

Conclusion

Rethinking Migration and Settler Colonialism in the Modern World

The Nexus between Emigration and Colonial Expansion

In February 1977, Umesao Tadao, then the director-general of Japan's National Museum of Ethnology and one of the most highly regarded anthropologists in Japan, arrived in São Paulo. Umesao had come to assist the local Japanese communities in their efforts to establish a museum of Japanese immigration. Inspired by the Historical Museum of Hokkaido (Hokkaido Kaitaku Kinenkan) in Sapporo,¹ the Historical Museum of Japanese Immigration in Brazil (Museu Histórico da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil) was unveiled in 1978 in São Paulo as an important part of the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of Japanese immigration to Brazil.

Under Umesao's guidance, the museum presented the history of Japanese Brazilian migration as a story of dazzling success. It recorded the achievements of Japanese immigrants in frontier exploration, agricultural innovation, and ethnic integration in Brazil. It also detailed Japanese contributions to Brazil's economic, social, and cultural development during different periods in general.² As Umesao put it, the triumph of Japanese Brazilians was a chapter of the glorious history of Japanese global migration. He acknowledged that the Japanese government, in the past, had to send its subjects overseas due to population pressures at home. However, as Japanese emigrants had made great contributions to their host societies, this development was undoubtedly a mutually beneficial one.³ According to him, by settling in North and South

¹ The Historical Museum of Hokkaido (Hokkaido Kaitaku Kinenkan) was opened in 1971 to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of the Japanese colonization of Hokkaido. It was renamed Hokkaido Museum (Hokkaido Hakubutsukan) in 2015. Historical Museum of Hokkaido, *Museum Survey and Guide* (Sapporo: Historical Museum of Hokkaido, 2014), 1.

Umesao was invited by Japanese Brazilian scholar Saitō Hiroshi to assist the establishment of a museum for Japanese immigration in Brazil. Saitō was impressed by the exhibitions at the Historical Museum of Hokkaido during a visit and wanted to create a similar one to record the history of Japanese migration to Brazil. Saitō Hiroshi, *Burajiru to Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1984), 115–119.

² Saitō, *Burajiru to Nihonjin*, 121.

³ Umesao Tadao, "Nihonjin to Shinsekai," *JICA Yokohama Kaigai Ijū Shiryōkan Kenkyū Kiyō*, no. 1 (2006): 4.

America the Japanese migrants “have joined the New World” (*Shinsekai ni sankasu*). On the other hand, Umesao dismissed Japan’s colonial migration within Asia as a miserable but abrupt episode and excluded it from his splendid narrative of integration and development.⁴

In reality, however, the experiences of Japanese migration in Asia and in Hawai‘i and North and South America were inseparable. This book has demonstrated the nexus between Japanese migration – both inside and outside of the empire’s sphere of influence in Asia – and the multidimensional continuities in Japanese migration before and after 1945. I have examined these connections and continuities at four different but interlocked analytical loci. The first locus of analysis is the history of Malthusian expansionism in Japan throughout the modern era. I have focused on the central role that the Malthusian discourse played during Japan’s migration-driven expansion in Asia, Hawai‘i, and the Americas from the beginning of the Meiji era to two decades after World War II. The evolution of Malthusian expansionism in Japan can be divided into four stages: emergence, transformation, culmination, and resurgence. During each and all of these four stages, I hold Japanese expansionists of different generations accountable for inventing, disseminating, and manipulating the anxiety of overpopulation to advance expansionist agendas and legitimize emigration campaigns. These individuals presented overpopulation as the fundamental cause of whatever social tension was plaguing the Japanese archipelago at the time; they further propagated the belief that to relocate the “surplus” people overseas would not only rescue the archipelago from a Malthusian catastrophe but also turn these elements of discord into valuable subjects who would expand the nation and empire. As their blueprints of expansion transcended the territorial boundaries of the Japanese empire, Malthusian expansionism left deep imprints in almost every major locale of Japanese emigration around the Pacific Rim – from Hokkaido to California, from Hawai‘i to Micronesia, from Texas to São Paulo, and from Manchuria to the Amazon River Basin.

The second locus of analysis is the human connections and institutional continuities between Japanese emigration campaigns in different time periods. The life trajectories of individual Malthusian expansionists such as Tsuda Sen, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Enomoto Takeaki, Katayama Sen, Saibara Seitō, Nagata Shigeshi, Ishiguro Tadaatsu, Sugino Tadao, and their associates all challenge the seemingly natural impermeability of temporal and territorial boundaries of the Japanese empire. Moreover, I have discussed a number of organizations that played leading roles in promoting migration-drive expansion in different

⁴ Nihon Gaimushō Kokusai Kyōryoku Jigyōdan, *Kaigai Ijū no Igi o Motomete: Burajiru Ijū 70-Shūnen Kinen: Nihonjin no Kaigai Ijū ni Kansuru Shinpojumu* (Tokyo: Nihon Gaimushō, 1979), 20.

spaces and time periods, such as the Colonial Association, the Emigration Association, and the Japanese Striving Society. My analysis of the campaigns planned and carried out by these organizations uncovers the consistent trans-Pacific flows and connections of Japanese migration around the Pacific Rim from early Meiji to the postwar era. The role that the imperial government played in its control and management of migration-related affairs also demonstrated continuities between different waves of emigration. The state's institutional expansion culminated in the formation of "the migration state" in the late 1920s. First aimed at encouraging the rural poor to migrate to Brazil, the same set of state machinery later took the lead in orchestrating the empire's mass migration to the Asian continent from late 1930s to 1945. Though briefly suppressed during the period of the US occupation, the same institutions – indeed, often the same people – would once again steer Japanese migration to South America in the postwar years.

This book's third locus of analysis is the ideological interaction between Japanese migration campaigns on both sides of the Pacific. I have explained how Japanese exclusion in the Americas had formed and transformed Japanese colonial expansion in Asia. Japanese exclusion in the United States not only precipitated Japanese expansion in Asia and other areas across the Pacific but also spurred the Japanese expansionists to invent the idea of coexistence and coprosperity. As a new principle of Japanese settler colonialism, this idea attacked the hypocrisy of white racism and Anglo-American imperialism while highlighting the supposed benevolence of Japan's own expansion. What's more, the closing off of the white men's world reconfigured the pattern of Japanese migration itself. Amid their bitter struggles against anti-Japanese sentiments in North America, Japanese Malthusian expansionists gradually reached an agreement that placed the acquisition of land and permanent settlement at the top and center of their migration agendas. Drawing from the lesson of Japanese exclusion in the United States, they concluded that *dekasegi*, the migration of temporary laborers who stayed overseas for only a short period, was an ill-conceived venture. Instead, they came to see those who would acquire and farm foreign land as ideal migration candidates: agricultural settlement would secure long-term land ownership, and it could also effectively extract wealth from the land for the empire.⁵ The ideas of farmer-centered Japanese settler colonialism were first experimented with in Texas in the first few years of the twentieth century and were soon applied in a few state-led colonial migration projects in Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula. Japanese agricultural settler colonialism reached its maturity in Brazil and Manchuria between the 1920s and 1945. During this period, to foster agricultural

⁵ For a general analysis of the role of agriculture in settler colonialism, see Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 395.

settlement overseas family migration became a norm, of which the migration of women was an essential component. Japanese expansionists expected female migrants were expected to assist their male counterparts by performing household duties and rearing the next generation of empire builders; moreover, they were tasked with representing a civilized empire and showcasing their feminine morality to the unenlightened others.

This paradigm change of migration was captured by the gradual shift of the written form of the Japanese word for colonial migration from 殖民 to 植民. Both were invented by Japanese intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century as the character forms of *shokumin*, the Japanese translation of the imported term “colonial migration.” The fact that 殖民 was much more commonly used in print throughout the Meiji era was a clear indicator of how colonial migration was understood at the time: an action to increase manpower for the empire. However, 植民, a combination of 植 (meaning “to plant”) and 民 (meaning “people”), gained increasing popularity during the 1900s and had become the dominant written form of *shokumin* by the 1910s.⁶ The shift from 殖民 to 植民 in the writings of Japanese intellectuals took place at the exact same time when Japanese laborer migration in the United States was met with increasing hostility. As Sakiyama Hisae, the president of the School of Overseas Colonial Migration (Kaigai Shokumin Gakkō), explained in 1928, 植民 was the more appropriate term because much like how the planting of trees and grass called for careful location selection and cultivation, emigration, too, should be a long-term project, in which the emigrants should put down their roots overseas, build robust families and communities, and plan for further development.⁷

The fourth locus of my analysis is the intellectual conflation between migration and expansion in modern Japanese history. Japan’s rise as a modern nation and empire took place in the dual context of territorial expansion and demographic expansion of the European powers in the modern era. Emigration was both a means and a result of Japan’s participation in the global expansion of modern imperialism and capitalism. In the imaginations of Japan’s leaders, the Japanese were a superior and civilized people, on par with the British and Americans who owned the most powerful empires, because the Japanese enjoyed a rate of population growth similar to the latter. For the same reason, they believed that Japan deserved the same right to export its surplus people out

⁶ As early as 1906, Tōgō Minoru’s book *Nihon Shokumin Ron* had already used the form 植民 in its title. See Tōgō, *Nihon Shokumin Ron*; Nagata, “Shokumin Oyobi Shokumichi no Jigi,” 123–127. Nitobe Inazō made it clear in 1916 that while 殖民 meant reproducing or increasing people, 植民 indicated planting people. See Nitobe, *Nitobe Hakushi Shokumin Seisaku Kōgi Oyobi Ronbunshū*, 41. As Yanaihara mentioned in the preface, this book is a collection of his note on Nitobe’s seminars on colonial studies between 1916 and 1917. So we can assume that Nitobe made this statement then.

⁷ Sakiyama Hisae, “Shoku to Iu Ji o Kokoro Toshite,” *Shokumin* 7, no. 2 (February 1928): 69–70.

of the overcrowded archipelago and claim rich and empty land overseas like its Western counterparts had done. Emigration, one of the central means of the United Kingdom and the United States to build their global empires, was thus never far away from expansion in the lexicon of the educated Japanese. Therefore, not only did the recent migration-driven expansion of the Western empires serve as a compelling example for Japan's project of empire building, the Western settler nations and colonies also became destinations of Japan's own expansionist migration. Subscribing to the Lockean definition of land ownership, Japanese Malthusian expansionists believed that the Japanese settlers deserved the right to the lands of the Americas, Hawai'i, and the South Pacific due to the low population density of the white population there. The Japanese could cooperate or compete with Western settlers to enlighten and replenish these lands while the Japanese empire was carving out its territorial Lebensraum by wrestling with Western colonialism in Asia.

Remembering Japanese Emigration in World History: Divergence and Convergence

This intellectual conflation between migration and settler colonialism provided the logical foundation for Umesao Tadao's historical narrative of Japanese overseas migration. Aside from those involved in the unfortunate episode on the Asian continent, Umesao argued, all Japanese migrants were bound for the "New World," like the Americas and Australia. In these global frontiers, Japanese migrants achieved glorious success by joining hands with European settlers to create a new and multicultural civilization for the entire mankind.⁸ Under this mind-set, Umesao supervised the construction of Japan Overseas Migration Museum (Kaigai Ijū Shiryōkan) in Yokohama and designed its permanent exhibition.⁹ With the theme of "We Have Joined the New World" (Warera Shinsekai ni Sankasu), this exhibition narrates a glorious saga of Japanese emigrants' struggles against racism and xenophobia and enumerates their contributions to the frontier explorations of various host countries across the Pacific. Though titled "The History of Overseas Migration" (Kaigai Ijū no Rekishi), the exhibition includes only the experiences of Japanese migration in Hawai'i and the Americas. The entire history of Japanese colonial migration in Asia, where most of the Japanese overseas had settled, is missing.¹⁰

Umesao's ideas and museum designs demonstrate the paradoxical logic upon which the history and memory of Japanese overseas migration had been

⁸ Nihon Gaimushō Kokusai Kyōryoku Jigyōdan, *Kaigai Ijū no Igi o Motomete*, 22.

⁹ Umesao, "Nihonjin to Shinsekai," 1.

¹⁰ Detailed information about the exhibition can be found in Kaigai Ijū Shiryōkan, *Kaigai Ijū Shiryōkan Tenji Annai: Warera Shinsekai ni Sankasu* (Yokohama: Dokuritsu Gyōsei Hōjin Kokusai Kyōryoku Kikō Yokohama Sentā, 2004).



Figure C.1 Display board at the entrance to the exhibition “We Have Joined the New World” at the Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama. The board states in Japanese, English, Portuguese, and Spanish that the exhibition is “dedicated to those Japanese who have taken part in molding new civilizations in the Americas.” This photograph was taken by Tian Huang at the Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, Japan, November 1, 2018.

constructed during the Cold War era. After the nation quickly reemerged as a Western Bloc power, the history and memory of overseas emigration in postwar Japan have been generally marked by two seemingly contradictory paradigms of narrative, namely the separation between Japanese settler colonialism in Asia and Japanese emigration beyond the empire on the one hand and the integration of Japanese emigration to the Americas and Hawai'i into the triumph of Western settler colonialism on the other.

First, the experience of Japan's colonial migration in Asia (*shokumin shi*), as a part of the disgraceful but also disposable past of the Japanese empire, has been clinically removed from the epic of Japanese overseas migration (*imin shi*) – a battle hymn of industrious Japanese migrants who successfully overcame racial and cultural biases in their host societies. Second, the history of Japanese migration to the Western settler nations and colonies has been incorporated into the colonial narrative of European expansion around the world. The Japanese migrants, as the narrative goes, came to join the European settlers in their mission of spreading civilization to the unenlightened lands.

As one of the most highly cited anthropologists and most influential thinkers in postwar Japan, Umesao Tadao also integrated his account of Japanese migration history into his ecological theory of world history that placed Japan and Western Europe at the top of a global hierarchy of civilizations. Umesao famously argued that due to similarities in their ecological environments, Western European and Japanese civilizations had developed in a similar manner and at a comparable pace. Their shared ecological features also made these two civilizations the most superior and progressive in world history. In contrast, common ecological features shared by societies in Asian continent, including those of India, China, the Islamic world, and Russia, meant that their civilizations were doomed to decline.¹¹

Fukuzawa Yukichi's thesis of de-Asianization (*datsuaron*) which urged Japan to embrace the West and leave Asia behind, Umesao argued, was only partially correct. Because, for Umesao, Japan had never been associated with Asia in the first place.¹² Just as Fukuzawa's thesis of de-Asianization mirrored Japan's acceptance of New Imperialism during the late nineteenth century, Umesao's ecological theory of civilizations was clearly influenced by the Cold War. It offered historical and even scientific legitimacy for postwar Japan's embrace of the Western Bloc and the colonial narrative of world history associated with it.

As Umesao saw it, the very nature of migration was for the migrants to partake in molding new civilizations: Japanese migrants in the "New World," like the European colonial settlers who came before them, were neither guests (*okyaku san*) nor invaders (*shinnyūsha*). Instead, they were participants

¹¹ Umesao, "Nihonjin to Shinsekai," 10. ¹² Ibid., 12.



Figure C.2 A section of the exhibition “We Have Joined the New World” is titled “Toil in the Soil.” Demonstrating the farming tools the Japanese migrant farmers used in the Americas, it praises the contributions that Japanese migrants made to the land exploration and agricultural development of the host societies through diligence and integrity. This photograph was taken by Tian Huang at the Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, Japan, November 1, 2018.

(*sankasha*) who contributed to the making of new civilizations.¹³ The equalization between the Japanese and European races in the “New World” was further strengthened by Umesao’s differentiation between the Japanese and other East Asian ethnic groups. The Koreans and Chinese, he argued, were not qualified to be migrants (*imin*); due to their lack of interest in farming, they were merely “floaters” (*ryūmin*) with no commitment to their host societies. The Japanese, instead, were willing to put down their roots in the new lands by taking up farming.¹⁴

The “New World,” Umesao further argued, was the future of mankind. The “Old World,” one composed of nation-states, was destined to decline and be replaced by the multicultural “New World,” established on the principle of

¹³ Nihon Gaimushō Kokusai Kyōryoku Jigyōdan, *Kaigai Ijū no Igi o Motomete*, 22.

¹⁴ Umesao Tadao, “Shin Sekai e no Sanka: Nikei Imin Shūdan no Sekaishi Teki Imi,” *Kasumigaseki Fōramu*, no. 1 (June 1977), republished in Umesao Tadao, *Umesao Tadao Chosakushū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1993), 260.

coexistence and coprosperity that transcended racial and national boundaries.¹⁵ As such, he interpreted the long history of European settler colonialism in the Americas as a cosmopolitan saga about the creation of a bright future for all human beings and highlighted Japanese migration as one of its critical components. In this splendid narrative, Umesao conveniently edited out the presence of the indigenous peoples in the Americas, people who had lived in this “New World” long before the “Old World” came into being. Needless to say, their tragic experiences of being deprived of livelihood, properties, and ancestral lands were also absent from Umesao’s narrative.

Migration as Settler Colonialism: Thinking with the Indigenous Perspective

Umesao Tadao’s description of Japanese overseas migration as contributing to the creation of a cosmopolitan “New World” may find its unexpected counterpart in the field of Asian American studies in the United States. Scholarship in Asian American studies has made great achievements in highlighting the contributions Asian immigrants have made to US society and explaining how Asian immigration has turned the United States into a more culturally and ethnically diverse nation. Together these studies have directly challenged the anti-Asian racism that has undergirded institutionalized discrimination, exclusion, and violence toward Asian immigrant communities throughout American history. However, as Candace Fujikane observes from the perspective of Hawai’ian history, this Asian-immigrant-centered narrative runs the risk of sabotaging the continued struggles of the indigenous peoples of Hawai’i to reclaim their ancestral lands. Inadvertently or not, writing the history of Hawai’i as one that begins with its colonization and ends with the creation of a multicultural society serves to cover up settler colonial violence with a veil of democracy. It masks “the realities of a settler colony that continues to deny indigenous peoples their rights to their lands and resources.”¹⁶ As such, Patrick Wolfe cautions, contemporary “antiracist” scholarship in Asian American history may inadvertently further empower the structure of settler colonialism disguised by multiculturalism and democracy.¹⁷

The critique of the “antiracist” narrative in Asian American history from the perspective of indigenous peoples also reveals the blurriness in the conceptual boundaries between migration and settler colonialism. To be sure, the history of migration is a complicated one. Not all experiences of migration in the modern

¹⁵ Umesao, “Nihonjin to Shinsekai,” 13.

¹⁶ Candace Fujikane, “Introduction: Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawai’i,” in Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 3.

¹⁷ Patrick Wolfe, ed., *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 2016), 15.

time should be understood through the lens of colonialism. Migration itself by no means equates to colonialism either. Yet, writing in the context of the Hawai‘ian history, Dean Itsuji Saranillio argues that by moving into a territory governed by a settler colonial state, the immigrants may bolster the existing power system. It is particularly so when immigrants seek empowerment by participating in the existing sociopolitical structure.¹⁸ From a similar perspective, Shu-mei Shih has questioned the value of “diaspora” as an analytical framework to understand the history of Chinese migration to Southeast Asia. The term “diaspora,” Shih argues, masks the colonial nature of Chinese settlements there in the past, as some Han Chinese migrants had established independent regimes in indigenous lands even before European colonizers arrived. Later on, many Han Chinese were also hired by European settlers to collect taxes and manage plantations. They played the role of what Shih describes as “middlemen settler colonialism.”¹⁹

As this book has explained, Japanese Malthusian expansionists saw Japanese migrants in the United States, both laborers on the West Coast and rice farmers in Texas, as Japan’s equivalents to the Anglo-American colonial settlers. From their perspective, Japanese immigrants’ struggle for inclusion in the US citizenry was a crucial step for the Japanese to secure membership in the white men’s club. Though this was eventually denied to them by the Immigration Act of 1924, between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, thinkers and doers of Japanese migration to the United States had no intention of challenging the US settler colonial structure itself. Instead, they saw Japanese American immigration as an intrinsic part of the Japanese empire’s participation in the colonial order in the Americas and other parts of the world.

Recent research on the history of Latin America poses another challenge to the discrepancy between the definitions of migration and settler colonialism. In the history of Anglophone settler nations, the taking of indigenous land typically began in the formative period of the settler states – that is, immediately after the landing of the colonial settlers. However, Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in the Americas first began by exploiting the native peoples’ labor and wealth rather than dispossessing them of their lands. In southern Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, large-scale immigration and appropriation of indigenous land did not take place until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, long after the independence of the settler states themselves. The conventional periodization in the history of Anglophone settler nations, that of a period of colonial settlers followed by a period of immigrants, is thus incompatible in the case of Latin America.²⁰

¹⁸ Saranillio, “Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters,” 287.

¹⁹ Shih, “Theory, Asia and the Sinophone,” 478.

²⁰ Michael Goebel, “Settler Colonialism in Postcolonial Latin America,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (London: Routledge, 2017), 139–140, 147.

The growth of Japanese migration to Brazil in the early twentieth century, discussed in this book, was part of a large-scale immigration wave in the Southern Cone. Japanese agricultural settlement in Brazil, which grew substantially during the 1920s and 1930s, was both a part and a result of the Brazilian government's appropriation of indigenous land. Moreover, this book has further demonstrated the nexus between Japanese migration in Brazil and Japanese settler colonialism in Asia. The Japanese expansionists' promotion of farmer migration to the state of São Paulo was intellectually tied with various colonial migration initiatives to the Korean Peninsula, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. The community of *Aliança*, established by the Shinano Overseas Association in the 1920s, became a prototype for the imperial government's mass migration and settlement campaigns in colonial Manchuria during the 1930s.

Settler Colonialism as Migration: Malthusianism and Expansion

This study has presented an account of Japanese expansion that transcends the territorial and temporal boundaries of the Japanese empire, arguing that we cannot fully grasp the history of Japanese expansion in Asia without an understanding of Japanese migration outside of the empire and vice versa. More importantly, it has taken a migration-centered approach in the study of settler colonialism. Instead of exploring the power structure inside the settler colonial space, it has focused on the process of settler migration itself, with both the sending and receiving ends of the migration in consideration. In particular, this book has demonstrated the close link between Malthusianism and settler colonial expansion. It has located Malthusian expansionism at the intellectual core of Japan's migration-driven expansion across the Pacific. This discourse endorsed colonial demands for additional land by both encouraging overpopulation anxiety and stressing the need for population growth. It rationalized emigration both as a panacea for social ills supposedly resulting from overpopulation and as a way of pursuing wealth and power abroad.

The ideas and practices of Japan's ideologues, social reformers, and settler community leaders, the protagonists of this book, should never be conflated with the voices and experiences of the individual Japanese emigrants themselves. Most of the men and women who left the archipelago had lived on the margins of society; emigration was usually their last option to escape destitution. Though Tokyo often hailed them as vanguards of the expanding empire, the emigrants did not automatically share these visions. Those who settled beyond the empire's sphere of influence often fell prey to institutionalized racism, violence, and exclusion. The history of Japanese migration to the United States, for example, contains ample evidence of such tragedies,

including the wartime internment of over 110,000 innocent people of Japanese ancestry.

The empire builders of modern Japan did not invent Malthusian expansionism. Instead, this set of ideas was created by British expansionists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to justify the colonial settlers' appropriation of aboriginal lands in North America. In fact, the emergence of Malthusian expansionism, a powerful discourse that legitimized the acquisition of foreign lands in the language of reason and progress, marked the birth of modern settler colonialism itself. While it was first exemplified by British settler colonialism in North America and then by US westward expansion, Malthusian expansionism was later also adopted by other modern empires to justify their own expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The chorus of Axis powers' demands for "living space" in the early twentieth century was by no means an anomaly in the civilized world. Their intellectual roots can be traced back to the genesis of the modern world itself, when imperial nations in Europe redrew the world map through the lens of Enlightenment.