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Colonies and Countryside in Wartime Japan: Emigration to Manchuria

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By Mori Takemaro

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between rural villages and Japan's colonies during the wartime period, with particular reference to the emigration of Japanese farmers to Manchuria (Manchukuo). My aim is to identify some of the key characteristics of Japanese emigration during this period and to reveal some of the distinctive features of the Manchurian case. I will focus mainly on Yamato Village in Yamagata Prefecture. The prefecture itself ranked second in the nation as a source of emigrants to Manchuria, and with Ohinata Village in Nagano Prefecture and Nango Village in Miyagi Prefecture it was one of the top three villages in all Japan in terms of the total number of emigrants produced.

The Rural Economic Revitalization Campaign

The rural crisis engendered by the Depression in the early 1930s proved an historical turning point for Japan, paving the way for war and fascism. The collapse of farming operations brought about by a sharp increase in the debts owed by farm households threatened to destabilize rural society, and the impoverishment of the countryside figured as a rationale in attempted coups d'état by young officers in the Imperial Japanese Navy and Imperial Japanese Army from the May 15th Incident of 1932 to the February 26th Incident of 1936. To cope with the rural crisis, the government encouraged farmers to commit themselves to what was called the 'Rural Economic Revitalization Campaign,' which promised economic recovery by means of self-help efforts of farmers. Later attempts by the government to promote emigration to Manchuria, in particular the plan announced in 1936 to send one million Japanese farm households there over a twenty-year period, were carried out as part of this campaign.

The Rural Revitalization Campaign was launched in 1932 as a means of dealing with the effects of the depression. The government designated 76 per cent of all towns and villages as revitalization localities, and farmers were urged to reconstruct their villages on the basis of self-help. From late 1938 onward, the campaign shifted from promoting recovery from the depression to increasing food production, functioning thereafter as part of wartime controls over agriculture.

In contrast to rural revitalization, which sought domestic solutions to the crisis of the countryside in the depression years, policies promoting emigration to Manchuria sought to defuse the crisis by exporting one perceived cause of it: the surplus population of Japanese villages.

Official promotion of emigration to Manchuria

Policies promoting emigration to Manchuria began in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident of September 1931 and the subsequent founding of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in March 1932. These policies reflected the military and political needs of running Manchuria as a de facto Japanese colony. Of course, the rural poverty caused by the depression also played a part, so it can be said that emigration to Manchuria linked wartime goals and the plight of the Japanese countryside.

Before further discussion of the case of

Manchuria, it will be helpful to outline the general contours of twentieth-century emigration from Japan. As shown in Figure 8.1, the number of Japanese immigrants resident in such Japanese colonies as Korea, Karafuto (southern Sakhalin), Taiwan and Southern Manchuria (a Japanese leasehold
Figure 8.1 about here
since 1905) began to increase in the years following the Russo—Japanese War. During the 1920s, the increase in Korea was particularly striking, rising from about 300,000 in the late 1910s to almost 600,000 in 1930. During the 1930s, however, the largest increase took place in Manchuria, with the total number of Japanese immigrants resident there surpassing the number in Korea about 1935. In addition, we can also see that the number of Japanese immigrants resident in China Proper escalated from a fairly low level from the mid-1930s, especially after the outbreak of hostilities between China and Japan in 1937. That is to say, it is clear that from about 1930 onward the balance shifted from emigration to Korea, Karafuto and Taiwan to emigration to Manchuria and China Proper, with the number of Japanese resident in Manchuria rising from 200,000 in 1930 to 1,000,000 in 1940. Beyond Japan's colonial empire, the number of Japanese immigrants resident in North America increased until the mid-1920s, but stabilized after passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 in the United States, one of the chief aims of which was to end immigration from Japan. From about that time, an increasing number of Japanese began to emigrate to Central and South America. During the initial four decades of the century, then, there were two main categories of emigration from Japan: that destined for Japan's formal and informal empire and that destined for the Americas. The former consisted of 'colonists' backed by national policy, and the latter consisted of 'economic migrants' who sought to improve their lives and who received relatively little in the way of official encouragement. That Manchuria was the focus of emigration during the 1930s is also clear.

Now, let us move on to a brief overview of emigration to Manchuria. In July 1932, a little more than a month after the May 15th Incident, Captain Tomiya Kaneo, a subordinate to Ishiwara Kanji on the staff of the Kwantung Army, and the agrarianist Kato Kanji, met in Japan and decided that a program of emigration to Manchuria was desirable. Kato (1888—1967) was to play a key role in bringing that program about. After graduating from the Faculty of Agriculture at Tokyo Imperial University he had worked part-time for the Home Ministry and the Imperial Agricultural Association before becoming a teacher in 1913 at the Anjo School of Farming and Forestry, which was directed then by the well-known agrarianist Yamazaki Nobukichi. While there, Kato became a devotee of the 'Ancient Shinto' teachings of Kakei Katsuhiko, which stressed commitment to the emperor and to farming as the essence of the Japanese spirit, and to put these teachings into practice Kato established his own school in Kamiyama, Yamagata Prefecture in 1915. By 1925, he had embarked on the Ogino reclamation project in nearby Shinjo, with support from the War Ministry, as a means of providing plots of land to the non-inheriting second and third sons of farm families in the prefecture. The community of new settlers that resulted from this project would later be used as a model for the subsequent Japanese settlement of Manchuria. Kato had thought the Manchurian Incident provided an excellent opportunity to provide much greater opportunities for Japanese farmers, and with the help of Ishiguro Tadaatsu, then Vice-Minister of Agriculture, he had been able to present his case for a concerted policy of emigration to Manchuria to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs in January 1932. He would organize an Imperial Farmers' Corps of emigrants in as many villages as possible, those corps to be led by local village leaders and mainstay farmers.

The May 15th Incident, in which some civilian agrarianists had also taken part, triggered a

flood of petitions from groups representing farmers to politicians and bureaucrats demanding attention to rural relief, and among the demands put forward by the Local Autonomy Farmers' Conference (Jichi nomin kyogikai) was 50 million yen in state aid for emigration to Manchuria. A much more modest appropriation of 200,000 yen 'to conduct feasibility studies on the farming and other economic opportunities available to those who went to Manchuria" was approved by the Diet in 1932, sitting in an emergency session known as 'the Rural Rescue Diet.' Emigration to Manchuria as a national policy began thereafter.

Among the very first to emigrate, beginning in October 1932, were seventy trainees from Kato Kanji's Japan National Higher Level School in Ibaraki, all of them carrying guns. In May 1936, in the aftermath of the February 26th Incident, the Kwantung Army and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs formulated a proposal 'for the dispatch of one million farm households to Manchuria,' which was approved by the Hirota Cabinet as a twenty-year plan in August 1936. In November, the Hirota Cabinet also approved a plan to send 'volunteer youth corps' to Manchuria (Manmo kaitaku seishonen giyudan). Both plans were to be implemented from 1937. In this way, emigration policy evolved in two phases, the first after the May 15th Incident and the second after the February 26th Incident.

On 11 March 1936, just after the February 26th Incident, Kato Kanji met with Tanaka Nagashige, head of the Economic Revitalization Section within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. It is worth quoting at some length from the record of their conversation:

Kato: On the question of land, there's plenty available [in Manchuria] now at one or two yen per tan. Worrying about what we'd do if the price rises, the way some people do, makes no sense at all. In my opinion, we should just get on with it as quickly as possible. The Chinese and the Koreans don't bother trying to find out who owns the land they want. They just move in and take it over. If we waste time trying to track down owners and agree prices, we'll get left behind. The first group of armed emigrants didn't buy land before they left Japan, they bought it after they arrived. In Manchuria, no one knows who owns which parcels of land. If we Japanese don't get cracking, the Koreans and the Chinese will grab all the land there is.

Tanaka (laughing): It sounds like theft to me.

Kato: The conditions over there are not like those here at home. If you call what I'm talking about 'theft,' then you'd have to be against war, too, because war also involves theft as well as killing.

Tanaka (laughing): You know, you sound like the head of a band of thieves to me.

As the above quotation makes clear, the two men did not agree about emigration to Manchuria. Whereas Kato insisted that the Japanese should acquire land there as quickly as possible and get on with Japanese settlement, Tanaka was highly skeptical. His stance was typical of the prevailing stance among most high-ranking Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry officials, where the entire venture was seen not only as likely to involve 'theft on a grand scale' but also as of dubious benefit to the Japanese settlers themselves on account of the difficulties they would face in operating their farms if and when they got them. In fact, it can be said that it was the military (especially the Kwantung Army) and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs that played the most active role in promoting the emigration project, and that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was more or less carried along in their wake. That said, there were high-ranking officials in the latter ministry such as Ishiguro Tadaatsu and Kodaira Gonichi who did actively support Kato's project in the expectation that the dispatch of settlers abroad would contribute to relief of agrarian distress at home by freeing up land that could be redistributed among the remaining farmers,

enabling them to expand their scale of operations.

Yet the essence of the emigration policy announced in 1936 lay not in the rescue of impoverished farmers, but in military necessity, as the following list of purposes makes clear:

First, the bolstering of national defense. For the military, emigration to Manchuria was seen as 'the most important policy at present for defense of the nation and the realization of national objectives.' More specifically, it was needed: (1) to defend the South Manchurian Railway and areas experiencing raids by anti-Japanese forces; (2) to defend Japan against the Soviet Union, by the settlement of immigrants in northern Manchuria, especially near the border; (3) to insure that the 'Yamato race' would form the core race among the 'five races in harmonious coexistence' in the region ; and (4) to provide for the defense of Manchuria's heavy industries. At the time, given these functions, Japanese emigrants to Manchuria were described as 'human pillboxes' (ningen-tochika).

Second, as a step toward the achievement of autarky. Japanese settlers were needed in Manchuria to provide Japan with feed for livestock and with improved stock breeds, and eventually with such staple foods as rice, wheat, and maize. More immediately, they were needed to guarantee self-sufficiency in food supplies for the rest of the Japanese population in Manchuria and for the Kwantung Army.

Third, as a means of solving the problem of over-population in Japanese villages, which was widely regarded as a major cause of rural poverty, by sending the most marginal farmers – especially those with holdings of 5 tan or less – abroad as settlers (10 tan = 1 cho, or .992 hectares). The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry agreed to support emigration largely for this reason and set about encouraging villages to divide residents into two groups, one of which would emigrate and establish a 'branch village' in Manchuria and the other of which would take over the vacated holdings, thus expanding the scale of their operations and prospering at last.

A fairly simple calculation underlay the target figure of one million emigrant households: at an average of 5 family members per household, that was the number needed to insure that 10 per cent of the population in Manchuria, which was projected to reach fifty million at the end of twenty years, would be Japanese. To achieve that target it would be necessary to get somewhat over half of the 1.86 million households farming less than 5 tan as of the mid-1930s to emigrate over the next two decades. Of the 5.5 million farm households in Japan at the time, roughly 20 per cent were to emigrate.

In the eight years between 1937 and Japan's defeat in 1945, however, the total number of emigrants to Manchuria was only 320,000, and at that rate, the goal of 5 million in twenty years' time would never have been achieved. In that respect, the policy of Manchurian emigration was an obvious failure.

Most Japanese emigrants ended up either in northern Manchuria, near the Amur River which marked the border with the Soviet Union, or in Dairen, Changchun and Harbin, near the South Manchurian Railway line. That they were concentrated there, rather than in the rural hinterland of southern Manchuria where it was possible to grow rice, shows that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's concern with the economic opportunities available to migrating farmers were subordinated to the strategic concerns of the army. Granted, there were great stretches of unexploited land in the plains of northern Manchuria, but as in Manchuria as a whole, virtually all of the land that was suitable for agriculture had already been occupied by Chinese, Manchurian or Korean farmers. The Public Corporation for the Development of Manchuria (Manshu kaitaku kosha) was able to get those farmers to sell their holdings at very low prices and pass them on to Japanese settlers only because the Kwantung Army stood behind it, willing to apply force as and when

necessary. In other words, the policy of emigration to Manchuria was indeed founded on pillage, or 'theft on a grand scale.'

Emigration to Manchuria and Rural Japan

Let us look at the distribution of emigrants by prefecture. Nagano Prefecture produced the largest number of emigrants. Yamagata Prefecture came a distant second, and Kumamoto Prefecture ranked third. Next came Fukushima, Niigata and Miyagi Prefectures. Overall, emigrants came primarily from the sericultural regions of central Japan, as exemplified by Nagano, and from the Tohoku region. To a degree, this reflected the fact that farmers in those regions had been hardest hit by the depression.

Ibaraki Prefecture, where Kanji Kato lived and a center of radical agrarianism during the depression era, came only thirty-third. Most of those who did emigrate came from the northern portion of the prefecture, where dry field farming prevailed and where agrarianism was particularly popular. But there was little interest either in agrarianism or in emigration in the southern, rice-producing portion of the prefecture. That there were unusually extensive tracts of forest on fairly level land stretching from the western part of the prefecture to the southern, providing opportunities to bring new land under cultivation at home, no doubt helps to explain the lack of interest in Manchuria.

To some degree, then, the geographical distribution of emigrants reflected local economic conditions, but there were other important factors as well, ranging from personal ties and a local tradition of emigration to the presence of local leaders promoting emigration. The latter was of particular importance. It was usually the case that those who mobilized the poor farmers and landless agricultural workers in their villages into emigrant groups were the very mainstay farmers and, in some cases, the village leaders who had previously led local rural revitalization efforts. Indeed, it was central to the whole emigration project that local mainstays persuade others in their communities to emigrate.

In Yamagata Prefecture the following six categories of people were listed as eligible to apply for emigration: (1) those who can command the respect of others and function in the future as the leaders of emigrant communities; (2) those with useful non-agricultural skills; (3) those with no land at all or insufficient land holdings; (4) those with a firm commitment to simplicity and honesty; (5) those who have engaged in agriculture for many years; and (6) those who are diligent and frugal.

The first category very clearly meant village mainstays. The 'useful skills' in the second category included plasterer, carpenter, blacksmith, and car driver, combined with some farming experience. All the other categories applied primarily to poor farmers of one sort or another, from landless agricultural workers to tenant farmers with tiny holdings.

No educational qualifications were imposed. Although applicants up to thirty years of age who had passed the physical examination for conscription were preferred, anyone up to the age of forty who was capable of physical labor was eligible. Even if married, applicants had to be willing to emigrate on their own and leave their families behind for at least one year; not need to send money back to their families; and be able to provide 30 yen toward the cost of getting to their destination and 20 to 30 yen for their expenses for a year. Most applicants were the fairly young second and third sons of farm families, who had no obligation to send money home.

Each successful applicant in 1937 was given a grant of 1,000 yen and 10 cho of land in Manchuria, consisting of 1 cho of paddy land, 3 cho of dry fields and the rest in a portion of communal pasture land. No payments for the land were required for five years, and then the cultivator would have ten years to pay the amount due.

Consider the socio-economic status of twenty residents who emigrated to Manchuria from

Yamato Village in the Shonai district of Yamagata Prefecture in 1941. Thirteen of the twenty were agricultural workers either on a daily or annual basis. Four of the thirteen also engaged in farming, probably as tenants. There was one carpenter, one factory worker and one rope maker, men who possessed some of the sought-after useful skills. All but one of the emigrants were married, not a few of them having large families with 6 to 9 members. Their average age was thirty-seven.

Among those who emigrated from Yamato Village were three men who were members of the Imperial Farmers' Corps, two of them farmers with land holdings (at over 2 cho and 8.5 tan, respectively) that were considerably larger than the holdings of others in the group. These were clearly village mainstays, who fulfilled the criteria of 'commanding the respect of others and functioning in the future as leaders of the emigrant village.' Thus, this group of emigrants was stratified into a few mainstay leaders on the one hand, and a larger number of poor farmers and agricultural workers, on the other. The latter, and the three men with useful non-agricultural skills, were probably the second and third sons of local farm households, who saw emigration to Manchuria as their only chance to establish themselves as landowning farmers.

Let us now turn our attention to one of the local mainstay farmers who played a crucial role in leading a group of emigrants from Yamato in 1943, Togashi Naotaro. Togashi was born in 1902. After graduating from upper elementary school and completing a middle-school correspondence course, he had spent some time in Tokyo. The eldest son in his family, he then returned home to succeed his father as family head. After becoming active in the administration of the local youth association, at the age of 25 he had attended some of Kato Kanji's lectures in Kamiyama and was persuaded that the opening up of new farm land at home and abroad was a means of solving the problems facing the non-inheriting sons of farm families.

His own family had been owner-cultivators of 2 cho of land, but his father had been forced to mortgage the entire holding when a coal mining venture in Karafuto he had borrowed money to invest in had failed during the depression. Faced with a great burden of debt, Togashi eagerly committed himself to rural revitalization and played an active role in organizing an industrial cooperative in his village. Then, by dint of improvements to his farm management and hard work, he was finally able to repay his creditors and regain title to the family landholding. In addition, he rented 2.5 cho, thus becoming an owner-tenant cultivating 4.5 cho in all.

Sometime in the 1930s he had organized the Yamato Village Imperial Farmers' Corps and become a champion of emigration to Manchuria as a means of solving the problem of rural over-population and the bleak prospects of non-inheriting sons. In 1943 he won over potential emigrants with the promise that each of them would become the owner-cultivator of 10 cho of land, obtained the necessary land from the Koreans who were cultivating it with the help of the Manchurian Development Corporation, and set off for Manchuria. In 1945, after the Soviet Union had entered the war and Japan had surrendered, local Manchurians attacked the settlement Togashi had established, killing forty villagers. He tried to lead the remaining emigrants back to Japan, but they were captured by Red Army troops and imprisoned in Siberia for one year and a half .

Back in the late 1930s Togashi wrote the following about the 'branch village movement' he led.

(a) The branch village movement is of fundamental importance to rural
regeneration, but village elders raise all sorts of objections to it. That's because they
are trapped in conventional ways of thinking and contented with the status quo.
They have no interest in building a new Japan. I feel that friction between people
like them who think only of themselves and people with new ways of thinking is

inevitable. After years of toil, I finally got our household finances straightened out,
and then I got involved in this movement. Since then I've had no time at all for
farming …But then, no one determined to build an ideal society can expect an easy
time of it.
(b) 'Emigration' is not the movement of impoverished people to another place.
Rather, it should be seen as a quest for independence, undertaken by comrades who understand the true importance of agriculture and who have awakened to the
Japanese spirit. That's how I regard emigration by farmers. Those who dismiss
agriculture, now that it has been devastated by the money economy, and who think
that the only work worth having is that of an employee on monthly salary are
mistaken, very mistaken indeed.
(c) Japanese history is actually the history of emigration. Both the Eastern
Expedition by Emperor Jimmu and the conquest of the Kumaso tribe in Kyushu by
Prince Yamato-takeru were products of a genuine, unceasing effort. It is the same
today with the many soldiers who leave their villages to cheering throngs and
waving flags to attend to the sacred task of driving the Russians out of Asia…. The
Hotoku movement founded by the revered Ninomiya [Sontoku] and the
colonization movement championed by Kato-sensei, leader of the Imperial
Farmers' Corps, share the same essence…. Villages today are filled to overflowing
with people, but finally there is a solution at hand to the wretchedness of residents'
lives and livelihoods….Aren't we brave men who don't worry about whether we
live or die? Wouldn't we like to lay the foundations for later settlements all the way
to the Urals?

It was in the above terms that one mainstay farmer, Togashi Naotaro, made the case for emigration to Manchuria. In (a) he emphasized that the branch village campaign had been opposed by 'village elders,' chiefly landlords we can assume, and represented a struggle to break free from the status quo and create an ideal society. Here we observe that so strong was his ideological commitment that he was even prepared to put his position as a middling farmer in jeopardy by neglecting his own fields. In (b) he professed his commitment to the central beliefs of agrarianism by means of a critique of the money economy and of urban salaried employees, confirming the importance of agriculture as a way of life and the importance of Japanese spirit. In (c) he made a case for emigration, in the process legitimizing his own actions. By citing examples of military expeditions since ancient (even mythological) times, he sought to present contemporary expansion onto the continent as an equally sacred project, in that the creation of a branch village would rescue all of those who had been impoverished emotionally and economically by the depression. Moreover, the expansion of the Yamato people he envisaged would eventually extend beyond Manchuria to reach as far as the Urals. The three elements of emperor-centered history, rescue of the countryside and emigration were thus combined in his thinking.

Although inspired by Kato Kanji, Togashi's ideas about emigration were also shaped by the dire straits of the countryside in the aftermath of the depression. Readers today will no doubt be struck by his ethnocentrism and enthusiastic support for the invasion of foreign lands, but it should also be noted that in the rural Japan of the time his ideas were considered revolutionary in that they, like the even grander schemes for a 'Showa Restoration' propounded by young military officers in the 1930s, sought to destroy the status quo. He regarded the acquisition of foreign territory not as an end in itself, but as a means of relieving rural poverty at home.

As the example of Togashi demonstrates, the promotion of emigration to Manchuria depended heavily on the leadership of mainstay farmers and the recruitment efforts of the local Imperial Farmers' Corps to persuade second

and third sons to sign up for emigration. It appears that in the Tohoku region, emigration was further encouraged by some lineage groups and hamlets pressing for volunteers to emigrate for the greater good of all concerned.

The next matter to consider is the response of local landlords to Togashi's campaign. In Yamato Village, a few large landlords had long dominated village affairs, and they proved themselves decidedly cool to both rural revitalization and emigration to Manchuria. In fact, their stance toward the latter was hostile, leading Togashi to conclude that the only way forward against the opposition of 'village elders' who defended the status quo was to seek the radical reform of village politics. Large landlords objected to emigration primarily because fewer tenant farmers would reduce demand for their land, leading first to a decline in the rents they could charge and eventually to a decline in the value of their holdings. Some smaller cultivating landlords also objected to emigration on the grounds that it would reduce the plentiful supply of local labor, forcing them to pay higher wages to those they employed to work their fields.

The stance of the established local elite in Yamato does not appear to have been at all atypical. A survey was conducted in villages in four districts of Ibaraki Prefecture in September 1936, in which residents who held various administrative posts within their communities were asked their views on emigration to Manchuria. Even though this survey took place at a time when emigration was official national policy and explicit opposition to that policy was difficult, more than 37 per cent of those polled said they saw 'no need' for such emigration. Moreover, the largest groups among those so responding were heads of local branches of the Imperial Agricultural Association (59 per cent), agricultural technicians (51 per cent), heads of local branches of the Military Reservists' Association (41 per cent) and village mayors (40 per cent). As most leadership posts in branches of the Imperial Agricultural Association were occupied by landlords at this time, and as most village mayors were landlords, it is apparent that landlords tended not to favor emigration.

Those expressing views in favor of emigration may be divided into two groups, 40 per cent expressing what can be described as positive endorsement (either 'very necessary,' 'necessary' or 'fairly necessary') and 23 per cent who might best be described as marginally or passively in favor (10 per cent 'somewhat necessary'; 7 per cent 'necessary in the future'; 3 per cent 'necessary in view of national policy'; and 3 per cent 'logically necessary.') The highest percentages recorded among those who regarded emigration as 'very necessary' were teachers in youth schools (at 28 per cent), principals of primary schools (at 20 per cent) and leaders of local military reservists branches (also at 20 per cent). That suggests that it was primarily the educators within villages who promoted emigration, along with at least some with close ties to the military.

Among the reasons cited in the same report why farmers in general were opposed to emigration were uncertainty about the conditions on offer, fear of Manchuria itself, the availability of land for reclamation within Japan, the peace and stability of their own villages, love for the homeland, parental objections, and the desire to find work in Japanese cities.

To sum up, it is clear that mainstay farmers with strong ideological convictions played a crucial role in mobilizing a fairly modest number of farmers to emigrate to Manchuria. It was very definitely not a program led by landlords as a means of defusing tension between themselves and their tenants, as some have argued (for example, Asada 1976), nor was it a venture to which poor farmers flocked in droves, eager to get their hands on 10 cho of land, as others have argued. On the contrary, poor farmers needed considerable persuasion to overcome their reluctance to sign on as emigrants.

Moreover, from the start of the Sino-Japanese

War in 1937 and the boom in war-related industries that it triggered, there were plenty of opportunities for non-agricultural employment again, and poor farmers had the more attractive option of migrating to Japanese cities. That Nagano Prefecture continued to provide emigrants in significant numbers thereafter was in part because of the strength of agrarian thought within the prefecture and the activism of local mainstay farmers, and in part because of the continued economic distress caused by the collapse of sericulture in mountainous districts where arable land, and hence, alternatives to sericulture, was scarce. Even then, it took the efforts of mainstay farmers and the urgings of such village leaders as elementary school teachers, youth school teachers and heads of military reservist branches to channel the desire of poor farmers for more land into a decision to emigrate to Manchuria.

Roughly comparable circumstances prevailed in Yamagata Prefecture. On the one hand, many of the mainstay farmers in that prefecture, whether owner-cultivators or owner-tenants, saw the emigration of their poorer neighbors as a source of additional land for themselves, an important consideration in a region where the harsh winter climate permitted only one crop of rice per year, and actively supported the 'branch village' movement to achieve that outcome. On the other hand, there were far fewer factories of any sort in the prefecture or anywhere along the Japan Sea side of the country, whether war-related or not, than was the case on the other side of the country, facing the Pacific, and so there were relatively few opportunities for poor farmers and non-inheriting sons to find non-agricultural employment. As a result, the over-population of villages remained a problem, and campaigners such as Togashi Naotaro were able to gain recruits for emigration.

Conclusion

Emigration to Manchuria was focused on agriculture, poor farmers were its major targets, and at every step it was controlled by the Japanese military. It was also conceived on a truly grand scale, as a 'national project' requiring the movement of one million farm households, almost one-fifth of all the farm households in Japan. As we have seen, recruitment proved difficult and by the time of Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945 only 320,000 individuals had emigrated. Those who remained in Manchuria at that time would pay a heavy price indeed for having seized the chance of owning 10 cho of land. The troops of the Kwantung Army rapidly retreated when the Soviet Red Army crossed the Manchurian border on 9 August, leaving the settlers behind to face reprisal attacks by the local population. Roughly one-third of them lost their lives. Many survivors, Togashi Naotaro among them, were captured and interned for a time in Siberia, and it would not be until after the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between Japan and the People's Republic of China in the early 1970s that the children of Japanese emigrants who had been separated from their parents in the confusion of retreat and revenge could be repatriated to Japan. In every respect, Japan's wartime project to promote emigration to Manchuria was a total failure.

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Mori Takemaro, a Professor of Economic Research at Hitotsubashi University Graduate School is researching the social history of twentieth century rural Japan and villages and regional cities in the postwar era. This is a revised and abbreviated version of a chapter that appeared originally in Nishida Yoshiaki and Ann Waswo eds. Farmers and Village Life in Twetntieth Century Japan, published by RoutledgeCurzon in 2003