CHAPTER 2

A World of Migration

This chapter contends that Yanaihara established the study of population migration based on his interest in the mobility of society, a factor that had a global impact on the international system. The scope of this study was much wider than the Japanese general concern over “colonization” (shokumin). In his time, great powers divided the world into territories, or spheres of interest, thus restricting opportunities of free migration by separate sets of legislation. In the context of great power competition, population migration was a thorny issue as it would change the balance of power or it could coincide with a state’s desire for territorial expansion. However, Yanaihara challenged the conventional notion that population migration was always dictated by imperial powers. I will show how he conceptualized the movement of people as a fundamental driving force of global political and economic reconfiguration, and how he developed an alternative historical perspective of a decentralized world society as the dynamic arena of socioeconomic and cultural interactions among diverse social and cultural constituencies.

The intriguing nature of Yanaihara’s conceptualization of population migration should be understood in a historical context. Seemingly, his position, the chair of Colonial Policy at Tokyo Imperial University, was obliged to educate future bureaucrats and officials in the governance of Japanese colonies. The creation of this position was political: Gōtō Shimpei (1857–1929), the first civil administrator of Taiwan, the Tokyo governor, and later the president of the South Manchurian Railway, initiated the creation of that position with an appointment of Nitobe Inazō, who formerly served Gōtō as a special advisor in Taiwan. Gōtō regarded colonies as the symbol of “Japanese international development in the arena of ‘national imperialism,’ so that colonies should be part of Japanese foreign policy in a broader sense.”1 However, when
Yanaihara was appointed as the chair of Colonial Policy at Tokyo Imperial University in 1923, this position had been already moved from the Department of Law to the newly established Department of Economics. The academic atmosphere of the Department of Economics was relatively open in comparison to the Department of Law, as the faculty members were concerned with economic disparity and social problems. It was in this context that Yanaihara provided a more solid socioeconomic approach to population migration, challenging the works by predecessors in colonial studies such as Yamamoto Miono (1894–1941) and Nitobe Inazō.

The chapter begins with Yanaihara’s perspective on Japanese immigration and Western restrictive policies on race issues. Although he shared an anti-Western sentiment with other Japanese intellectuals, he had a wider interest in the general theme of population migration. The second section describes Yanaihara’s concept of shokumin, a term that is often translated as colonization, but more correctly signifies population migration. To identify the motive behind this definition, the third section moves onto his book and articles on “overpopulation,” the phenomenon in which population growth is faster than the increase of the means of subsistence. The fourth section focuses on his study on the Zionist movement to which he referred in defining population migration. The fifth section considers Yanaihara’s proposal for the right of abode to correspond with people’s needs. The final section examines the relevance of Yanaihara’s argument to today’s debate on migration and globalization.

State Control of Migration and Racism

“Population migration” was a popular subject in imperial Japan. In theory, the rapid increase of the Japanese population in the late nineteenth century demanded a place of resettlement for the “surplus” population in Japan. In practice, Japanese farmers who suffered from the changing economic and social system under the Meiji reform emigrated to foreign lands such as Guam, Hawaii, mainland North America, and Latin America. Since the movement of nationals became closely linked to the state power, a state-supported scheme for Japanese emigration soon started. The Taisho era was a critical time for the growing number of Japanese migrants to the colonies such as Korea and Taiwan as well as to Australia and the United States. By 1920, there were approximately 1.2 million Japanese immigrants in the United States, about 70,000 in California. The growing number of Japanese immigrants who came to