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Japanese OCWs to the Philippines, 1903–1917

Lydia N. Yu-Jose



At the turn of the century Japan, like the present Philippines, encouraged its laborers to go overseas as contract workers. Most of the Japanese OCWs in the Philippines worked to complete the construction of the Kennon Road from 1903 to around 1905. Upon completion of the road, some of these workers transferred to Davao, where the cultivation of abaca had begun. By the 1920s Davao, along with Hawaii, mainland U.S.A., Brazil and Peru, was the Mecca of Japanese OCWs (Yu-Jose 1994, 21–23).

Recruitment agencies began to send to the Philippines Japanese contract laborers both skilled and unskilled in a trickle in 1903. The number of laborers gradually swelled in 1904, and abruptly dwindled in 1905 as the Kennon Road came to completion. In 1903 more than nine hundred Japanese laborers were sent by ten recruiters; there were fifteen recruiters who sent more than two thousand laborers in 1904; in 1905 there were still fifteen recruiters—not all of them were the same as the previous year's—but the number of laborers sent was less than two hundred. Around eighty percent of all Japanese who entered the Philippines between 1903 and 1905 came through recruitment agencies. The number of recruitment agencies and Japanese emigrant workers bound for the Philippines stabilized upon the development of abaca plantations in Davao. In 1917 the Japanese government amalgamated the half a dozen existing agencies in Japan, except the Morioka Imin Kabushikigōshigaisha (Morioka Emigration Company) into one agency, the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha (Overseas Development Company) and, in 1920, the amalgamation became complete when the latter merged with the former.

The low demand for Japanese labor continued up to the outbreak of World War I. In August 1914 the Japanese consul in Manila informed the foreign office in Tokyo that even though the Philippines was not directly effected by the war in Europe, demands for Manila hemp, copra, tobacco, pearls and other products had dropped,

resulting in unemployment among the workers engaged in the production of these exports (Hiroshima ken 1991, 551). Domestically too, the buying power of people had dropped. Therefore, the consul advised, only the laborers who had already completed their papers for departure should be allowed to proceed to the Philippines. The others should stay in Japan until further notice. In January 1915 only the eighty-four laborers recruited by Tōyō Imin Gōshigaisha (Oriental Emigration Company) for Ōta Development Company, the oldest and one of the biggest Japanese abaca plantation companies in the Philippines, were allowed to go to the Philippines.

A Problematic Beginning

On 1 February 1903 sixteen Japanese contract workers recruited by Kōsei Imin Kabushikigaisha (Kōsei Emigration Company) and twenty recruited by Morishima Hisao disembarked in the port of Manila and were able to pass the customs authorities without any problem. However, on 9 February, the Japanese vice-consul in Manila reported that most of the workers brought in by Kōsei Imin Kabushikigaisha were unskilled and soon became unemployed bums. The vice-consul added that while only skilled workers could be legally allowed entry into the Philippines, there would not have been any problem with the unskilled if they had been assured of employment. Reporting that the arrival of these workers was scandalous and was a result of indiscretion, he reminded the Foreign Ministry that even workers with assured employment—in other words, contract workers—should officially enter the Philippines as “free emigrants,” that is, workers who departed from Japan without any contract of employment” (*Gaikōmonjo* 36, item 1165). The word “emigrant” is here used the way the Japanese during this period used it, without distinguishing between one who emigrates for permanent residence abroad, and one who emigrates for temporary employment. Most of the Japanese immigrants in the Philippines came to work, and had no intention of staying permanently. Likewise, literal English translations of names of recruitment agencies often carry the word “emigration” or “colonization.” These may be read to mean “recruitment agency.”

On 29 March 1903 fifty-seven contract workers were brought in by an individual recruiter, Morishima, and twenty nine by Kōbe Tokō Gōshigaisha (Kōbe Emigration Company) (*Gaikōmonjo* 36, item 1171). The following day Kōbe Tokō Gōshigaisha brought thirty eight more.

After just a couple of days thirty four of those brought in by Morishima and thirty-four by Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha boarded a ship back to Japan.

The workers sent by Morishima complained that they were promised a salary of three U.S. dollars a day and that they could work as soon as they arrived (*Gaikômonjo* 36, item 1173). Their contract, however, stipulated that their salary was only thirty Mexican dollars a month or roughly, one Mexican dollar a day (*Gaikômonjo* 36, item 1173). Moreover, the manager of Morishima's agency explained, the workers had to wait in Manila because the departure of the ship from Manila to Davao where they were supposed to work as agricultural workers was irregular, only one boat a month. It was also possible, the manager surmised, that the workers returned home because they felt homesick, or felt that the climate was too hot for them.

The local agent in Manila of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha claimed that the workers went home because while waiting for a boat to Davao, they met idle unemployed Japanese in Manila who persuaded them to go home. The unemployed Japanese, the agent alleged, persuaded the new comers to go back to Japan with them. The manager of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha, on the other hand, cited sickness and other excuses as reasons for the return of the workers (*Gaikômonjo* 36, item 1182). The report of the governor of Hyogo Prefecture where Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha was based indicated otherwise and pointed out other irregularities committed by the recruitment agency.

According to the report of the governor of Hyogo, the reasons given by the local agent in Manila and the manager of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha as to why the workers returned were not true (*Gaikômonjo* 36, item 1182). His investigation revealed that the manager of the recruitment agency persuaded thirty of the thirty-eight workers who actually wanted to go to Hawaii to go to the Philippines instead. They were told that the salary in Hawaii was low and that the physical examination a worker had to undergo to enter Hawaii was strict. On the other hand, Manila was better because while the salary was the same as in Hawaii, there were more work opportunities there and it was easier to get a passport to the Philippines. It was also found out that there were two laborers who were able to find employment by giving the local agent in Manila grease money, but they were soon dismissed.

On 24 February 1903 the vice-consul in Manila reported to Tokyo the activities of a Japanese who was recruiting workers without a license (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1168). The impostor even wrote

letters of introduction on behalf of some four gullible recruits addressed to some Japanese in Manila, one of them the infamous pimp Muraoka Iheiji (on Muraoka, see Iheiji 1960). Muraoka left Japan in 1885 and brought Japanese prostitutes to Singapore, Borneo, New Guinea, Makassar, Jolo, Zamboanga, Manila, and Legaspi. He operated in the Philippines up to the Japanese occupation of the country.

All these people denied promising any employment to anyone, or any knowledge of the impostor. Around nine of his recruits did not know that they were not supposed to say to the customs officials in the Philippines that they were contract workers. Upon questioning by the customs officials in Manila, they declared that they were contracted to work for Tagawa Shōkai (Tagawa Commercial). Tagawa Shōkai was owned by Tagawa Moritarō, the most respected Japanese businessman in Manila in the first decades of the twentieth century. For a seminal research on his life, see Yoshikawa Yōko, "Bei-ryō ka Manira no shoki Nihonjin shōgyō, 1898-1920: Tagawa Moritarō no nan'pō kan'yo" [The Development of the Japanese Commercial Sector in Manila: The Case of Jose M. Tagawa] *Tōnan Ajia kenkyū* 18 (December 1980): 387-421. Tagawa, too, did not know of this fake involvement.

Without much ado, these workers were soon shipped back to Japan. It is not known if the workers were able to recover the fortune swindled from them but the impostor who was then operating in Taiwan was banned from Taiwan for three years as punishment for the estafa he committed (*Gaikōmonjo* 36, part 2, item 1176).

The above cases of problematic Japanese laborers and recruiters in the Philippines were contained in the reports of the Japanese vice-consul in Manila. It may be gathered from these reports that U.S. Immigration Law prohibited the entry of contract workers but allowed that of skilled workers and, that the vice-consul advised superficial obedience to the law.

The reports also show the problems and complications of emigration of Japanese laborers to the Philippines in the beginning of 1900. There were many actors involved, aside from the laborers and the employers: the recruitment agencies and their agents, the Japanese consular representatives in Manila and Davao, and the governors in the Japanese prefectures or in the case of Tokyo, the Chief of the Metropolitan Government where the Japanese recruiters were based and to whom the recruiters reported the number of emigrants to be recruited, the names, ages, family registries and occupations of the emigrants whose emigration had been approved by the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1193). The process also involved the officials of prefectures where the laborers were recruited and where initial application for passports was made, the shipping agencies, the banks or money lenders, and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The dream of the Japanese laborers to go to greener pastures such as the Philippines was complemented by the need of the employers in the Philippines for skilled workers, by the desire of the Japanese government to send abroad what was perceived as excess labor, and by the profit-motivated recruitment agencies, the shipping companies and the money lenders. However, since the interests of the actors were not always complementary, the Japanese government had to be vigilant in protecting the laborers from unscrupulous recruiters and money lenders. While the Japanese government wanted to encourage emigration of laborers to the Philippines, it also had to be cautious so as not to arouse opposition from Filipino labor unions and suspicion of aggressive colonial intentions from the United States. More importantly, the Japanese government had to be careful that violations by the Japanese of the U.S. Immigration Law were not exposed. From this network of complementary and conflicting interests arose a complicated process of sending Japanese laborers to the Philippines.

The Legal Skilled Workers

The Japanese laborers who entered the Philippines legally by virtue of the fact that they were skilled were few. Among them were the seven glass workers sent by the recruiter Omi Shinkyô in 1906 (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1177; 41, part 2, item 1725). The others were the fifty-four miners recruited by Tairiku Shokumingaisha (Tairiku Emigration Company) for the Batan Coal Mines in 1903 and 1904. These workers were publicly declared as contract workers. The supply of workers for the Batan Coal Mines was beset with problems. The situation that the miners in Batan got into will be narrated in relative detail below in order to bring out the problems that might have engendered some of the rules and regulations regarding Japanese emigration to the Philippines.

On 22 June 1903 the Japanese vice consul in Manila informed the Foreign Ministry that the local Japanese "agent" (a sub-contractor) of Omi Shinkyô, a recruiter in Japan, had applied to recruit Japanese miners, a doctor, an engineer, a translator, a blacksmith, and

carpenters for the Batan Coal Mines (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1180). It was not until mid-September that the Chief of the Metropolitan Police (the recruitment agency involved was based in Tokyo) forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the request of Tairiku Shokumingaisha to recruit miners for Batan (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1209). Evidently, Omi had transferred to Tairiku Shokumingaisha this particular business opportunity of sending laborers to the Philippines. Enclosed with the request was a description of Batan—its geographical location, climate, living and work conditions, prepared by Tairiku Shokumingaisha.

Forty-five miners (forty-one men and four women), a doctor, and an engineer recruited from Fukuoka arrived in Manila on 18 November, but one man and two women were refused entry because they were suffering from trachoma. The rest were allowed to disembark, but only after posting a bond of five hundred dollars. The bond was demanded because the workers could not show a certification that they were skilled workers. They were detained until the agent's promise to bring the certificate from Japan was accepted by the customs officer. The certificate signed by the governor of Fukuoka and a copy of the contract signed by the manager of Tairiku Shokumingaisha, two guarantors, and the emigrants finally reached the Japanese consulate after about two weeks.

The same omission was committed by the five recruits who came on board the *Tremont* on 30 November, but they were not as lucky as the forty-five before them; they were not allowed to disembark (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1234). The vice consul, aiming to avoid a repetition of these unfortunate incidents, advised the Foreign Ministry that the next batch of miners should carry with them a certification with an English translation that they were expert miners. In the beginning of 1904 twelve more miners arrived, but three were refused entry because they were detected to be infected with trachoma (*Gaikômonjo* 37, part 2, item 1001).

On 22 July thirty-five miners went back to Japan. It was reported that insufficient facilities in the work place and delayed payment of salaries were the causes of the workers' discontent and departure. The report also mentioned that payment of salaries was often delayed because of the poor transportation condition between Manila and Batan. Furthermore, it was revealed that the recruitment agency, in violation of the Japanese Emigration law, took a commission of twenty cents per ton of coal. A later report by the Chief of the Metropolitan Police said that the workers did not leave without permis-

sion and that they left on the assumption that they would be paid their uncollected salaries in Japan (*Gaikômonjo* 37, part 2, item 1002; item 1006). Therefore, whatever the real reason why the workers abandoned their jobs, the problem on hand after the workers had returned to Japan was for them to be paid the uncollected salaries.

Settlement of the claims of the workers dragged on for three months. Since the Chief of the Metropolitan Police had established that the Batan Coal Mines had completely paid its obligations, the problem was to pinpoint who had kept the money due the miners (*Gaikômonjo* 37, item 1006). Whether it was the Tairiku Shokumingaisha or the Japanese sub-contractor in the Philippines was never made clear, but the dispute was solved through a compromise between the Tairiku Shokumingaisha and the workers (*Gaikômonjo* 37, item 1008).

Batan Coal Mines temporarily closed but soon resumed operations using some twenty Japanese recruited by another local Japanese sub-contractor in Manila. Some of these recruits were former miners recruited by Tairiku Shokumingaisha who left Batan, and had stayed in Manila (*Gaikômonjo* 37, item 1009).

Illegal Workers as "Free Emigrants"

A majority of the illegal Japanese workers in the Philippines were recruited to work in the construction projects in Manila and the surrounding areas. The more known of these public works was the completion of Kennon Road. Only some two hundred Japanese workers were requested by the Manila Railway Company to work on the construction of a railway between Antipolo and Manila and between Bigaa and Cabanatuan. But aside from the information that Kansai Imin Gômeigaisha (Kansai Emigration Company) was the recruitment agency that applied to supply these workers, not much is found in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hiroshima ken (1991, 545). The illegal workers often presented themselves to the customs officers in Manila as "free emigrants," and unless they were very unlucky, they were allowed to disembark, for Japanese emigrants who could prove that they would not be a financial burden to the public by showing a certain amount in cash called "show money," were allowed under the existing U.S. Immigration Law.

In mid-June 1903 Major L.W.V. Kennon, supervisor of the construction of the road which was later named after him, with a letter of introduction by the executive secretary of the American governor-

general in the Philippines, visited the Japanese consul in Manila to request for Japanese laborers to work on Kennon Road. The letter is enclosed with the Japanese consul's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see *Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1178). Since at the time only the local agent of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha, Inaba Usaburô, was available, the consul introduced Kennon to him. It must be remembered that Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha was under investigation for alleged misdeeds against some workers sent to the Philippines earlier in the year.

Kennon and Inaba signed a contract which stipulated the number of stone masons, supervisors, translators, and coolie laborers that would be supplied, the salaries and perquisites of each kind of laborer, and other relevant matters such as the number of working hours per day (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1178). A total number of 1,022 laborers, including twenty supervisors and two translators was requested. Every month a number of them was to arrive at the work place but the sending of all the workers was to be completed not later than 30 September 1903.

Communications flowed between the Japanese Consulate in Manila and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and between the latter and the Hyogo prefectural governor. The Japanese consul in Manila conveyed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he was aware of the problems that might arise should the Japanese laborers be sent. These were the political and legal problems concerning the U.S. Immigration law and the objections from Filipino labor unions, not to mention the great adjustment the Japanese laborers would have to make in this challenging chore in the mountains of a land strange to them. Nevertheless, with discretion and careful choice of "brave, healthy and strong laborers," the consul believed that the project should be given a try (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1179). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting on this cautious evaluation and remembering the previous case of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha, reluctantly approved the project on a provisional basis and advised the governor of Hyogo to take special care regarding the behavior of Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1181, item 1184).

On 13 July Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha officially asked permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the governor of Hyogo to recruit workers from several prefectures. By August, communication lines became busier when other prefectural governors addressed to the Foreign Ministry inquiries and requests about recruitment in their prefectures. The network became complicated when other recruitment agencies joined the band wagon. On 13 August, for example, a

communication was received by the Foreign Ministry from the governor of Hiroshima where Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha was based (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1186). The governor wanted the foreign ministry's comment on the enclosed contract to the effect that the 510 of the 1,000 workers that Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha was supposed to supply would, instead, be supplied by Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha. The contract also stated that Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha would pay Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha's agent in Manila, Inaba Usaburô, who would also act as agent for the former, a commission of five yen per emigrant and, would pay Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha a concession fee of two yen per emigrant. The following day a letter from the governor of Okayama was received, asking if Teikoku Shokumin Gôshigaisha could be allowed to supply half of the 1,022 workers Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha was supposed to recruit, inasmuch as the deadline for the sending of all the workers was approaching, and there was no sign that Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha would meet the deadline (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1187).

Towards the end of August the Japanese consul in Manila, sensing that Kôbe Tokô Gôshigaisha would not finish the processing involved in sending emigrants to the Philippines, recommended that permission to recruit be given to many recruitment agencies or individual recruiters, and to divide among them the total number of workers that must be sent by 30 September (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1198). On 21 September the consul wrote that the deadline for sending all the remaining laborers had been extended to mid-November. He repeated his advice that not more than one hundred per ship be sent to avoid suspicion (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1210). The new deadline came, but Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha had sent only two hundred twenty five of the five hundred ten it was supposed to supply. In its petition to be allowed to send the remaining emigrants even after the deadline, it explained that the issuance of passports of these emigrants was delayed, and besides, since only a certain number of laborers could be sent per ship, the agency applied for passports on behalf of only a few at a time (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1230). He explained that Japan should try its best to meet the deadline because if it failed, it might lose this golden opportunity to supply workers for the same project in the future, and for other construction projects that abounded in the Philippines. He added that to avoid suspicion by the customs officer in Manila that these were contract workers, and indeed, they were, no more than one hundred laborers per ship should be sent.

Several days later the consul sent another letter where he wrote that since this would be the first time Japan would send contract laborers since the passage of the U.S. Immigration Law, he was not sure how strictly the American customs officers would enforce the law (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1208). Certainly, this was not the first time that contract workers were sent by Japanese recruiters in violation of the law. What the consul meant was that this would be the first time that a big number of Japanese contract workers would be sent. Just to be sure that the emigrants would not be refused entry, the consul suggested that they be disguised as "free emigrants," and that it should not be publicly known that they were sent by recruitment agencies.

Finally, on 16 October one hundred ninety Japanese laborers arrived in Manila on board the *Hongkong Maru* (*Gaikômonjo*, 36, part 2, item 1216). Twenty-three of them were recruited by Morishima Hisao. Four recruitment agencies sent the following number: thirteen by Bôchô Imin Gômeigaisha (Bôchô Emigration Company), seventy-five by Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha, six by Gôshigaisha Sanmaru Shôkai (Sanmaru Company), and forty-five by Teikoku Shokumin Gôshigaisha—a total of one-hundred seventy workers including those sent by Morishima. The other twenty arrivals were not recruited by any agency. The following day *Cable News* reported the arrival of the laborers (*Gaikômonjo*, 36, part 2, item 1216). Hardly a news item welcomed by the Japanese consul, he promptly reported the "exposé" to the foreign office in Tokyo, which in turn did not lose any time in sending a memorandum to the Chief of the Metropolitan Police and prefectural governors, ordering the reduction of the number of emigrants per ship, and reminding the governors and the Chief of the Metropolitan Police to be more discreet in sending laborers to the Philippines, for if more exposés such as the one made by *Cable News* happened, Japan might soon lose this golden opportunity of sending Japanese laborers to the Philippines (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, items 1214–1216). The consul in Manila followed up his report with a reminder that it should be made to appear that the workers were not contract laborers. Furthermore, the Philippine Commission had passed a resolution calling for the ban on importation of foreign labor. The consul therefore advised stopping the sending of laborers until further notice. Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha and Teikoku Shokumin Gôshigaisha, however could continue sending the laborers they had recruited (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, items 1217–1219).

In mid-November one hundred sixty seven emigrants recruited by Kaigai Tokô Kabushikigaisha (Overseas Emigration Company) and Teikoku Shokumin Gôshigaisha (Imperial Colonization Company) reached the port of Kobe, but before they proceeded on their journey, they complained of being overcharged by the two agencies (*Gaikômonjo* 36, part 2, item 1220). It was ascertained in the investigation that one hundred forty nine of the emigrants borrowed money from a money lender and each one was made to pay a fifteen yen processing fee, broken down as follows: 1.68 yen notarial fee, 4.50 yen interest for three months, and 8.82 yen to cover the transportation and lodging fees of the agent of the money lender who came along with the clients to help them change the yen to dollars and write receipts. It can be assumed that the amount borrowed by each one was 100 yen, for that was the amount needed as "show money." There was suspicion of a collusion between Teikoku Shokumin Gôshigaisha and the money lender, but since it was hard to prove this, the money lender and the emigrants agreed on a compromise: three yen was returned to each one of them. It was also ascertained that the fifty yen collected from each of the one hundred sixty seven emigrants as embarkation fee at Kobe was in excess of the actual amount. Furthermore, the overcharging was done through the collusion of the personnel of the shipping company with the two recruitment agencies. Each emigrant was refunded twenty-seven yen.

Complaints that the two yen collected as disinfecting fee at Hongkong and the 1.30 yen as disembarkation fee at Manila were in excess of the actual cost were brought out, but these were not proven. It also seemed that the emigrants were not able to get a refund from the 3.50 yen (200 yen = 1 U.S. dollar) fee they paid for their stay at a lodging in Kobe. It was a practice for the emigrants to be lodged at Kobe for around a week while waiting for the next ship, and/or completing their travel papers. It was possible, the investigator reported, that the middle man who put the emigrants in the lodge contracted for thirty *sen* (one hundred *sen* was equal to one yen) a person, and charged the occupants fifty *sen* each, but it was hard to establish any collusion with the recruitment agency. Satisfied with the refunds made to them, the passengers finally boarded their ship for Manila.

Kennon Road was opened to traffic in 1905. Before its final completion the recruitment agencies should have stopped recruitment for this project because the job could be finished by the workers who were already there. The recruitment agencies in Japan, however, did

not stop recruitment in spite of the fact that the road was about to be finished, and in spite of the knowledge that these laborers would soon lose their job. One recruit who arrived in June 1904 recalled that he was told by the person who recruited him that there was still plenty of work at Kennon, but it became obvious to him upon his arrival that the road would soon be completed (*Shuroku Luson*, no. 55, p. 139).

Regulations and Guidelines

Ad-hoc and piece-meal response of the Japanese government to the problems that arose from this early experience with recruitment agencies brought about some guidelines which later on became akin to rules and regulations of sending Japanese laborers to the Philippines.

One of the first guidelines was for recruitment agencies to send workers to the Philippines only when there was a demand. Complementary to this guideline was the stipulation that the grant or renewal of permits of recruitment agencies was dependent on the existence of a demand for the skills of the laborers they proposed to send. Public works in the Philippines in the beginning of the twentieth century indeed were in need of skilled workers and the Japanese who were recruited for these projects did not have to enter illegally if they were really skilled. Unfortunately there were many who were recruited in spite of their lack of skills. In fact, the Japanese vice-consul in 1904 reported that many of the laborers sent by the agencies to work in Kennon were "not different from the natives and the Chinese" (Hiroshima ken 1991, 537-43). The comment meant the Japanese were as bad as the Filipinos and the Chinese. The Japanese had a low esteem for Filipino and Chinese laborers.

While carpenters, masons, barbers, blacksmiths, horse shoers, miners, and glass makers were usually in demand, there was no permanent list or definition of what jobs needed special skills or experience; it all depended on current demands in the Philippines. This brought about a second rule, that recruitment agencies should regularly report on the condition of the demand and supply of labor in the Philippines. Moreover, they should report on the geographical location of the work place, its climate, and the labor conditions there.

The most often repeated reminder from the Japanese consulate in Manila to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the informal rule that the number of emigrants sent from Japan should not exceed one

hundred per ship. The limitation was self-imposed in order to make the arrival of the emigrants inconspicuous to the customs officer and the local press in the Philippines.

A number of rules was issued to check the abuses of the recruitment agencies and to protect the laborers. In August 1903 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs put down three conditions before a recruitment agency's application to send emigrants to the Philippines could be approved (*Gaikōmonjo* 36, part 2, item 1192). First, the recruitment agency should have an agent in the Philippines and second, the salaries of the laborers should be paid according to the contract they signed and transportation fees should not be more than the actual amount. Obviously, the first two conditions were meant to ensure that somebody to look after the well-being of the emigrants would be in the Philippines, and that the recruitment agencies did not make illegal profits out of the emigrants. The third condition was that if the agency had an agreement with another agency to cooperate in sending workers, proof must be shown that the agreement had been confirmed by the two parties. Presumably, this was to ensure that the contracted total number of workers to be sent would be complied with within the period specified.

In 1904 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to act to shield the laborers from unnecessary complications and exploitation resulting from the presence of sub-contractors or middlemen. Aiming to eliminate middlemen, it ruled that agreements to supply workers should be entered into directly by the employers and the recruitment agencies or their officially designated agents (Hiroshima ken 1991, 548).

The role of local Japanese agents officially designated to operate in the Philippines was important because the responsibility of the recruitment agency in Japan to the laborer did not end upon sending him to his work place. The recruitment agency was supposed to double as a guarantor of the laborer. The Japanese Emigration Law stipulated that if the laborer fell sick or for some other reasons had to be sent back to Japan, the expenses incurred could be advanced by the Japanese government, but the guarantor had to pay it back.² The recruiter had this obligation to the laborer for a period of ten years from the date of the laborer's departure from Japan.

In compliance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs order, three local Japanese agents were assigned in Manila. In 1905, acting upon the recommendation of the Japanese consul in Manila, one of them was transferred to Davao (*Gaikōmonjo* 38, part 2, item 1246). The need for a local agent in Davao arose when Japanese who became jobless

upon the completion of the Kennon Road moved to Davao to work in an abaca plantation. There was already a Japanese recruiter in Davao, but since he was not officially designated by any recruitment agency, he had no legal obligation to extend to the laborers the protection stipulated in the Japanese Emigration Law. It was reported that this recruiter had failed to inform the consulate in Manila about the deaths of some Japanese in Davao when an epidemic broke out. He had even failed to extend to the laborers he himself had recruited proper assistance when they fell sick (*Gaikōmonjo* 38, part 2, item 1246).

Towards Centralization

The above measures did not totally eliminate derelict recruiters. For example, the Bōchō Imin Gōmeigaisha continued to use middlemen. In August 1908 it sent Japanese recruited from the Ryukyus to cut railroad sleepers for a lumber company in Zamboanga, but these workers were ignorant about cutting railroad sleepers (*Gaikōmonjo* 40, part 2, item 1476). In 1917 the Japanese government, aiming to have a stricter control over recruitment and sending of laborers overseas, undertook a drastic measure of amalgamating all the recruitment agencies under one corporation, the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha. As has been mentioned earlier, the Morioka Imin Kabushikigōshigaisha joined the amalgamation only in 1920. Subsidized by the government, the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha became the only Japanese recruitment agency authorized to send Japanese laborers abroad. With the creation of this umbrella corporation, the Japanese government took full control of the overseas emigration of its laborers.

Governmental control over the recruitment agency even extended to the approval of advertisements for recruitment of workers. The agency had to submit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs several drafts of its advertisements before they were publicized. An example of a draft submitted by the agency for approval read: "Recruiting agricultural workers for abaca plantations in Davao, Philippines, the place for success overseas. Apply at once, for slots are limited." The ministry's approval came with the "advice" that the phrase "apply at once for slots are limited," be deleted (JMFA, Imin toriatsukainin kankei zakken, Hiripin no bu [Miscellaneous Matters Relating to Recruiters: the Philippines], 3.8.2-300-2-3, 17 December 1917, Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha to the Foreign Minister; 10 January 1918, Bureau of Commerce to Superintendent-General of the Metropolitan Police).

In 1925 the Japanese consul in Manila opined that since the problem of recalcitrant recruitment agencies had been solved with the creation of the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha, there was no longer a need for a contract which was then required in order to protect a laborer from unscrupulous recruiters. The consul recommended that the practice of signing a contract but instructing the laborers to deny that they were contract laborers and instead declare themselves as "free emigrants" to the customs officers, be stopped. In other words, all the Japanese laborers would be "free emigrants" in the sense that they did not sign any contract.³ Through this system, no laborer would make the mistake of telling the customs officer that he signed a contract. In reality, however, there were, more often than not, jobs waiting for the Japanese arrivals.

This systematized way of sending laborers to the Philippines was done by designating the Ōta Development Company as the nominal employer of Davao-bound Japanese workers. In reality, the Ōta Development Company employed only some of them, and deployed the rest to other abaca plantations. Thus the recruitment and deployment of Japanese workers in the Philippines were centralized and made more discreet, farther from the reach of Filipino and American authorities, and closer to direct Japanese supervision.

Conclusion

This article has identified some of the Japanese recruitment agencies and the employers in the Philippines to whom they supplied laborers. As the flow of communication from the source of the demand for labor to the point that the laborers were supplied is traced, it has shown how the Japanese government sought to protect its overseas workers through a strict supervision of recruitment agencies. It is not the intention of this article to present what Japan did as a model for the Philippines to solve the problems of Filipino OCWs. It is only hoped that the historical presentation has highlighted the fact that recruitment agencies and the government of the sending country were and are central to the problems of OCWs. The Philippine government should take a closer look at its own policies and the operations of the recruitment agencies and arrive at its own original solution.

Notes

1. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (hereafter JMFA), *Gaikōmonjo*, 36, item 1164. *Gaikōmonjo* or, more correctly, *Gaikō bunsho*, is a collection of primary Japanese diplomatic records. Reference to this source will hereafter be indicated as simply *Gaikōmonjo*, with volume and item number.
2. Law for the Protection of Emigrants, Article III, in appendix of Moriyama (1985).
3. JMFA, Honpo imin kankei zakken: Hiripin no bu [Miscellaneous Matters Relating to Japanese Emigrants: The Philippines], 3.8.2-285-12, 14 July 1925, Japanese Consul in Manila to Foreign Minister.

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