two schools, *Japan Marches South* examines how the GEACPS ideology dictated the lives and actions of the graduates. It also explores to what extent these boys accepted or did not accept the GEACPS ideology (p. 2).

Japan Marches South situates experiences of the graduates and their relationship with the GEACPS ideology in broader histories of modern Japan, Japanese imperialism, and the Japanese diaspora. Part I shows how and why boys came to participate in Japan's emigration policy by delineating socio-economic and geopolitical contexts, education policy, and the boys' individual aspirations. Part II delves into stories of the GEACPS project on the ground by pursuing the personhood of graduates and the perspectives of locals in the Philippines and Guåhan. To illustrate a history of the GEACPS from below, Okubo scrutinizes a wide range of archives, including publications by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, diaries, memoirs, oral history conducted by Okubo herself, and diverse genres of secondary sources. This is not an easy history to write, mentally and methodologically. Many sources are fragmentary. Many of the graduates ended up dying abroad or having traumatic experiences, along with locals who endured the Japanese occupation, war atrocities, and Euro-American colonialism. The GEACPS ideology, state-led training schools, and various socio-economic factors fomented the fever of adventuring overseas among the Japanese youth. Okubo, however, argues that the graduates faced a big gap between state visions and the reality in their destinations. The state emigration education training the leaders and "liberators" of people in Asia barely helped these boys at the scene;

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neither Japan's war nor the projects of the GEACPS "liberated" Asia from Euro-American imperial powers.

Japan Marches South mirrors and further galvanizes new moves in the history of the Japanese empire and broader historical scholarship. The geographic focus of this monograph on *nanpō*, and Okubo's global and comparative approach, force us to revise the map of the Japanese empire. Voluminous literature has concentrated on official colonies and occupied territories, such as Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria, fixing the geography of Japanese imperialism. This dominant set of boundaries has led many to neglect areas outside East Asia, like Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Sakhalin, and those that have remained Japan's territories after the end of the Japanese empire, Okinawa and Hokkaido. The new cadre of scholars, including Kirsten Ziomek, Maria Cynthia Barriga, and Ayuko Takeda, compare and connect regions that scholarship on the Japanese empire often overlooks.[1] Okubo herself explains that the study of the regions which Japan did not occupy until the 1940s, allows her to write the multilayered nature of imperialism, without reducing boys' experiences into the poles of victim and perpetrator and of between colonizer and colonized (p. 7–8, 108). In this sense, *Japan Marches South* joins a growing debate considering people in-between, those in the "grey zone," and those whom the nationalist agenda in scholarship has ignored as "collaborators." Recent work, including this book, has been centering historical actors who were neither victim nor perpetrator, which serves to complicate the history of war and imperialism beyond the perspectives of soldiers, administrators, and anti-colonial nationalists.[2]

Japan Marches South also contributes to burgeoning discussions about "ego-documents" and the history of emotions. Not only anglophone but also Japanese scholarship has recently produced exciting works on this topic.[3] Ego-documents are the source material for methodological endeavors that utilize personal and private archives. While ego-documents provides a window for examining various people's emotional experiences, the history of emotion, a close field to intellectual history and the history of sensibility, has traditionally focused on elites. Recent work, however, has paid growing attention to the emotional and intellectual practices of non-elite groups. In this sense, Okubo's approach to the inner self of the youth, ordinary and often-neglected historical actors, share methodological rigors with Sayaka Chatani's *Nation-Empire: Ideology and Rural Youth Mobilization in Japan and Its Colonies* (Cornell University Press, 2018). By looking at village youth associations in Taiwan, Korea, and Northeast region in Japan (Tōhoku), it explores why the rural youth eagerly participated in Japan's national and imperial project.[4] Both *Japan Marches South* and *Nation-Empire* highlight the youth, a neglected actor of intellectual history and the history of emotion; strict training and disciplines prohibited them from feeling and being emotional. However, this is why their inner experiences should be historicized, and why ego-documents become useful sources.

Particularly compelling are Chapters 4 and 5 in Part II, which investigates the invaluable private archives of Toshio Itō, a graduate of the Takunan School. Upon his graduation, Itō got a job at Kurabō Industries Ltd, a prominent textile company, and was soon sent to its Philippine branch at the age of 18. From October 1942, he worked at the San Miguel Farm in Tarlac, Tarlac Province, for a year, to manage local Filipino laborers. Although being trained to become a role model for the Japanese and locals, the book argues, Itō faced a quite different reality there from his education in Japan. Filipinos did not welcome their new Japanese occupier; in the eyes of Itō, Filipinos were "lazy," a typical trope that the colonizer produced because of their inability to understand the colonial, oppressive structure. In addition, his co-workers, who were also dispatched from Japan to Tarlac, led frivolous lives and disappointed him as many visited "comfort stations" (military brothels) and contracted gonorrhea. In the Philippines, Itō faced a big gap between state visions and reality. The

[1] Ziomek (2019); Barriga (2020); Takeda (2023); Mason and Lee (2012); Shirane (2022); Yellen (2019).

[2] The term "grey zone" builds upon the concept proposed by an Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi. Takatsuna *et al.* (2023). Also see, Kwon (2015).

[3] Hasegawa (2020); Ito and Morita (2023); "Tokushū = Kanjōshi" (2023).

[4] Chatani (2018).

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GEACPS project on the ground did not allow him to serve as a leaders or "liberators" of people in Asia; and it took the lives of many of these graduate boys and locals in the Philippines in 1945, when the war situation intensified.

A section in Part 2, which Okubo names "Supplemental Chapter" (*horon*), instead of a "Chapter," offers an experimental history of the GEACPS project in Guåhan by centering the perspectives of local CHamoru people. In May 1944, the third and fourth graduates of the Takunan Training Center were sent to farms there to secure food for the Japanese military (p. 176). However, the U.S. military attack on Guåhan began just a month after their arrival, thus boys did not have enough time to dedicate themselves as the "leaders" of locals, since they were caught up in the battles. In other words, the GEACPS project in Guåhan likewise did not allow them to serve as the leaders nor "liberators" and forced them to pay the cost of the policy failure. Okubo wrestles with the absence of CHamorus in the ego-documents and memory archives of the graduates, such as oral testimonies and memoirs. This struggle prods her to shift the perspectives from the Japanese youth to locals. Archival silence and the erasure of memories are burning questions for historians. CHamorus also experienced war violence and nevertheless have been neglected under the framework of the war as a conflict between the United States and Japan. By patching together fragmented evidence in primary and secondary sources, Okubo reconstructs the history of the Asia-Pacific War by focusing on the CHamoru.

This ambitious work raises a couple of questions. First, how is the story of Japanese youth related to the pre-World War II history of Japanese migration in the Philippines and Guåhan? These two destinations share the history of Spanish and then U.S. colonialism. In the first half of the twentieth century, during the American colonial period, Japanese migrants settled in both the Philippines and Guåhan. For example, the Philippine Census documented Japanese residents in Tarlac Province as 27 in 1918 and 37 in 1939.[5] Even if it's a small number, Japanese people lived and established settlements in the area. It is not very difficult to imagine that Japanese companies, like Kurabō Industries Ltd. that hired Toshio Itō, depended on the knowledge and network of local Japanese communities when the companies began their offshore business. Relatively elite groups that came from Japan to the Philippines in the late 1930s and 40s often produced a narrative representing entire Japanese communities, including people who arrived much earlier. I wonder if the key to analyzing Itō's diary is not only in his bias against local Filipinos but also in his erasure of the prewar history of Japanese migration. If Itō documented such Japanese migrants in his diary, how did he describe them? And if not, why?

Another question goes to the Supplemental Chapter on Guåhan. Okubo's attempt to recuperate the perspectives of CHamoru people challenges the nationalistic, Japanese-centric methodology of existing literature, offering a significant intervention. Her attempt to recover local people's perspectives is also seen in Chapter 5 as she shares her fieldwork in the Philippines: she conducted an interview with the daughter of then Tarlac City mayor, Manuel P. Villaroman, who was close to the expatriate employees of the Kurabō Industries Ltd. But this kind of effort to highlight local communities also prevents her from answering this book's research question, how the Japanese youth negotiated with the GEACPS ideology. Again, her attempt is a necessary one, and readers would want to read the Supplemental Chapter on Guåhan as a Chapter. To do so, how might the author reframe the question? And what kind of insights could be brought by such newly framed questions in the scholarship on the Japanese empire?

Japan Marches South should be read and discussed by scholars in multiple fields. The book is written in an accessible language, thus the general public would also appreciate new stories of the Asia-Pacific War. After the war, the Allied Powers deported Japanese residents in Japanese colonial and occupied territories to mainland Japan. However, the stories of the former residents (Japanese migrants) in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands have not yet been sufficiently told, compared to their counterparts in Manchuria. *Japan Marches South* helps us think critically about the persistent

[5]Census Office of the Philippine Islands (1921), 353; Commonwealth of the Philippines Commission of the Census (1941), 428.

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colonial trope rooted in the GEACPS ideology – the narrative that Japan "liberated" Asia, and even the postwar trajectories of Japan.

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