COMPLETION   REPORT

War in a Settler Zone: Changes in the Social Relations among Filipino, Japanese and Filipino-Japanese Residents in Davao province, Philippines(1935-1945)

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War in the Philippines: View from a Settler Zone—Davao, Philippines, 1941-1945

War historians acknowledge that there are divergent narratives on the Asia-Pacific War. The editors of *East Asia's Haunted Present* observe, "[E]ach nation has its political and national needs and historical experiences, and own cultural idioms by which to interpret history. There may never be a unanimous non-conflicting narrative of events."[1] Like many others, they seek to bridge the gap in war consciousness by juxtaposing narratives from former enemy nations. An alternative perspective focuses on frontiers, border settlements and settler zones—areas far from national centers. Rather than separating nations, frontiers and borders are seen as regions where people of divergent cultures meet.[2] Following the latter perspective, my study provides a local war history of Davao Province, a Filipino-Japanese settler zone at the outbreak of the war. Through the use of collective biographies, family histories, memoirs and personal interviews, I examine how Filipino and Japanese residents responded to war exigencies.

Located in the far south of the Philippines, Davao Province was considered a frontier by both Manila, which was loyal to the US, and of Tokyo. Davao was one of the wealthiest Philippine provinces, yet its wealth was drawn from the abaca production industry dominated by the Japanese. Filipino farmers were employed by Japanese agriculturalists; Filipino lawyers and doctors served Japanese corporations. While the Japanese migrants consisted only 8% of the total population, Davao was saturated with Japanese culture—the Osaka Bazaar, *kakigori* and *manju* peddled by vendors, Filipino boys playing *kendo,* and the like. By 1930s there were a number of Filipino-Japanese intermarriages; by 1939 there were at least 754 Filipino-Japanese children. However, despite years of intercultural connections, nationalism from Tokyo and Manila (which soared in the 1930s) penetrated the frontier. By 1940, Davao feared the high concentration of potentially enemy population.

I found that in Davao, the war exigencies and the residents' responses to these are quite similar to those in other Philippine provinces—outright and subtle resistance against foreign invaders, and withdrawal to autonomous areas and to informal economy for survival.[3] What differed was why and how those responses were made. For example, at the outbreak of war Filipinos in Davao, like in other provinces, looted bazaars to stockpile supplies; however in Davao there emerged another reason for looting—the bazaars were owned by the Japanese, the enemy.

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[1] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism* (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008), 239.

[2] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Lines in the Snow: Imagining the Russo-Japanese Frontier," *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 1 (1999): 58, accessed in http://www.jstor.org/stable/2672336 on June 30, 2014.

[3] Benedict Kerkvliet, "Withdrawal and Resistance…," in *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John Small*, edited by Laurie J. Sears, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

During the Japanese military occupation, prewar connections aided in acquiring "Good Citizen Certificate" which allowed Filipinos to roam their city without fear of Japanese military harassment. Prewar connections also facilitated the flow of reliable information and of sharing of resources, across nationalities. Residents who had been immersed in both cultures (e.g. Filipina wives of Japanese settlers and their mestizo children) became cultural mediators and interpreters. By the final months of the war, it seems that prewar connections did not play a major role due to the people's mobility in those last three years. However, for the Japanese who evacuated en masse to the interior mountains, kinship and ethnic ties with indigenous people saved their lives. My paper concludes that besides nationalist sentiments and racial prejudices, factors influencing residents' responses were ethnic identity, kinship/ family ties, and prewar neighborhood/ occupational networks.

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