

# Japanese Intellectual Engagement with Indonesia

— How Japanese perspectives on Indonesia changed before WWII —\*

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“Arise! Ye Sons of Yamato’s Land  
A grand work awaits your hand  
Loathed Satan Plays on your head o’er”  
Shiga Shigetaka

## 1. Introduction

### 1-1. The purpose of this paper

Japanese perspectives on other countries depict the social and economic changes not only within Japan domestically but also internationally. Some might think Japan was ambitiously aiming to dominate Southeast Asia countries from the time Japan became a Westernized nation state. However, the way Japan saw Southeast Asia dramatically changed from the Meiji period to WWII. Indonesia is a good example to show how Japanese expansionistic ideas developed before the war. Although Japan ended up establishing a military presence in Indonesia during WWII, most of Japanese did not see Indonesia as a target to occupy in the Meiji period. This paper will show changes of Japanese society in both domestically and internationally by providing examples of Japanese writings relating to Indonesia from different periods.

### 1-2. The concept of Nanyō

The process of knowing Indonesia started as a byproduct of research which became famous in Japan after the Meiji Restoration. Before observing Japanese involvements in Indonesia, it is necessary to understand the concept of the South Seas or Nanyō (南洋). The concept of what we now recognize as Southeast Asia did not exist until the Cold War. On the other hand, the concept of Nanyō existed from the Edo period. The idea of Nanyō geographically includes the area from India to the

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Pacific islands. Nanyō was the general term for the Pacific region and Southeast Asia with unclear images of mysterious and tropical islands from the isolation period in the Edo period. However, as more and more knowledge about Nanyō was developed, Nanyō specified the uncivilized region of the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Nanyō studies gradually became influential in Japan from 1931 as Japan became deeply involved in China. This research was initially limited to Japanese intellectuals with high social statuses. Japanese military expansion from the Meiji period continuously encouraged Japanese to pay attention to Nanyō. When the idea of Nanyō was connected with Japanese concerns about national defense, Nanyō became an especially popular term for Japanese. As a result of Japanese military presence in Northern China, it became a popular idea that Japan should defend the North and expand in the South. Nanyō was an intellectual term in the Meiji era but it became a common regional concept for Japanese in the Shōwa era.

Several scholars have studied the history of Nanyō and Indonesia. One of the pioneering works was the 1975 “Nanshin no Keifu (南進の系譜 The genealogy of Nanyō)”, by Yano Tōru (矢野暢). This book introduces important Japanese scholars who contributed to Japanese knowledge about the development of Nanyō. Another example is Goto Ken'ichi (後藤乾一), an expert of Indonesian history who has published several books about the history between Japan and Indonesia. For instance, “RETURNING to ASIA” focusses on Japan-Indonesia relations from the 1930s until the war starts.

### 1-3. Periodization

This paper will focus on the development of Japanese knowledge about Southeast Asian countries with the example of Indonesia. The changes in Japanese perceptions about Indonesia can be categorized into 3 parts, chronologically; the Meiji era, the interwar period between WWI and the Japanese establishment of Manchukuo in 1931, and from 1931 to the end of the war. Every period has its idiosyncrasies and key players. The knowledge about Indonesia was influenced by the political and social situation of Japan during each period.

The Meiji period was the first time that the Japanese eyes were opened to overseas, except to China and the Netherlands. These two countries were the only countries allowed to trade with Japan during the isolation policy period. Japanese citizens were permitted to travel abroad after the Meiji Restoration. However, the writers about Indonesia were limited to well-educated and financially independent people. Poor Japanese like Karayuki-san (those who went to overseas as prostitutes) existed from the Meiji era but they didn't write books about themselves or the inhabitants of the places in which they lived. Therefore, Japanese knowledge about Nanyō and Indonesia was established from the perspectives of Japanese elites. Many

written works from this period took the form of travel books, for instance, Shiga Shigetaka's travel book about Nanyō which will be discussed in this paper.

The next period was the time between the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. This period coincided with the beginning of WWI as the Taishō era started in 1912 and WWI started in 1914. This period lasted until the Japanese intervention in China relating to Manchukuo started in the 1930s. This period was almost the entire interwar period for Japanese and no significant conflict took place during this period for Japanese. Compared to the Meiji period, this period had a wider range of key players in Japanese development of knowledge about Indonesia. For example, scholars and adventurers still wrote about Indonesia, but more Japanese writings about Indonesia written by businessmen and new kinds of researchers appeared in this period. In this period, Japanese capital inflow to Indonesia had started as well. It is certain that many Japanese businessmen came to visit Indonesia from the Taishō period.

The last period started from 1931 when Japan became deeply involved in the conflict in China and isolated from the international world. More and more Japanese with connections to Indonesia started demanding Japan establish a strong presence in Indonesia. Furthermore, this time was the first time period in which Japanese recognized "Indonesia". It is noteworthy that some Japanese government officials started considering seriously taking over the Netherlands East Indies with violence from this period.

## 2. Meiji

### 2-1. Intro

Knowledge about Indonesia as a part of Nanyō started appearing among Japanese as a result of a new Japanese outward looking attitude. After more than 250 years of isolation from the world, many scholars from elite families travelled overseas for learning. A stream of leading Japanese scholars visited European and American countries but some scholars also paid attention to Southeast Asia and the Pacific islands. However, scholars in this period did not study about Indonesia specifically. The writings from the Meiji era about Indonesia were part of Nanyō studies. As Japan was a new modernized nation, scholars were interested in how maritime nations like the British Empire expand and maintain their territories and influences.

### 2-2. Shiga Shigetaka (志賀重昂)

The available books relating to Indonesia from the Meiji period were written by scholars who can be considered as supporters of "Nanshinron (南進論 or Southern Expansion)." Nanshinron is the idea that Japan should expand its influence in the

South Seas. Poor Japanese moved to the Pacific and Southeast Asia during the Meiji era; an emigration which was caused by the sudden transformation to a capitalist economy in Japan starting from the Meiji era. However, written work from Japanese emigrants in Nanyō is difficult to find. Their main purpose for moving to these new places was to find a new job, not to spread new knowledge about Nanyō to other Japanese. On the other hand, the scholars who visited Nanyō left many books published in Japan. The Nanyō scholars were well-educated and financially independent. These intellectuals were able to publish their findings about Nanyō. Therefore, the writers of the Meiji era were oriented to the scholars from high social status families. For example, Shiga Shigetaka (志賀重昂) who was a son of the samurai class and studied in Sapporo Agriculture University wrote a book about Nanyō based on his experiences and observations on the Pacific islands. His 1887 “Nanyō Jiji (南洋時事 or Southern Affairs)”<sup>1</sup> starts with Shiga’s poem imitating the Christian hymn “Arise, Sons of the Kingdom.” Shiga titled his poem as “Arise! Ye Sons of Yamato’s Land”:

Arise! Ye Sons of Yamato’s Land  
A grand work awaits your hand  
Loathed Satan Plays on your head o’er

From this poem, it is clear that Shiga was encouraging Japanese to develop the islands in Nanyō. Shiga started his book with a warning to Japanese not to overlook Nanyō which is geographically close to Japan. Japanese indifference to Nanyō was a common concern among Japanese writers who wrote about Nanyō. Japanese, not only the general public but also scholars in the Meiji era, mainly focused on Western nations. As Japan was opened to other countries and underwent Westernization, most Japanese scholars paid attention to Europe and the USA which were already developed. In addition, Japan had long historical relationships with China and Korea. Therefore, sufficient knowledge about these Asian neighbors was already developed in Japan.

Shiga also perceived the importance of the small islands in Nanyō, not for their rich resources but for their roles in foreign trade. As Japan is an island nation, Shiga believed it was necessary to understand how the British Empire sustained its trade network which covered the entire globe. Shiga drew a diagram to explain how British trade ports maintained its trade flow, starting from Britain through St. Helena, the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Melbourne, Sydney, New Zealand, the Panama Canal and back to Britain. Shiga learned that even a small island can contribute to maintaining a nation’s diverse trade routes. Shiga believed that his idea about islands as trade ports in Nanyō should support Japanese efforts to establish a presence in Nanyō.

Not only trade routes but also colonization was the new main theme of the books

in the Meiji era. Shiga visited Apia on Upolu Island in the Samoa Islands and observed colonization with his own eyes. Shiga found out that not only a nation or lords can own foreign territories, but that a company also can own lands. For instance, Shiga visited the area owned by a German trade and plantation company. In his book, he noted that he entered the domain of *Eigenthum der deutschen Handels und Plantageh Gesellschaft der Sud See Ilsen*, the Domain of the German South Seas Islands Trade and Plantation Company. This company was the German national company which established a foothold in trade in the South Seas.

Japanese colonial perspectives and trade expansion ideas in Nanyō started in the Meiji era. At an early moment, Shiga observed that a powerful policy called colonization gaining more and more attention in Europe. At the same time, Shiga wrote about the difficulties in maintaining colonies, giving examples of rebellions in Madagascar and Tunis for France and the Afghan rebellion for Britain. Shiga accumulated important knowledge for overseas expansion based on what European nations were doing. Unlike Japanese mainstream scholars who studied in Europe or the USA, scholars of Nanyō like Shiga learned about colonization and foreign trade from local observations. The mainstream scholars in the West might have learned how to establish foreign trade and colonies theoretically but Shiga observed overseas expansion more practically. However, it is important to keep in mind that Shiga was not aiming to colonize Southeast Asia region where was already colonized by European countries and the USA. Shiga believed that the less developed Pacific region was a suitable place for Japanese colonization.

Furthermore, Shiga's observations focused more on the Pacific islands rather than Southeast Asia for colonization and overseas trade. This was mainly because he traveled with the training ship Tsukuba whose training route was in the South Pacific. Precisely, Shiga visited New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, Solomon, the New Hebrides, Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tonga and Tahiti. From Shiga's book, it can be observed that Japanese knowledge about Indonesia was very basic because the book merely mentioned "Java, Sumatra, Celebes etc., most of oriental islands as territories of the Netherlands East Indies." It was common for the scholars about Nanyō in the early Meiji period to put more value on the Pacific region than Southeast Asia. The Meiji era was the starting point for Japanese idea about expansion in the form of foreign trade and colonization focusing on the Pacific specifically.

### 2-3. Suganuma Tadakaze (菅沼貞風)

Suganuma Tadakaze (菅沼貞風) produced more provocative writings about Nanyō in order to explain the importance of Nanyō. Suganuma was born to a poor Samurai family of Nagasaki in 1856, almost 10 years before the Meiji restoration. Although Suganuma's family could not support his education, his talent and courage

in study allowed him to receive a scholarship to study at Tokyo University<sup>1</sup> in 1884. In 1892, he wrote a book entitled “Dai Nihon Shōgyōshi (大日本商業史 or History of Great Japanese Commerce)” which summarized Japanese commercial history.<sup>ii</sup> On the other hand, he also wrote his opinions about new directions for the Meiji government when he was only 24 years old, however his writing was so provocative and aggressive that it was not published until 1942.

His ideas relating to Nanyō were accumulated and published with the title of “Shin Nihon no Tonan no Yume (新日本の閩南之夢 or The Dream of New Japanese Southern Expansion)”<sup>iii</sup> and explain why Japan had to undertake expansionary policies. In this book, Suganuma’s ideas about necessary policies for Japanese independence were summarized. He argued that Japan had to abolish unfair treaties with European countries and the USA. As a modern nation, Suganuma believed Japan could not tolerate unequal treaties with the Western powers like other colonized countries. In addition, Suganuma was concerned about British, French and German presences in Asia. He wrote that French and German presences were not a threat to Japan but those of Britain threatened Japanese independence as Britain was ambitiously targeting Japan and its market. In order to maintain Japanese independence and to advance Japan, Suganuma believed that Japanese improvement in commerce was unavoidable, however his means to achieve this goal was considered as aggressive.

First, Japan had to change its commercial attitude from passive to active. Japanese commerce had been traditionally passive. For example, when Japanese merchants needed something from overseas, they waited for foreign traders to bring those items to Japan. However, new Japanese merchants had to be able to go overseas and purchase items from local producers for their businesses. At the same time, Japanese merchants needed to be able to sell Japanese products without the hands of foreign traders. He mentioned that Japanese merchants had to advance from the traditional behavior of the long period of seclusion.

Second, Suganuma not only set Japanese mental objectives but also Japanese strategic goals. He believed that Japan had the potential to dominate Asian trade. As a first step, Japanese commerce required its own ships for trading in order to gain marginal benefits. At the same time, Suganuma used Britain as a model nation for Japan. Suganuma stated that Japan needed to be the main player of the Asia trade like Britain which became the main player of European trade taking the place of Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands. In order to achieve Suganuma’s dream and protect Japanese commercial dominance from the Western powers, Japan needed to obtain colonies in Asia so Japan could have a strong presence in Asia, in the same way that European countries were doing in Asia. Therefore, Japan had to draw a new defense line on a map. Taking Sakhalin and Kamchatka in the North allowed Japan

to use Arctic ices to protect Japan from the Russian threat. More importantly, Suganuma noted that Japan required taking the islands in East Indies and Singapore to establish a defense line around the equator. He clearly wrote “taking the Netherlands Java and Sumatra islands then British Singapore” was necessary. It can be assumed that his aggressive ideas were not allowed to be published until Japan put Suganuma’s ideas into action during WWII.

#### 2-4. Hattori Tōru (服部徹)

Another important advocate of Southern expansion in Nanyō, Hattori Tōru (服部徹), proposed Nanyō as a solution to the problems which were caused by the rapid modernization of Japan. Hattori published a book entitled “Nanyō Saku (南洋策 or The Southern Policy)” in 1891.<sup>iv</sup> The book has an interesting introduction attempting to draw more attention to Nanyō. Hattori started his book by listing the problems which Japan was facing as a modernizing nation. For instance, Hattori raised questions about how to protect the independence of Japan, how to achieve unlimited advancement of Japanese, overgrowing population problem, the power balance among the great powers and how to consume oversupplied products as a result of industrial improvements. The answers to these questions were, of course, Nanyō. Hattori found a vast variety of potentials and opportunities in Nanyō to solve the problems.

In his book, Hattori offers an explanation of Nanyō for the readers and his way of explaining Indonesia. His descriptions of these regions give us the images which Japanese had in the Meiji era. Hattori described Nanyō as composed of the continent and islands whose total area would be the same size as Europe but one fourth of the population. He separated Nanyō into four categories; South Asia, Malaysia, Micronesia and Polynesia. This categorization shows that Indonesian research started as a sub-branch of Nanyō Studies. Moreover, Indonesia was considered by Japanese as a part of Malaysia at the end of the 19th century. The fact that labeling Indonesian islands as Malaysian in Japanese shows that neither the concept of “Indonesia” nor “Indonesian” existed at this stage in Japan.

Hattori claimed historical Japanese legitimacy in Asian trade in his book. As an advocate of expansion to Nanyō, Hattori described Japan as a trade nation with experiences in foreign trade. The founder of Tokugawa Shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu, used Dutch and British shipwreck survivors in Japanese territory to build ships capable of crossing the ocean for trade. Tokugawa used these ships to trade with Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Vietnam. Notably, Ieyasu was so fascinated about foreign trade that he encouraged direct trade with Mexico. However, the spread of Catholicism threatened the stability of the Tokugawa Shogunate thus the Shogunate decided to isolate Japan from the world during the reign of the 3rd Shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu. Through asserting Japanese

historical trade legitimacy in Nanyō to his audience, Hattori was stimulating Japanese to establish businesses and trade with Nanyō. This historical background as a trading nation also shows that Japanese interests in Nanyō during the Meiji era were slightly different from those in the Edo period.

The shift in the main target of Nanyō trade in the Meiji era from that of the Edo period suggests that the Japanese involvement in Nanyō needed to be changed. After almost 300 years of isolation from the rest of the world, the main field of Nanyō trade had slid to the Pacific from Southeast Asia at the start of the Meiji era. This difference suggests that the situation of Nanyō for Japan had changed during the isolation period. Most of Southeast Asia was colonized by European nations and the trade in Southeast Asia was dominated by Western powers, such as the Netherlands and the British Empire. It was difficult for Meiji Japan to establish a strong presence in Southeast Asia as a new rising country in Asia. Showing ambition in Southeast Asia might, and in fact did, cause frictions between Japan and the Western colonial masters of Southeast Asia. To avoid this problem, Suganuma's ambitious ideas were not published during the Meiji era. Suganuma's book about Japanese commercial history was published, but "Shin Nihon no Tonan no Yume" had to wait almost half a century. Compared to Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands were less developed with less importance for Europe. The Pacific was more attractive for Japanese, especially for colonization. Therefore, Japan was aiming to establish a strong presence in trade and business, but the main target in the Edo era was Southeast Asia and that of the Meiji era was the Pacific. This attitude changed again as Japan became a stronger and more modernized nation which could defeat other great powers, such as China and Russia.

#### 2-5. Changing of the guards

Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 brought new perspectives about the other countries for Japanese. This period still belongs to the Meiji period but it had different character compared to the early Meiji period. From around the time when Japan defeated this Western nation, new kinds of writers and contexts about Indonesia with more nationalistic and expansionist ideas started appearing in Japanese writings. It was not the age of wonders, rather it was an age when Japan had enough knowledge about Indonesia to proceed to experiments and activities in Indonesia. One notable difference of research in this era is that books from the late Meiji era focused more on particular issues. In other words, researchers of the early Meiji era sought to discover what the Nanyō Islands were but the intellectuals of the late Meiji era were more eager to find answers for the questions they set. For instance, the Japanese sugar industry began to find a business opportunity in Indonesia and this business expansion had economic and political influences on both Japan and Indonesia.

### 3. Japanese economic intervention in Indonesia during the interwar period

#### 3-1. Intro

As Japan advanced to become a more modernized nation with new industries after the Meiji period, more Japanese business owners started visiting Indonesia to seek new business opportunities. Although some people sought new jobs in Indonesia in the Meiji era, the interwar period was the first time when Indonesia attracted Japanese capitalists, not just poor Japanese workers. Japanese small businesses, such as pharmacies and grocery stores started appearing in Indonesia in the Meiji era. However, Japanese business owners found Indonesia attractive as both a production base and consumer market from the interwar period. Moreover, after the Russo-Japan, it was easier for Japanese businesses to expand operations in Indonesia, because Japanese social status in the Netherlands East Indies was promoted to the same status as “Europeans” in Indonesia as a result of Japanese victory over Russia.

#### 3-2. Fujiyama Raita

A renowned Japanese business man, Fujiyama Raita (藤山雷太) visited Southeast Asia to find suitable sites for his sugar business. Raita was an influential businessmen and was interested in expanding his business in Nanyō. Fujiyama graduated from Keio University in 1887 and first worked for Mitsui Bank (三井銀行). After quitting Mitsui Bank because of a factional conflict within Mitsui, he worked for several companies and was nominated to be president of Dai Nippon Seitō (大日本製糖 or Great Japan Sugar Company) in 1909 by Shibusawa Eiichi (渋沢栄一), best known as the founder of Toshiba. At the time Fujiyama became president, Dai Nippon Seitō was in danger of bankruptcy because of the scandal known as Nippon Seitō Oshoku Jiken (Japan sugar bribery case). This scandal began with the discovery of that the sugar company was bribing lawmakers to enact protection for sugar from Taiwan. After Japan obtained Taiwan following its victory in the Sino-Japanese war, Taiwan was the key centre for Japanese sugar production thus Japanese sugar production companies in Taiwan wanted protections on the industry. Fujiyama was nominated to improve the image of the company to appease the scandal.

As president of Dai Nippon Seitō, Fujiyama expanded sugar factories not only in Japanese territories but also outside of Japanese territories. Fujiyama decided to integrate sugar mills throughout Asian regions. For example, he integrated a sugar company in Korea in 1919. In addition to Japan and its colony, Fujiyama was attracted to Southeast Asia for its sugar industry. For instance, in 1923, Dai Nippon Seitō bought Naigai Seitō (内外製糖 or Outside and Inside Sugar Company) which

had the largest sugar mill in Indonesia according to a Japanese newspaper in Taiwan, *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinbō* (台湾日日新報 or Taiwan Newsletters).<sup>v</sup> Furthermore, Fujiyama visited Southeast Asia in 1925 to seek further business opportunities in this region because he believed that Japan had to actively expand business in Southeast Asia, especially in Java. The reason why Fujiyama chose Indonesia was that the Netherlands East Indies was richer in resources and the locals in Indonesia were more welcoming to Japanese business, unlike French Indochina where there was more anti-Japanese sentiment.<sup>vi</sup> His idea about Indonesia as a preferable business base can be found in one of Fujiyama's postings to newspapers from his 3 month visit in Southeast Asia. He summarized his visit and observations in Southeast Asia and published a book entitled "Nanyō Sōdan (南洋叢談 or Southern Sea Talks)" in 1927.<sup>vii</sup>

From Fujiyama's visit to Southeast Asia, the need for natural resources for not only Japanese military expansion but also civilian and businesses purposes encouraged Japanese expansion to Indonesia. Japan continuously expanded its territory and industry overseas from the Meiji restoration and Japanese businessmen found Indonesia the next suitable site. Especially, Fujiyama as businessman was attracted to the infrastructure and suitable location for agricultural plantations in Java.<sup>viii</sup> Fujiyama also criticized the Japanese government and other Japanese businesses for putting excessive efforts into developing Japanese domestic industry, rather than outside of Japan where abundant natural resources and labor were available.

Fujiyama ambitiously expanded his businesses in Nanyō but he didn't have political or militaristic ambition with respect to Indonesia. It is essential to keep in mind that Fujiyama clearly stated that Japan should not have territorial ambition because it would trigger devastation of the nation. Therefore, peaceful economic cooperation was important because it could achieve the same benefits as gaining the territory without causing any conflict. In addition, it can be assumed that Fujiyama's idea about Indonesia was influential among Japanese businessmen and politicians because he had served as the president of Tokyo Shōgyō Kaigisho (東京商業会議所 or Tokyo Chamber of Commerce) and a member of House of Peers (貴族院 or Kizokuin). Therefore, some Japanese business leaders were attracted to Indonesian rich resources from the Taishō and Shōwa era for civilian products. It can be said that not all large businesses encouraged Japanese military expansion. Fujiyama Raita is a good example of an advocate of peaceful business expansion to Indonesia. Nevertheless, it can be also said that Japanese industrial expansion in Indonesia caused a high degree of tension between Japan and the Netherlands East Indies unintentionally. This Japanese peaceful business attitude changed to more militaristic attitude as WWII approached.

#### 4. Japanese economic intervention from 1930

##### 4-1. Kobayashi Ichizō (小林一三)

The other Japanese businessman and politician who shows important Japanese images about Indonesia before the war is Kobayashi Ichizō (小林一三). As a businessman, he was the founder of Hankyū Tohō Group (阪急東宝グループ) which included one of the biggest private rail lines and department stores. In 1940, he visited Indonesia as Minister of Commerce in the Second Konoe Cabinet for trade negotiations about oil imports. He participated in the conference known as the Second Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks. He published a book containing his observations on Indonesia, entitled “Ran’in o Kaku Mitari (蘭印を斯く見たり or Observations on the Dutch Indies).”<sup>ix</sup>

In his book, Kobayashi mentioned the linguistic and ethnic similarity between Indonesian and Japanese. Observing Indonesian locals, Kobayashi noted that Japanese and Indonesian faces looked very similar as if they were relatives, although their skin colors were different. Therefore, Japanese and Indonesian might have had ancestors from the same line, he suggested. Moreover, Kobayashi was surprised that Indonesian language had similar words to Japanese. It is noteworthy that this awareness of ethnic similarity connected to Japanese Imperial ideas about the Emperor who was considered to be the great father or big brother of Asian races during this time period.

On the other hand, Kobayashi as a policymaker for Japanese economy noted that Japan could be a better authority in Indonesia. One reason was that, according to Kobayashi, Indonesian locals were more in favor of the Japanese than of the Dutch. This idea was influenced by Pan-Asianism which aimed to strengthen Japanese leadership in Asia as a more developed Asian race who could save other Asian races who had lived under severe Western colonization for several hundred years. Furthermore, Kobayashi criticized Dutch colonial development because it only succeeded in Java. Therefore, he noted that it would be better for Asian races if these undeveloped islands were managed in the Japanese way.

Kobayashi's thoughts about Indonesia were popular among influential Japanese before the war. Japan should take the place of the Netherlands as the master in the same colonizer and colonized relationship, but the only excuse Japan could make was the racial similarity as Asians. In addition, Kobayashi mentioned another reason why Japan would be a better colonizer: because Japan did not show racial superiority to Indonesians, unlike what the Dutch were doing. Some important Japanese had very aggressive ideas toward the Dutch East Indies even before the war started.

#### 4-2. Early Shōwa Japanese economy

Fujiyama and Kobayashi had similar positions in both business and politics but their ideas about Indonesia were very different, perhaps because the situations were different as they visited Indonesia in different periods. The one common idea is that they both demanded the Japanese government encourage Japanese business to expand into Indonesia for the Japanese economy. However, Fujiyama did not suggest having a Japanese political presence in Indonesia, his idea was to have an economic presence there. On the other hand, Kobayashi saw Indonesia as a rich land waiting for Japan to develop it as a colony. Japanese attitudes toward Indonesia from an economic perspective in the 1920s were a peaceful economic expansion without militaristic means. However, it became not just economic but also political and militaristic expansion in the 1940s.

During the early Shōwa period, Japanese perspectives on Indonesia for economic policies had been revised. For instance, in the Meiji era Japanese sought new lands for poor Japanese workers, however Japanese interests changed to seeking new sites for Japanese business, as the previous two entrepreneurs show. In addition, Japanese in Indonesia focused on commerce in the early period of Japanese emigration in the Meiji period. Nonetheless, the focus shifted to large scale industry triggered by the economic boom following WWI. The reason for this change was that Japan could export abundant Japanese products to Indonesia during WWI. However, some Japanese realized that the actual laborers in commerce, such as sellers and coolies were Chinese. Therefore more and more Japanese were encouraged to engage in commerce operations directly. As a result, Japanese commerce successfully dominated the Indonesian market, edging out the Chinese thanks to the positive effect from WWI economic prosperity. In the next stage, many Japanese entrepreneurs and government officials tried to achieve industrial prosperity in the Indonesian market thus some Japanese companies were encouraged to develop production bases in Indonesia. Indonesia could be seen as an important battlefield for Japanese business in the proxy war against the Chinese economic domination in Asia.

These ideas of Japanese economic dominance in Indonesia in opposition to that of the Chinese can also be found in “Jawa no Inshō (爪哇の印象 or Impressions of Java)” written by Maezawa Masanori (前澤正則) in 1929.<sup>x</sup> He visited Java on a study tour of Waseda Infrastructure Policy Research Committee to observe the infrastructure in Java. He noted that Japanese business forces were defeating Chinese and Arab economic domination in Indonesia. He also wrote about the fact that Chinese used to be more powerful in Indonesian commerce but they were notorious among Indonesians. This book suggests that a factor which encouraged Japanese to put more effort into maintaining an economic presence in Indonesia was

to replace Chinese economic dominance.

#### 4-3. The turning point

After Japan established economic superiority over the Chinese in Indonesia, Japanese expansion into Indonesia became more nationalistic and militaristic. This change was mostly effected by the fact that Japan also started defeating China economically and militarily on the continent beginning with the 1931 Manchurian incident. Therefore, China was not a hypothetical enemy for Japan anymore. The Japanese military presence in China triggered high tension in the Pacific region, especially with the Soviet Union and the USA. Japan needed a stronger presence in Indonesia in order to defeat these new hypothetical enemies.

Japanese economic expansion in Indonesia caused a high level of friction between Japan and the Netherlands East Indies authorities. Japanese products and capital inflow to the Netherlands East Indies continuously increased from World War I. It can be said that the Indonesian market was saturated by Japanese goods. This Japanese strong presence in Indonesia encouraged the Netherlands East Indies to use its authority to protect their profits from Japan. Therefore, anti-Dutch sentiment became more common among Japanese. These social and economic changes resulted in the First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks.

### 5. Political delegates from Japan in the 1930s

#### 5-1. Takei Jūrō (竹井十郎)

More nationalistic and expansionist Japanese wrote books from the 1930s in order to change Japanese opinion toward Indonesia. One good example is Takei Jūrō (竹井十郎). Takei had been in Indonesia more than 22 years until he went back to Japan in 1928. Six years after he left Indonesia, he visited Indonesia again because his knowledge and connections in Indonesia were requested to support Nagaoka Harukazu (長岡春一) who was the leader of the Japanese delegation to the First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks in 1934. Takei arrived in Surabaya on the 23rd of May 1934 to prepare for the commercial conference, before the Japanese mission arrived in the Netherlands East Indies. It is generally difficult to understand an individual's personality but Takei's character can be found from his writings. His ideas about the Netherlands East Indies can be summarized in his quote "Dutch's cruel exploitation in Java over the past 300 years treated Javanese as less valuable than horses, at least on a superficial level." He summarized his experience in Indonesia and published a book entitled "Ranryō Indo o Kataru (蘭領印度を語る or Talking about Dutch India)" in 1935.<sup>xi</sup>

Takei had supported Indonesian nationalist movements for a long time, thus he

had interesting connections with Indonesian nationalists. His connections reveal that the Indonesian independence movement was not merely a rebellion of ethnic groups in Indonesia but it was based on more political and nationalistic ideas. For instance, Takei visited Ernest Douwes Dekker who is known as an Indonesian national hero now but he was a principal of a school in Bandung when Takei met him. Dekker was of mixed Dutch and Javanese descent but he chose to be Indonesian. He supported racial equality in the Netherlands East Indies for Indonesians. Moreover, his commerce school in Bandung demonstrated his ideas as an advocate of Indonesian racial equality. For example, Dekker's school was not limited to Javanese or Dutch but it was opened to anyone, including ethnic Chinese and Eurasians.

Takei used the words "Indonesia" and "Indonesian" as a politically united body, not a racial term. In the chapter entitled "Where is Indonesia going?" Takei defined of these words in more political and nationalist terms rather than academic terms. Takei also called the natives in the Netherlands East Indies Indonesians. "Indonesia" used to be a term for Geology and Anthropology in the Pacific and the Southeast Asia. However, the locals of the Netherlands East India specify their islands as "Indonesia," Indonesia was not a part of "Malay" for them. The Netherlands East Indies natives started to use "Indonesian" to designate both the language and people. In addition, not only anti-Dutch sentiment but also the Indonesian independence movement was based on racial awareness and racial liberation from the Dutch. "White people considered us (Indonesians) as an inferior race but this is their illusions," was what Takei heard from an Indonesian friend.

The concept of Indonesia was imported to Japan by people like Takei who had been in Indonesia and made contacts with the locals in the late 1930s. It is certain that Takei had relationships with Indonesian independence activists in Indonesia who used the words "Indonesia" and "Indonesian" to achieve their political goals. Takei's writings show that he sympathized with Indonesian nationalists, so he utilized the concept of "Indonesia" as a general name for people who lived under the Dutch authority in Southeast Asia, with political and nationalistic senses, rather than anthropological or ethnographical meanings. The year 1935, following the first dispatch of Japanese delegates to the Netherlands East Indies for the first official commercial talks, was the time when the word "Indonesia" started appearing in Japanese writings, not Ran'in (蘭印 or Dutch India) nor Higashi Indo (東印度 or East India) which traditionally described Indonesia in Japanese.

#### 5-2. Kimura Eiichi (木村鋭市)

This participant in the commercial talk helps us to understand Japanese ideas about Indonesia. This Japanese diplomat also used the word "Indonesia" in his book which was published in 1935. The First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks in

1934 were so important for Japan that it required variety kinds of professionals from Japan, from nationalists like Takei to the peaceful diplomat Kimura Eiichi (木村銳市). Kimura also accompanied the First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks mission in support of Nagaoka. Compared to Takei, Kimura was more patient towards both the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia. For example, Kimura noted that Java was more developed than other colonies thanks to the Netherlands' colonial policies, supported by advanced technologies and Dutch efforts. In addition, the Javanese had their own great history of more than 2000 years and it was still flourishing, he mentioned. Dutch prosperity was not only because of Javanese natural resources but also the fact that the Javanese had ability to achieve their potential, according to Kimura. From his writings, it is certain that Kimura was a diplomat who was capable of balancing profits and prestige among Japan, the Netherlands and Indonesia. Kimura didn't criticize the Netherlands' colonial policies which were common targets for criticism of Japanese writers about Indonesia in this era. Being diplomatic, he didn't note any provocative opinion about Indonesian locals and aiming at co-prosperity between Japan and the Netherlands East Indies.

As the First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks were the first time for Kimura to visit Indonesia, his ideas depict common Japanese images of Japanese. In his book, he noted that Java should not be treated the same as other small mandate islands in Nanyō where naked people are dancing under the moon as Japanese used to believe. Moreover, Java had been colonized for more than 300 years by the Netherlands, but Java was interesting enough to research as a part of Indonesia in terms of culture, according to Kimura. This suggests that most Japanese in Japan imagined Java as an undeveloped island without civilization, similar to the small islands in the Pacific region.

Kimura used the word "Indonesia" to explain that Java is a part of the larger "Indonesian" culture in his book.<sup>xiii</sup> He was neither a professional scholar of Indonesia nor had experience living in Indonesia before the commercial talks but he was aware of the concept of Indonesia. This proves that from around 1935, no matter what kinds of interest Japanese had in Indonesia, the concept of "Indonesia" was already available. Notably that Kimura did not use the word "Indonesia" in a political or nationalistic sense, but rather as a cultural and academic term, unlike Takei.

The difference in the use of the word "Indonesia" between Takei and Kimura reveals how the word was used by Japanese. On the one hand, Takei as a supporter of Indonesian nationalist movement used "Indonesian" as a word to describe people who united against the Netherlands East Indies colonial administration. For Takei, "Indonesian" did not necessary mean ethnic Indonesian but Chinese ethnics and Eurasians were also considered as "Indonesian". It was an idea for people fighting for their freedom from the Netherlands East Indies, this was relatively new and rare

idea for Japanese in this period. On the other hand, Kimura's "Indonesian" was a more academic term explaining races and culture in the islands of the East India where were governed by Dutch. The common experience between these two writers is both had been participated to the First Japan-Netherlands Commercial Talks started in the end of 1934. From the following year, the word of "Indonesia" started to be used by more writers, including nationalists and scholars in Japan. There had been precise racial-ethno-geographical knowledge about people in the Netherlands East Indies but they had not been categorized as an "Indonesian" group until around 1935 in Japanese.

## 6. Conclusion

Japanese ideas about Indonesia gradually became popular beginning in the Meiji era. Japanese started to think about Indonesian islands in Nanyō as a result of the end of isolation. As a newly emerging country, Japan found the Netherlands East Indies to be a good trade partner which could provide new lands for Japanese emigrants who could not keep up with new Japanese economy. Having a commercial presence in Indonesia was a main stream idea in the Meiji period. At the same time, some extreme nationalists also started to think Japan needed to dominate the islands of Nanyō in order to protect Japan from the Western powers.

After the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, Japanese capital began flowing into Indonesia. Initially, Indonesia was a place for poor Japanese to find a new job, but it became a production and commercial base as more and more Japanese businessmen visited Indonesia and established business branches and factories in the early Shōwa period. In the early process of Japanese economic expansion in Indonesia, Japanese entrepreneurs did not request Japanese military presence in Indonesia.

Not only influences from businesses in Indonesia but also from Japanese who visited Indonesia and established connections with Indonesian nationalists changed Japanese ideas about Indonesia in the 1930s. Knowing about the Indonesian independence movement enabled Japanese to recognize the Netherlands East Indies as Indonesia. The concept of "Indonesia" enabled Japanese to see Indonesian locals as people oppressed by the Dutch. At the same time, Japanese knowledge about Indonesia had been improved and Japanese acquired the concept of "Indonesia" as an academic term.

In conclusion, Japan recognized Indonesia as a result of social and economic developments. As Japan became a modern nation state with excessive industrial development and a large income gap, Japanese started to seek a new land of opportunity for the next generation. Japan needed a place where the poor could get

a job and maintain themselves. Indonesia was a preferable place for the Meiji Japan because more space was available for commercial and industrial developments in Indonesia. Japanese exploitation in Indonesia established communication and knowledge building with Indonesia. At the same time, a strong Japanese presence in Indonesia created friction between Japan and the Netherlands East Indies. This struggle between two authorities strengthened anti-Dutch sentiment and made more Japanese sympathetic supporters of Indonesian nationalist movement.

#### Note

1. Tokyo University existed only about 10 years; later the name of school was changed to Tokyo Imperial University.

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