

Part Two: Political, Diplomatic and Military Issues

Japan's Involvement in Cambodia during World War II

Hideo Sasagawa Professor, College of Asia Pacific Studies, Ritumeikan Asia Pacific University

Introduction

On weekends, Aeon Mall, a Japanese shopping center opened at the southern outskirts of Phnom Penh city in June 2014 attracts many Cambodian customers. Arriving at the airport, most tourists head for the east where the heart of the capital is located, but following National Road No. 4 in the opposite direction leads to the Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone where Japanese factories proliferate. While foreign direct investment from China, Taiwan and South Korea poured into the garment industry from the late 1990s, Japanese capital got a late start. Since the late 2000s, however, the Japanese presence is certainly detectable in Phnom Penh as described above. Historically, Japan's penetration of French Indochina including Cambodia was later than in other European colonies in Southeast Asia such as the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines, where many people migrated from Japan, and where Japanese commodities, though subjected to severe criticism as cheap but fragile, were distributed even to local people. The reason why these products were limited in Indochina was that France was alert to Japanese economic expansion, and imposed a high rate of tariff. Under these circumstances, it was not until the Second World War that Japanese companies succeeded in securing a market there.

This paper discusses how Japan became involved in Cambodia during World War II, and how Cambodians reacted to that involvement. During this period, a number of events occurred in Cambodia, including the Franco–Thai War that started at the end of 1940 which led to the retrocession of territory to Thailand, the beginning of the Japanese invasion of southern Indochina on July 28, 1941, the arrest of a Buddhist monk named Haem Chiev in July 1942 and the following “Umbrella Demonstration” to protest against his detention, as well as the direct involvement of the Imperial Japanese Army after Operation Meigo taken place on March 9, 1945 and, finally, the achievement of nominal “independence.” All these developments would eventually have considerable impact on modern Cambodian history. However, existing studies of that history have said little about how Japanese organizations including both the military and civilians had been involved in Cambodia.

In the study of Cambodian history, it is often works written in French that are reviewed as previous studies; in the specific case of the World War II period, by contrast, there is more scholarship in English. Earlier studies include an article and a book review by David Chandler, whose contents are reflected in his book on

Cambodian history.¹ Nevertheless, no materials or publications in the Japanese language have been used, and one may come across misspellings of some of the Japanese personal names in these sources.²

After Chandler, no outstanding work on Cambodia during World War II appeared in either French or English until John Tully's exhaustive history of Cambodia in the colonial era, which includes detailed treatment of the wartime period. Tully conducted some research at the Archives Nationales du Cambodge (ANC), which was opened to researchers for the first time at the end of 1997. But as he admits, not all materials were organized or made available around the year 2000, thus one can hardly say that his research was exhaustive. Also, as in Chandler's works, there were misspellings in Romanization for some Japanese terms.³

Sébastien Verney is among those young French researchers who have worked in the ANC in and after the 2000s. After collecting data, Verney published a book about French Indochina during World War II in which he often mentions Cambodia. However, Verney is interested in discussing Indochina under the Vichy regime rather than Cambodian history, and his lack of fundamental knowledge about Cambodia is apparent in his book. For instance, when referring to Norodom Sihanouk, former King who ascended the throne on October 28, 1941, Verney shortens his name as "Norodom" instead of "Sihanouk," which leads to confusion with King Norodom (r. 1860–1904) who is Sihanouk's paternal great-grandfather. Also, there is a lack of reference to Japanese sources as is the case for the English-language scholarship just mentioned.⁴

The present paper mainly uses documents and publications in the Japanese language to review the involvement of the Japanese military, private organizations (including corporations), and Japanese civilians in Cambodia during World War II. Besides, as there are documents in the ANC as well as in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, France that still have not been used in previous studies, materials written in French and Khmer are utilized to discuss how Cambodia reacted to the Japanese involvement.

1. Overview of Cambodian history during World War II

Before discussing the Japanese involvement in Cambodia, this chapter outlines the major developments there during World War II. It was the Franco–Thai War at the end of 1940 that dragged Cambodia into the subsequent conflict. In July 1940 in France, the Vichy regime came to power after being defeated by Nazi Germany in the previous month. A conflict emerged between the Vichy government

¹ David P. Chandler, "Review: Bunchhan Mul, *Kuk Niyobay* (Political Prison)," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 60, 1 (1972): 439–440; "The Kingdom of Kampuchea, March–October 1945: Japanese-sponsored Independence in Cambodia in World War II," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17, 1 (1986): 80–93; *A History of Cambodia*, 4th edn (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2007).

² For example, the name of Tadakuma Tsutomu, the best-known of those Japanese soldiers who remained behind (to be discussed below) was misspelled as "Tadakame" in Chandler's book (*History of Cambodia*, pp. 208, 328).

³ As an example, "Kenpeitai" or "Kempeitai," meaning military police, is misspelled as "Kempeitei"; John Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia, 1863–1953* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), p. 375.

⁴ Sébastien Verney, *L'Indochine sous Vichy: Entre Révolution nationale, collaboration et identités nationales, 1940–1945* (Paris: Riveneuve, 2012).

and Free French led by Charles de Gaulle and supported by Britain. Both of them claimed that “the power that holds colonies is the only legitimate French government,” and thus Indochina became quite an important colony for Vichy to demonstrate the legitimacy of its governance. Meanwhile in Siam Plaek Phibunsongkhram became Prime Minister on December 16, 1938, and on June 24, 1939, he changed the country’s name from Siam to Thailand to heighten support for his vision of expansionism. The first hostile encounter between Thailand and French Indochina occurred in September 1940, and sporadic conflicts continued before finally erupting into open warfare at the end of that year. The Franco-Thai War only ceased after Japan, which hoped to please Thailand, stepped in to mediate the conflict and arrange a peace treaty signed in Tokyo that stipulated cession of northern and northwestern parts of Cambodia (all of Battambang, the northern parts of Siem Reap and Kompong Thom, as well as the west bank of Mekong in Stung Treng) to Thailand.

Japanese intervention in Indochina had begun with the invasion of northern Indochina on September 26, 1940, but it was not until July 28, 1941, after Japanese forces moved into southern Indochina, that Japanese troops were stationed in Cambodia.

On July 17, 1942, Buddhist monk Haem Chiev was arrested while still retaining his priest status on a charge of preaching anti-French doctrine. One or two thousand monks marched with umbrellas along with lay people to protest against the arrest, and thus it was called the “Umbrella Demonstration” or “Umbrella War.” This demonstration was organized by the editors of *Nagara Vatta*, who became acquainted with Haem Chiev through activities in the Royal Library and the Buddhist Institute. *Nagara Vatta*, founded in 1936, was the first Khmer-language newspaper to publish political opinions in Cambodia. Some of the editors, including chief editor Pach Chhoeun and Son Ngoc Thanh, belonged to the first generation of secular nationalists who had education in the French language. The demonstration on July 20 was suppressed and Pach Chhoeun was arrested. Son Ngoc Thanh found asylum in Japan, making his way there via Battambang and Bangkok. *Nagara Vatta* went out of existence.

On March 2, 1943, George Gauthier assumed the office of *Résident Supérieur* in Cambodia. He enforced a policy of abolishing the Khmer script and replacing it with the Roman alphabet (August 13, 1943) as well as abolishing the Cambodian calendar, which was a combination of the Buddhist and lunar calendars, to be replaced with the Gregorian one (July 17, 1944). These were compulsory and highly unpopular policies under the Vichy government and produced a backlash, especially from Buddhist circles.

After Operation Meigo took place on March 9, 1945, the French forces were disarmed in Cambodia as elsewhere in Indochina. King Norodom Sihanouk declared the independence of the “*Royaume du Kampuchea*” on March 12.⁵ The next day, Royal Ordinance (*Kram*) No. 5 was officially announced, re-

⁵ The day of independence is indicated as March 13 in many Japanese sources based on the authoritative study by the Center for Military History of the National Institute of Defense Studies; see Boeicho Boeikenshujo Senshishitsu, *Sittang Meigo Sakusen: Biruma Sensen no Houkai to Tai Futsuin no Boei* [Operations Sittang and Meigo: Collapse of the Burmese Front and Defense of Thailand and French Indochina] (Tokyo: Choun Shinbunsha, 1969), p. 638. However, this paper adopts the date of March 12 based on the day when the declaration of independence (Royal Ordinance No. 3) was proclaimed; see *Journal Officiel du Cambodge* [henceforth JOC], 1(1), 22 mars 1945, p. 1.

turning to the Cambodian calendar. On the following day a return to Khmer script was promulgated by Royal Ordinance No. 6.⁶

Although it was “independence” with some Japanese influences still remaining, those arrested after “Umbrella Demonstration,” including Pach Chhoeun, were released. Son Ngoc Thanh returned to his country on May 31, and took up the post of Foreign Minister on June 1.⁷ However, since the majority of the Cabinet immediately after “independence” was composed of pro-French royalists, the *Corps des Volontaires Cambodgiens* (referred to as “Green Shirts”) attacked the royal palace on August 9, 1945, and a coup was mounted with the demand for of a Cabinet consisting of pro-Japanese nationalists.⁸ On August 14, Son Ngoc Thanh became Prime Minister⁹ but after Japan’s defeat was announced, Franco-British allied forces took control of Phnom Penh in October and Son Ngoc Thanh was arrested.

The independence of the *Royaume du Kampuchea* was formally nullified on December 14, 1945; however, Cambodia was recognized as possessing autonomy over its domestic administration within the French Union through the Franco-Cambodian *modus vivendi* signed on January 7 the following year. In the national political arena, the people involved in *Nagara Vatta* and the Democratic Party that attracted the readers of the newspaper, established a position of dominance in the late 1940s to the early 1950s. On the other hand, there was a movement demanding early independence from France. With a mixture of the right and left wings, under the collective term “Khmer Issarak,” they continued underground activities.

From the beginning of the 1950s, King Sihanouk began to get more involved in politics. After his declaration of independence on November 9, 1953 and formation of Sangkum Reastr Niyum on April 7, 1955, Sihanouk took all the credit for the fruit of independence. On March 18, 1970 Sihanouk was dismissed as Head of State (a post he had held since his abdication of the Throne in 1955) and the Lon Nol government was established. Haem Chiev’s biography and a memoir written by Bun Chan Mol, who was a participant of the Umbrella Demonstration could only be published at this time. Only after that, the people started to officially discuss various protagonists who emerged in the 1940s and the important roles they had played.¹⁰

2. Intervention by the Japanese Army

2.1 Japanese invasion of southern Indochina

As is pointed out above, Japan’s involvement in Cambodia had been quite limited before its invasion of Vichy Indochina. The majority of the Japanese residents there were female, who are assumed to have been prostitutes called “*Karayuki-san*.” Also it was apparent from the guest books submitted by hotels

⁶ These two decrees are found in *ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

⁷ *Kret* N° 94, *JOC*, 1(12), 7 juin 1945, p. 239.

⁸ Tully, *France on the Mekong*, p. 394.

⁹ *Kret* N° 198, *JOC*, 1(22), 16 août 1945, p. 562.

¹⁰ Chandler, “Review,” p. 440.

in Phnom Penh to the police that there was a drastic increase in the number of Japanese people including military officers who came to Cambodia for the purpose of observation and research after the Japanese invasion of northern Indochina in September 1940.¹¹

On July 14, 1941, the “Japanese invasion of southern Indochina,” effectively an expansion of the existing military presence, was agreed on between Japan and France. In relation to this agreement, the 25th Corps composed of the Japanese Imperial Guards division and the 21st Independent Mixed Brigade (a reorganized unit), originally deployed for the invasion of northern Indochina, and was ordered to move southward.¹² The 5th Infantry Regiment conscripted at Sakura was mainly deployed to different parts of Cambodia, while in Phnom Penh the headquarters of the 2nd Imperial Guards Brigade (Tokyo) and the 5th Infantry Regiment were stationed, along with the 2nd Battalion of the regiment. In Takeo, the Imperial Guards Searching Regiment and a part of the Imperial Guards Transport Regiment were stationed, while the 1st and 3rd Battalions were in Siem Reap and Kampot respectively.¹³ These regions became the focus of deployment after the northwestern Cambodian territory was ceded to Thailand after the Franco–Thai War, and Siem Reap on the north bank of Tonle Sap and Pursat on the south bank became the new national boundary with Thailand.

Some sources in the ANC show how the local residents reacted to the Japanese occupation forces, including reports from provincial governors and district chiefs to the kingdom's Interior Minister. Many of them indicate that local people took no notice of the Japanese occupation forces in general, and that no major confrontations had taken place. That said, however, one can read from some of the documents that small-scale confrontations and other problems were occurring. For example, in a letter from the Kompong Trach district chief to the Kampot provincial governor on August 11, 1941, it was reported that naked Japanese soldiers had been bathing in a public fountain and some residents were complaining about it.¹⁴ Also, according to a letter from the Kompong Thom provincial governor to the Minister of Interior and Religion on August 21, a vehicle of the Japanese army arrived at a market in Kompong Thom at eight o'clock in the morning on August 16, where seven or eight soldiers ran into a Chinese shop. They had seen a picture depicting the Sino–Japanese War in this Chinese shop the previous day, and that was the reason for their return to the shop. It is said that the Chinese owner was hiding the picture, but the military men forced him to take it out, kicked him and hit him with their ri-

¹¹ Sasagawa Hideo, “Cambodia during World War II: The Status Quo on the Existing Studies and Documents,” in Shiraishi Masaya ed., *Indochina, Thailand, Japan and France during World War II: Overview of Existing Literature and Related Documents for the Future Development of Research* (Tokyo: Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 2015), p. 403.

¹² Boeicho Boeikenshujo Senshishitsu, *Sittang Meigo Sakusen*, p. 520; Hohei Dai82 Rentaishi Kankokai, *Hohei Dai82 Rentaishi* [A history of the 82th Infantry Regiment] (Privately published, 1988), p. 154; Kinhosanshi Kanko Iinkai, *Konoe Hohei Dai3 Rentaishi* [A history of the 3rd Imperial Guard Infantry Regiment] (Privately published, 1985), p. 344; Konoe Hohei Dai5 Rentaishi Henshu Iinkai, *Konoe Hohei Dai5 Rentaishi* [A history of the 5th Imperial Guard Infantry Regiment] (Privately published, 1990), vol. 1, p. 164.

¹³ Boeicho Boeikenshujo Senshishitsu, *Sittang Meigo Sakusen*, p. 521; Konoe Hohei Dai5 Rentaishi Henshu Iinkai, *Konoe Hohei Dai5*, p. 168.

¹⁴ Archives Nationales du Cambodge [ANC], Résidence Supérieure du Cambodge [RSC], 3488 (32179) Traduction de la lettre confidentielle N° 18-X du 11-8-41 du Chauvaysrok de Kg-Trach.

fle butts, and confiscated the picture.¹⁵ Also, a letter from the Loek Daek district chief to the Kandal provincial governor on December 3, 1941 reported that some local residents were having trouble with the boorish behavior of the Japanese army and that their compulsory drafting of local residents for labor was inhumane.¹⁶

2.2 Indochina occupation forces

When war broke out on December 8, 1941 with the USA, Britain, and the Netherlands, it was decided that the occupation forces in southern Indochina were to be scaled down.¹⁷ As the 82nd Regiment conscripted in Toyama of the 21st Division (headquartered at Kanazawa) was ordered to take charge of Cambodia, the regiment moved from the battlefield in China to land in Haiphong on February 4, 1942. By the end of March, the deployment in Cambodia was completed. The 1st Battalion headquarters (the 1st through 4th Companies and the 1st Heavy Machine Gun Company), a platoon of the 4th Company, and one from the 3rd Company were stationed at Phnom Penh, Svay Rieng, and Banam respectively.¹⁸

The 82nd Infantry Regiment was involved in Son Ngoc Thanh's seeking asylum in Japan after the "Umbrella Demonstration" was suppressed in July 1942. According to John Tully, the military police assisted Thanh's escape to Battambang.¹⁹ Also among the materials found in Japan, a letter from Council General Minoda in Saigon to Minister of Foreign Affairs Togo dated July 22, 1942 indicated that some participants in the demonstration made contact with the Japanese gendarmerie, asking for support for their independence movement. This letter is available to review in the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR).²⁰ However, the Japanese Army maintained a "wait and see" attitude as they gave priority to security enforcement. Although specific names of groups or individuals are not given in the above-mentioned materials, the history of the 82nd Infantry Regiment says that Chief Imada Shigeru ordered First Lieutenant Inaba Yoshiro to escort "the leader of the independence movement" to Battambang.²¹ It is certain that this refers to the escape of Son Ngoc Thanh.

On November 9, 1942, the Indochina occupation forces were organized. Around that time there were slight changes in the deployment plans for the 82nd Infantry Regiment. First, it was decided on

¹⁵ ANC RSC 3488(32179) Note postale confidentielle N° 130c du Chauvaykhet de Kompongthom, à Son Excellence le Ministre de l'Intérieur et des Cultes, 21 août 1941.

¹⁶ ANC RSC 2751(23291) Lettre confidentielle N° 77-C du Chauvaysrok de Loek-Dek, au Chauvaykhet de Kandal, 3 décembre 1941.

¹⁷ Tachikawa Kyoichi, *Dainiji Sekai Taisen to Furansu Ryo Indoshina: "Nichifutsu Kyoryoku" no Kenkyu* [The Second World War and French Indochina: A study on "Franco-Japanese Cooperation"] (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2000), pp. 162-66.

¹⁸ Hohei Dai82 Rentaishi Kankokai, *Hohei Dai82*, pp. 155-56, 163-64. "Banam" is misspelled "Panam" in some Japanese sources. Located along Route Coloniale No. 1 (presently National Road No. 1) connecting Saigon and Phnom Penh, it was given importance as the landing for a ferry across the River Mekong. The name "Banam" does not exist in the present Cambodian administrative boundary system. The name is deemed to have been originally derived from Vietnamese. Since the name was replaced with a Khmer toponym after independence, only Neak Loeung—located to the south of Banam—became known as a ferry landing. However, local residents in the region still use the name "Banam" even now.

¹⁹ Tully, *France on the Mekong*, p. 375.

²⁰ JACAR B02033030200.

²¹ Hohei Dai82 Rentaishi Kankokai, *Hohei Dai82*, p. 169.

September 20 that the 2nd Battalion stationed at Cap Saint-Jacques (now Vŭng Tàu) would be transferred to Bangkok, while the 3rd Battalion was transferred to Phnom Penh.²² Subsequently the 9th Company was dispatched to Hanoi to provide security for the divisional headquarters. In November 1943, the 34th Independent Mixed Brigade was organized to join the occupation forces. Finally the "Saigon Guards" were formed with the incorporation of a number of personnel from the 82nd Infantry Regiment. In January 1944, the regiment was redeployed to northern Indochina to return to the 21st Division. Meanwhile, the 70th Independent Mixed Brigade was formed and the 428th Independent Infantry Battalion was stationed in Phnom Penh on September 18.²³

2.3 Operation Meigo

The Indochina occupation forces were reorganized as the 38th Corps on December 11, 1944, and took charge of Operation Meigo on March 9 the following year. The 29th Infantry Regiment assigned to the 2nd Division based on Sendai, was responsible for Cambodia. As indicated by its nickname of "Wakamatsu Regiment," this unit was formed in Aizu Wakamatsu. They were attacked catastrophically in Guadalcanal. After that, with newly drafted soldiers, the regiment took part in the Battle of Imphal in Burma. However, once strategic errors became apparent, they were ordered to move out to Thailand on January 19, 1945. In the following month, the regiment entered Indochina to join the 38th Corps. On February 25, it was headquartered at Stung Treng in northeastern Cambodia.²⁴

According to the description in the book *Operations Sittang and Meigo* published by the Center for Military History of the National Institute of Defense Studies, King Sihanouk was missing after the issuance of orders for the Operation Meigo on March 9 and was later found by the military police disguised as a monk and hiding in the palace temple.²⁵ Monks did not reside in the Cambodian palace temple, however, and thus it would hardly have been realistic for the king to disguise himself as a monk. According to an essay written by Furuyama Komao, who took part in Operation Meigo in Phnom Penh and became a novelist after the war, Sihanouk was waiting in a "temple across from the palace" to see how things went until safety and security were confirmed, at which point he returned to the palace by himself.²⁶ Considering that this was recorded by a person who actually took part in the Operation and that there were no monks residing in the palace temple, Furuyama's account seems more true to the historical evidence.

Among other soldiers participating in Operation Meigo was Tadakuma Tsutomu, who is known as one of those soldiers who remained behind. The career of Tadakuma, who joined the Khmer Issarak after the war and continued his involvement in Cambodia as an entrepreneur after independence, is

²² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²³ This information is drawn from *ibid.*, pp. 172–73, 185–86.

²⁴ Wakamatsu Rentai Zenshi Kanko Iinkai, *Wakamatsu Rentai Zenshi* [Complete history of the Wakamatsu Regiment] (Privately published, 1998), pp. 101–102.

²⁵ Boeicho Boeikenshujo Senshishitsu, *Sittang Meigo Sakusen*, pp. 637–38. Voat Preah Kaev Morokot is the temple's name in Khmer. As the floor of the main hall was paved with silver plates, it is known as "Pagode d'Argent" or "Silver Pagoda."

²⁶ Furuyama Komao. *23 no Senso Tanpen Shosetsu* [23 short stories on the war] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2004), pp. 346–47.

described in my previous article. It should be noted that Sihanouk himself played the role of a Japanese colonel Hasegawa Ichiro, in his 1969 movie *Rose de Bokor* just before he was dismissed as Head of State, and Tadakuma is assumed to be the real-life model for this Japanese officer.²⁷ Tadakuma paid a fee to release a Korean “comfort woman” from prostitution and married her during the war. She accompanied him when he escaped from the French and joined the Khmer Issarak as a fugitive after the war. When it became too difficult for her to stay with him, she was left in a farming village, and she remained in Cambodia. *The Phnom Penh Post* published a story about this woman in June 1997, and immediately after that, a related report was released online by a South Korean journalist.²⁸

Another Japanese stay-behind named Ishida Matsuo also published his memoir, which makes it easy to trace his whereabouts during and after the war. Ishida joined the 29th Infantry (Wakamatsu) Regiment in April 1941. After combat in Guadalcanal and Imphal, he arrived at Phnom Penh on February 3, 1945. But he did not take part in the Operation Meigo because on March 7, two days before the operation, he was bitten by a poisonous snake and was admitted to hospital.²⁹ After the war, Ishida deserted from his unit and went to Vietnam to join the Viet Minh.

3. Private organizations

This section looks at the Okawa Juku (Okawa Private School) and Dainan Koshi as civilian organizations that were involved in Cambodia during the war. Okawa Juku produced individuals who were deeply engaged in the nationalist movement in Cambodia and Vietnam while Dainan Koshi was a Japanese trading company founded in Indochina which accepted many graduates from Okawa Juku.

3.1 Okawa Juku

Okawa Shumei, the founder of Okawa Juku, was known as a prominent Pan-Asianist in Japan in the pre-war period. After the war, he was prosecuted in the Tokyo Trials (International Military Tribunal for the Far East) for having committed “Class A” crimes. It was said that he became insane from syphilis, which may be evidenced from an episode when he slapped the head of former Prime Minister Tojo Hideki, who was sitting in the front row in the Tokyo Trials. Under these circumstances, Okawa has not been a major subject for researchers unlike other right-wing ideologues such as Kita Ikki until re-

²⁷ See Sasagawa, “Cambodia during World War II,” pp. 406–07. Since Sihanouk’s overthrow meant the movie could not be edited or shown in Cambodia, it was edited in North Korea in 1970. As of August 2015, the movie can be viewed on YouTube with the opening title both in French and *Hangul*.

²⁸ Michael Hayes, “The Unbearable Discomfort of Being,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, June 13, 1997; Anonymous, “‘Hun’ halmoni ponbo tandok hoegyeon Khambodia seo ‘kodok ui 54 nyeon’” *dongA.com*, 1998.6.15, <http://news.donga.com/3/all/19970615/7262083/1> (accessed on May 15, 2015); the same journalist also interviewed Tadakuma in person: “Ilbonin Tadakuma hoegyeon ‘Hun halmoni kohyang Incheon eulu saenggak’” *dongA.com*, 1998.6.18, <http://news.donga.com/View?gid=7262913&date=19970618>. (accessed on May 15, 2015).

²⁹ Ishida Matsuo, *Betonamu Zanryu Nihonhei: Doran no 30 Nen wo Ikinuite* [A Japanese soldier who remained behind in Vietnam: Surviving 30 years of upheaval] (Tsukuba: Tsukuba Shorin, 1990), pp. 3–24. Hayashi Eiichi claims that Ishida fought in Operation Meigo at Stung Treng, but his citation is inaccurate; Hayashi Eiichi, *Zanryu Nihonhei: Ajia ni Ikita Ichiman Nin no Sengo* [Japanese soldiers who remained behind: The postwar period for ten thousand people who lived in Asia] (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2012), pp. 72–73. According to Ishida (p. 25), he arrived at Stung Treng after he was discharged from the hospital, which was one month after the Meigo.

cently, when scholars have started to engage in studies of his ideologies and activities.³⁰

Okawa Shumei was born on December 6, 1886 in Nishiarase-mura, Akumi-gun (present-day Sakata city), Yamagata prefecture. After graduating from Shonai Junior High School (now Tsuruoka Minami High School), then from the 5th High School (now Kumamoto University) in Kumamoto prefecture, he entered Tokyo Imperial University (Department of Literature, majoring in Indian philosophy), and graduated in 1911. In April 1918, he joined the South Manchuria Railway Co., Ltd. (commonly referred to as Mantetsu), and assumed the post of editing manager in the East-Asiatic Commercial Intelligence Institute (Toa Keizai Chosakyoku) in Tokyo the following year. At the same time, he organized the Yuzonsha political discussion club and began to be active as a Pan-Asianist ideologist. In April 1920 he obtained a professorship at Takushoku University. After Yuzonsha was dissolved in February 1923, he formed another organization, Kochisha, in April 1924.

In July 1929, the East-Asiatic Commercial Intelligence Institute separated from Mantetsu to become an incorporated foundation. In April 1938 a human resources development organization, commonly called Okawa Juku, was founded as an affiliate of the Institute. Every year the organization recruited 20 young men, just graduated from junior high school (in the old educational system), to give them boarding school education for two years. Mantetsu, the Foreign Ministry, and the Army Ministry sponsored its foundation. Zuikoryo (Zuiko dormitory) originally located at Asagaya in Tokyo, was later transferred to a former residence of Takahashi Korekiyo, which is now the 4th campus of Sugino Fashion Junior College. The students chose to study one of the languages of Southeast Asia (Thai, Malay, or Vietnamese), South Asia, or West Asia as a second foreign language in addition to English or French. The purpose of this school was to eventually send its graduates to every corner of Asia.³¹ After the war, the Okawa Juku graduates formed a group called “*Nanpokai*” (Association of the South) that published a journal entitled *Minnami* from 1978 to 2007. The following section will discuss the essays contributed by Japanese civilians who were involved in Cambodia.

3.2 Dainan Koshi (Dainan Corporation)

Before the Japanese invasion of northern Indochina, France was wary of Japanese economic advancement and imposed high tariffs on Japanese imports to the colony. Therefore, it was hard for Japanese companies to expand their business in the colony. Dainan Koshi was founded by Matsushita Mitsuhiko as a locally-based company. Matsushita was born on August 3, 1896 in Amakusa, Kumamoto prefecture. He along with his aunt Hashiguchi Seki, who was visiting Japan at the time, moved from Nagasaki to Tonkin in January 1912. After working for a Japanese miscellaneous goods retailer and a

³⁰ Recent studies of Okawa Shumei include Matsumoto Ken'ichi, *Okawa Shumei* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004); Nakajima Takeshi, *Ajia Shugi: Sono Saki no Kindai he* [Asianism: Modernity beyond it] (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 2014); Otsuka Ken-ya, *Okawa Shumei: Aru Fukko Kakushin Shugisha no Shiso* [Okawa Shumei: The thought of a reactionary reformist] (Tokyo: Chuokoron, 1995; reprinted by Kodansha, 2009); and Usuki Akira, *Okawa Shumei: Isuramu to Tenno no Hazama de* [Okawa Shumei: Between Islam and the Emperor] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2010). On Kita Ikki, see Matsumoto, *Okawa Shumei*, pp. 24–34.

³¹ On Okawa Juku see Otsuka, *Okawa Shumei*, pp. 170–74; Tamaiko Akihiro, *Okawa Shumei, Ajia Dokuritsu no Yume: Kokorozashi wo Tsuida Seinen Tachi no Monogatari* [Okawa Shumei, his dream of Independence in Asia: Stories of the young men who respected his will] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2012), pp. 27–42.

trading company in Haiphong and Hanoi, he went independent in 1922 and started his own business in Hanoi. The company he founded was Dainan Koshi. He moved the main office to Saigon in 1928 to expand his business, which mainly dealt imports and exports between Indochina and Japan. He increased the number of branches not only within the colony, but also elsewhere in Southeast Asia. After the Japanese invasion in 1940, Matsushita also became engaged in the transportation business as well as civil engineering and construction business for the Army. Because he was an ardent admirer of Okawa, he not only got deeply involved in the Vietnamese independence movement, but also offered the branches of Dainan Koshi as bases of operation for Okawa Juku's graduates.³²

4. Civilian involvement

4.1 Kato Kenshiro

Among the alumni of Okawa Juku who worked for Dainan Koshi, Kato Kenshiro (whose original family name was Katano), who was involved in Son Ngoc Thanh's escape to Japan, is the most closely related to the subject of this paper. Kato was born in Sakata, Yamagata prefecture, which was also Okawa's hometown. He joined the Arabic group of Okawa Juku on the recommendation of Okawa's younger brother as a student of the second cohort after its foundation. Since it became unrealistic to send personnel to the Arabic-speaking world during World War II, he changed to study French instead in his second year. In Dainan Koshi, which he joined after graduation in August 1941, Kato hoped to get involved in the independence movement in Vietnam, where at the time there were no Japanese. Then he was assigned to Battambang, one of the Cambodian provinces that had been ceded to Thailand.³³

When the "Umbrella Demonstration" was suppressed in 1942, Son Ngoc Thanh escaped to Battambang to be sheltered by the local branch of Dainan Koshi. However, the activities of that branch were detected by the French authorities, and Kato decided to escort Thanh to Bangkok. Since Thailand at the time was suffering from a catastrophic flood comparable to the one in 2011 and land transportation was cut off, he travelled to Bangkok by boat and handed over Son Ngoc Thanh to the Japanese Embassy.

By comparing this episode with the above description of the history of the 82nd Infantry Regiment, it becomes clear who the Japanese individuals were that assisted Thanh to escape from Phnom Penh to Bangkok and the circumstances behind these events. An article on Thanh's escape written by Kato was published in *Minnami* magazine, and a DVD of an interview with Kato is currently available.³⁴

³² Biographical information on Matsushita is from Maki Hisashi, "Annan Okoku" no Yume: Betonamu Dokuritsu wo Shien Shita Nihonjin [The dream of the "Kingdom of Annam": Japanese who supported Vietnamese independence] (Tokyo: Wedge, 2012), pp. 66-68, 87-89, 106-13; and Hirata Toyohiro, "Matsushita Mitsuhiro to Dainan Koshi" [Matsushita Mitsuhiro and Dainan Koshi] in Kansai Daigaku Bunka Koshogaku Kenkyu Kyoten ed., *Tojiki Ryutsu to Seikai Chiiki* [Pottery and porcelain circulation and the Western Sea area] (Osaka: Kansai Daigaku Bunka Koshogaku Kenkyu Kyoten, 2011), pp. 116-19.

³³ Maki, "Annan Okoku," pp. 321-23 and Tamaiko, *Okawa Shumei*, pp. 181-82 also mention Kato's involvement with Son Ngoc Thanh's escape. However, Maki treats this event as something occurring within Cambodia, failing to note that Battambang had been ceded to Thailand.

³⁴ Katano [i.e., Kato] Kenshiro, "Son Goku Tan to Watashi" [Son Ngoc Thanh and I], *Minnami* 31 (2001): 42-44; Murase Kazushi ed., *Okawa Shumei: 'Okawa Juku' Nikisei Kato Kenshiro San Intabyu* [Okawa Shumei: Interview with Mr. Kato Kenshiro, a second cohort graduate of Okawa Juku] (DVD), Tokyo: KM Consulting LLC, 2011.

4.2 Miura Takuji

Another Okawa Juku alumnus who was involved in Cambodia was Miura Takuji.³⁵ After graduating from Aomori prefectural Hachinohe Junior High School (now Hachinohe High School) in March 1938, Miura joined Okawa Juku in May as a member of the inaugural cohort and was assigned to the French-language group. He continued his training from May 1940 in the Taiwan Nanpo Kyokai under the auspices of the Governor-General of Taiwan and studied there for six months. He was scheduled to go to Bangkok and study at Chulalongkorn University; however, in response to a request to join the staff section of the Nishimura Division in the Indochina Expeditionary Force as a member of the military geographic documentation group, he instead went to Hanoi in January 1941. Miura engaged in top-secret surveys in the Nishimura Division at Saigon and various locations in Cambodia.

In September 1941, Miura became an official French interpreter for the 5th Infantry Regiment deployed in Cambodia as part of the invasion to the southern Indochina. While in Cambodia, he worked at the 1st Battalion headquarters in Kampot. After outbreak of the war against the Allies on December 8, he worked under the Nakamura secret service, a special economic activities unit set up in Saigon by the Army Ministry and the Ministry of Greater East Asia. Miura returned to Cambodia in the spring of 1942 to help with the opening of a Japanese Consulate in Phnom Penh.³⁶ Watanabe Toru, introduced in the next section, came to Phnom Penh in July as Miura's replacement. Miura joined the Konomi secret service in December 1942, and later worked in the Saigon Main Office of Dainan Koshi from January 1944 before joining the 4th Marine Engineering Regiment stationed at Phnom Penh, in October that year. Operation Meigo was launched while he was in Cambodia, on his way to his next assigned location. On this occasion, Miura is assumed to have become an intermediary between the Japanese and French forces.

4.3 Watanabe Toru

Watanabe Toru was assigned to a Turkish-language group as a member of the second cohort at Okawa Juku, and studied French as his first foreign language.³⁷ In August 1941, along with other members of his cohort, he sailed from Kobe and disembarked at Saigon with Kato in September. In July 1942, he moved to Phnom Penh to replace Miura in the Japanese Consulate. In July 1944, he passed and was ranked as class A in the physical examination for conscription. He made plans to travel around Indochina before joining the army. Along with Hirano (from Utsunomiya) and Kon (from Kesenuma) both of whom had been members of Nan'yo Kyokai and were working for Dainan Koshi at Phnom Penh, Watanabe visited Vientiane, Hue, and Hanoi. This episode is described in a memoir published in

³⁵ The following paragraphs are based on profiles of Okawa Juku graduates in *Minnami*, 30 (2000): 18–26 and 34 (2007): 39–47 along with Miura Takuji, “Watashi no Senzen Senchu no Ryakureki” [A brief summary of my career before and during the war], *Minnami*, 23 (1992): 1–48.

³⁶ Cambodia was removed from the jurisdiction of the Japanese Consul in Saigon, and a separate Consulate was opened in Phnom Penh under Foreign Ministry Ordinance No. 9 and Foreign Ministerial Notification No. 16, dated June 19, 1942. (JACAR B13091912900).

³⁷ Yamamoto Tetsuro, “Nyusho kara Sotsugyo made” [From entrance to graduation], *Minnami*, 5 (1981): 15.

Minnami.³⁸ Among the human resources trained by Nan'yo Kyokai, known as "Nan'yo commercial apprentices," 12 members of the twelfth cohort were sent to Indochina, thus it is assumed that both Hirano and Kon may have been among this group. Watanabe joined the army in September 1944 and was assigned to Hanoi before being transferred to Phnom Penh the following year. He was in Kompong Som when he fought in Operation Meigo.³⁹

Watanabe continued his career in the field of foreign diplomacy after the war. In August 1953, he returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was assigned to the Embassy in Cambodia in February 1956. He worked there for six years. He was posted to Laos for about four years and to Rumania for two years in the 1960s before returning to Phnom Penh in the height of the civil war during the early 1970s to work in the Embassy for one-and-a-half years.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Some previously unknown details about Cambodia's wartime history have been revealed by materials and publications in Japanese language, as shown here. One may even learn specific names of military units, individuals, companies and organizations.

If we compare the time and space to vertical and horizontal lines for the history of Cambodia during World War II, there are gaps in both lines. Studies of Southeast Asia during this period have advanced to a considerable degree overall, although there are some differences in the degree depending on which part of the region is concerned. From a viewpoint of the horizontal line, very little has been known about the history of Cambodia as compared to other regions, especially relating to Japanese involvement. Similarly, in terms of the vertical line of timeframe, specific details of the World War II period in Cambodian history have not been known. The two blanks where gaps in our knowledge exist can be filled in to some extent by reviewing literature in the Japanese language, as has been attempted in this study.

³⁸ Watanabe Toru, "Aru Jinsei no Kiroku" [Record of a life], *Minnami*, 3 (1979): 5. According to interviews with individuals connected to the palace conducted in the 1950s by V. M. Reddi, the manager of the Phnom Penh branch had pretended to be deaf, but after Operation Meigo, he was discovered to be a colonel in the army and engaged in military activities; V. M. Reddi, *A History of the Cambodian Independence Movement, 1863-1955* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1970), p. 88, n. 32. I have not found confirmation of this in any Japanese materials so far, but I will continue to study the Phnom Penh branch of Dainan Koshi.

³⁹ Watanabe, "Aru Jinsei no Kiroku," p. 6 and Yokoi Kaori, "Inoue Masaji to Nan'yo Kyokai no Nanshin Yoin Ikusei Jigyo" [Inoue Masaji and the project to train personnel for the Southern Expansion], *Shakai Shisutemu Kenkyu*, 16 (2008): 82. The number of studies of Nan'yo Kyokai has been increasing recently. For good references on the background of its foundation, see Yokoi, "Inoue Masaji," p. 77, as well as details in two other articles by the same author: "Nan'yo Kyokai Taiwan Shibu to Taiwan Sotokufu" [The Taiwanese Branch of the Nan'yo Kyokai and the Government General of Taiwan], *Toyo Shiho*, 4 (1998): 44-46; and "Nan'yo Kyokai Taiwan Shibu to Taiwan Sotokufu, Sairon" [The Taiwanese branch of the Nan'yo Kyokai and the Government General of Taiwan, revisited], *Toyo Shiho*, 10 (2004): 53-54. See also Kawanishi Kosuke, "Nan'yo Kyokai to Taishoki 'Nanshin' no Tenkai" [Nan'yo Kyokai and Japan's Southward Movement in the Taisho Period], *Kioi Shigaku*, 18 (1998): 40-43 and "Gaimusho to Nan'yo Kyokai no Renkei ni Miru 1930 Nendai Nanpo Shinshutsu Seisaku no Ichidanmen: 'Nan'yo Shogyo Jisshusei Seido' no Bunseki wo Chushin to Shite" [A study of the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the South Sea Association on the Southern Advance policies in the 1930s], *Ajia Keizai*, 44, 2 (2003): 40-60.

⁴⁰ Watanabe, "Aru Jinsei no Kiroku," p. 7.

Moreover, the contemporary significance of these studies can also be pointed out. As of 2015, issues of security and defense policy are provoking continuing debate in Japan. While hearing debates over whether the right to collective self-defense should be approved or not, and to what extent the Japan Self-Defense Forces may get involved in conflicts overseas, one may remember that it was to Cambodia that present-day Japan's Self-Defense Forces were dispatched for the first time. Their participation in peacekeeping operations under the supervision of UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992 was the first overseas deployment since the organization of the Self-Defense Forces. Robust research will acquire further significance by reviewing Japanese involvement, to contextualize what the Japanese Army and people did in the past in the country to which the Self-Defense Forces were sent for the first time, and where Japanese companies began to invest capital from the 2000s, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper.

One may come up with various aspects of the Japanese involvement other than the issues discussed in this article. Fujiwara Sadao has reviewed in detail academic exchanges centering on the Angkor monuments.⁴¹ Other potential topics may include whether the Japanese Buddhist circles became engaged in Cambodia during wartime, and whether it is possible to discuss Cambodia from a perspective of war and literary works such as novels. These topics cannot be included in this paper, and are left for future studies.

⁴¹ Fujiwara Sadao, *Orientalisuto no Yuutsu: Shokuminchi Shugi Jidai no Furansu Toyo Gakusha to Ankoku Iseki no Koukogaku* [Orientalist Melancholy: French Orientalists and the archaeology of Angkor monuments during the colonial period] (Tokyo: Mekon, 2008).