



Southeast Asia in the minds of post-World War 2 Japanese : An afterthought on the themes of *Harp of Burma*

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Abstract *Harp of Burma* was one of the most popular and influential works in the post-war period in Japan. It was written in 1947-48 and awarded a prize by the minister of education in 1949. By examining this story and its critics, some issues defining the post-war Japanese attitude toward Southeast Asia are revealed. Should Japan's position be "Co-Asia" or "Ex-Asia"? Was Southeast Asia perceived as relevant to Japan's future course? Then, as subsequent evidence of these attitude during Japan's reconstruction period, the theory of Umezao Tadao is examined. While he categorically denied similarity between Asian countries and Japan, he also set aside the role of European pressure in the process of Japan's modernization. Lastly, some contemporary views are cited to reopen the question of what light *Harp of Burma* might shed on present-day Japanese interests in Asia.

Key words Takeyama Michio, Umezao Tadao, *Harp of Burma*

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第二次世界大戦後の日本における東南アジア 認識再考：『ビルマの堅琴』によせて（英文）

概要 第二次大戦後から現在に至る日本のアジア認識の変遷を検証するのが本論文の目的である。特に東南アジアを素材とする代表的な議論を扱うことによって、その特徴を検出した。戦争直後の代表的なものとして竹山道雄の著作『ビルマの堅琴』及び彼に対する批判を検討する。続いて梅棹忠夫の『文明の生態史観』を論じる。最後に今後の日本とアジアの関係を論じる際に最重要となると思われる幾つかのポイントを指摘する。

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1. *Harp of Burma* : The Japanese mind at the end of the war

Harp of Burma is a Japanese children's tale written by Takeyama Michio in 1947-48. The story was extremely popular and well-known among the Japanese people, and its author received the minister of education's prize for it in 1949. The tale first appeared in serial form in the children's magazine *Aka-Tombo* (meaning "Red-Dragonfly" in English). Up to the time of its publication, the author had been a professor in German language in Japan and had made some important translations from German literatures including the works of Goethe, Niche and Schweitzer.⁽¹⁾ After retiring from academe in 1951 shortly after its publication, he became engaged as an essayist trying to lead the Japanese public opinion toward discovering the inherent value of Japanese culture and tradition. In this effort, he was shunned : He was regarded as a hard right winger - as one of the most aggressive representatives of such thought after the World War 2, even though he himself had opposed the totalitarian states including Nazi-Germany and Communism-Russia before Japan formed its alliance with Germany and Italy in 1940.

Apart from its author's ideology, *Harp of Burma* itself has garnered an excellent reputation in Japan. This story was twice made into a movie, in 1956 and 1985 ; these movies have also been popular, said by some to be more impressive than the original novel. Thus, it is safe to say that *Harp of Burma* has been accepted by most Japanese people in the post-war period, as reflecting the country's anti-war mindset ; conversely, it can be said to have played an important role in forging Japanese post-war opinion.

This popular story is set in Myanmar, one of the places where massive numbers of Japanese soldiers died during the war. In accordance with the

(1) Takeyama Michio was born in 1903 in Osaka as a son of a banker. His father's business obliged him to change his address often. He lived in Seoul for six years beginning at age 4. <http://www.city.kamakura.kanagawa.jp/stroll/culture/takeyama.htm>. <http://homepage2.nifty.com/hi-rose/ijinden/7gatu/0717.htm>. etc.

events of the war, Southeast Asia has been one of the essential background regions when examining traits in the Japanese people's attempt to come to terms with their military defeat.

The story has two main plots, which are as follows.

(A) The protagonist of this tale is a Japanese soldier, Mizushima. At the end of the World War 2, Japan was fighting a losing battle with the English army in Myanmar. Mizushima belonged to a unit whose commander had graduated from a music school and loved music dearly. As the soldiers of this unit could sing well, it was nicknamed a 'singing troop'. Mizushima himself not only was a good singer, but he also played the harp.

One day in the summer of 1945 they were marching among the mountains in Myanmar, unable to communicate with headquarters. To them, by chance, the local inhabitants made approaches, offering hospitality and food. In the scenes that followed, Japanese soldiers and Myanmar people sang together, sharing their native folk songs with each other. Meanwhile, however, the number of local inhabitants were gradually decreasing. The Japanese soldiers at last realized that they were being besieged by an overwhelming English force. The commander of the Japanese army had to prepare his men for the last desperate attack. Before going off to fight, they sang the nostalgic song "Hanyuu no Yado" (meaning "a poor house made of clay" in English), a Japanese favorite. Then, unexpectedly, the surrounding English soldiers began to join in the melody. Infused with profound emotion, the two forces avoided battle. The Japanese soldiers came to learn that the war had ended three days earlier.

Prior to the war, 'Hanyuu no Yado' had been specified by Japan's Ministry of Education as one of the basic songs for elementary education. Therefore, Japanese soldiers thought this song was inherently Japanese, and sang it with longing for the sight of their homes in Japan. This was not the case, however. In fact, the melody originated from the English song "Home,

Sweet Home”,⁽²⁾ although Japanese soldiers did not know this at the time. Thus, the singing of the Japanese soldiers inadvertently brought feelings of homesickness upon the English soldiers, too.

(B) Mizushima eventually leaves his corps. On the ship returning to Japan, the commander receives a letter from Mizushima. In this letter Mizushima discloses his determination that he will not return home, expressing his thoughts about the war and his future. This letter is so impressive that it has constituted another point of public approval for the story. The following are his contentions.

1. Our suffering in the defeat of war should be considered a consequence of our becoming too greedy and forgetting the most important thing for human beings. We believed in our civilization but our belief had a superficial trait in it. To be sure, it is not good to be lethargic like Myanmar people, but we should try to be more moderate. Otherwise, we, not only as the Japanese but also as the human beings, cannot be saved.
2. I will stay in Myanmar in order to bury every Japanese soldier who has died there. Now that I have seen the tremendous number of my colleagues' bodies that have been abandoned, I cannot return home by myself. I stay here to consider the right answer as to how we will be truly saved. I want to live in and devote myself to Myanmar. This is not my own will speaking but as if someone else had ordered me strictly but tenderly. I cannot do anything else after hearing this voice.

The author of this story, Takeyama, confessed later that he knew only few things about Myanmar, including the monks' ways of living in the country. Therefore, some important misunderstandings about the country

(2) The lyrics of “Home, Sweet Home” are as follow :

Mid pleasures and palaces, Tho' we may roam ; Be it ever so humble, There's no place like home ; A charm from the skies Seems to follow us there, Which, seek through the world Is ne'er met with elsewhere. Home! Home! Sweet home! There's no place like home! Oh! There is no place like home!

(Cited from <http://www6.plala.or.jp/Djehuti/230.htm>.)

and its culture in this story could be seen and in fact have been pointed out. Furthermore, some anecdotes around the generation of the plot have been clarified. For example, one illustration says :

On a Christmas day during the World War 1, there spontaneously occurred a courteous exchange of songs between English and German soldiers. Takeyama was inspired by this incident. He made up his mind to write *Harp of Burma* in the summer of 1946. At first he thought that the setting of the story would be on the military front line in China. In that case, however, he couldn't find a song that both Japanese and Chinese could sing together. As a result, it followed necessarily that the enemy should be an English troop and the battlefield be in Myanmar.⁽³⁾

This commentator insisted that the process of making this story was inevitably determined by the historic evolution of modernization in Japan. In this sense, this story articulated a demand for historical reassessment of the path that Japan had taken and exposed the problematic of Japan's modernizing development since the 1860s. Although the story was set in Myanmar, the author's intention was to reflect on the rightness and wrongness of Japanese modern development by way of imitating Western civilization. As a matter of fact, after writing this story, Takeyama proceeded to make a unique interpretation for Japanese history by specifically searching for non-European value in Japanese modern thought.

2. Critical responses to *Harp of Burma* : Prelude to Japan's post-war mind

It might be said that *Harp of Burma* has been accepted by Japanese people in general. Even now, some Japanese leading intellectuals think this the best Japanese book to recommend. However, different people point to different aspects of the book. In fact, there is some tension between storylines (A) and (B).

(3) Sekikawa, Natuo, "Honn-yomi no mushiboshi", 1999. in <http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~MI6M-FRYM/diary/note.htm>.

The former shows the existence of common humanistic traits within Japanese people and people of other regions in the midst of an antagonizing situation of Japanese military in Asian countries, which may imply the possibility of future peaceful global co-development, even if led by Europeans. The latter suggests that there is no way out of the conflict except to abandon worldly pursuits and rely upon regional religious activities, namely, Buddhism.

Meanwhile, as to the author himself, there have been some fierce criticisms of his thought, which was regarded to be irreconcilable with Japan's new political direction after the war. Generally speaking, the evaluation of an author's explicit ideology and the implicit ideology of his/her works can be separated to some extent, but in his case the discrepancy between the reputation of *Harp of Burma* and the tenor of his thought is extreme. In fact, this gap reflects some of the rifts in Japanese thought regarding Southeast Asia after their defeat in World War 2. Before examining this gap, some important responses to this story as well as to its author from intellectuals of the post-war period should be introduced.

Takeuchi Yoshimi was one of the fiercest critics of Takeyama's thought in the post-war period. His criticism was as follows :⁽⁴⁾

In the history of Japan's modern economic thought, there have been two entangled threads, i.e. one toward a strategy of Co-Asia and another toward Ex-Asia. The resolution for these entanglements was finally brought about politically with the tragedy of military defeat on the part of Japan ; meanwhile the history in thought took a course by which "Co-Asia" was absorbed into "Ex-Asia". This progress corresponded with a transition in the meaning of Asia for Japan from an object of soli-

(4) He had several writings on this theme between 1954 and 1964. One of the most detailed ones is "Two ways of understanding Asian history", 1958, *Tokyo Shinbun*. Concerning *Harp of Burma* itself, Takeuchi did write only a few words and in a negative way in 1954, which was one of the earliest criticisms against Takeyama. However, his style of criticism was very high-handed.

parity to one of domination. In this sense, Takeyama was a legitimate child of the Ex-Asian theory. He did not want equality of races, as is illustrated by the racially discriminatory manner of his description in *Harp of Burma*. (1958. 8.15-17, *Tokyo-Shimbun*, in "Collected Essays of Yoshimi Takeuchi", Vol. 3, "Japan and Asia", 1966. 4.28)

Takeuchi was a scholar whose main interest was in Chinese literature. He criticized Takeyama from the criteria that racial discrimination invalidates any ideology or work of which it is a part. In the context of this paper, his criticism seems to have targetted mainly the story of (A), i.e., the sympathetic treatment of Japan's imperial army. Although most Japanese people would admit, as a matter of empirical fact, that racial equality has rarely been maintained, even in the Western "democratic" world, his speculative style of criticism was dominant during the post-war period among Japanese intellectuals. The assertion that Takeyama's thought was not oriented toward "Co-Asia" and that Japanese development before the war was not "Co-Asia" is not inconsistent with the general rule of the American GHQ system, making Japan Democratized. However, judging from a criterion of Democracy is one thing and judging whether the Japanese have upheld "Co-Asia" is another. Because no criterion concerning democracy could easily explain any real-complex of Japanese modern history, it might be said that Takeuchi was obliged to introduce some kind of moral requirement into discussions around economic strategies. Thus, from this standpoint it should be difficult for him to make a judgment on Takeyama's work itself. He relied on the power of the ideology of "Democracy". By making a dichotomy of "Co-Asia" and "Ex-Asia", Takeuchi wanted to make an immediate connection between the possible political effects and the thoughts that might bring them about. If we see frankly the historical process of Japanese imperialism, "Co-Asia" was actually closer to the case geopolitically, although this ideology surely had its savage traits. Nevertheless, that point was ignored for the theoretical prerequisite of eliminating racial discrimination on the part of Japan. By emphasizing the facts of discrimination in Japan's history of colo-

nialism, Takeuchi and post-war Japanese intellectuals could compromise with the post-war global political system. Meanwhile, we might assert that when Takeuchi referred to “Asia”, he always imagined China and rarely thought of Southeast Asia. At the time this posed no problem. As Japan’s post-war strategy in Asia was simply to retreat from former occupied areas, especially in terms of residential out-migration, various areas of Asia had not their proper meanings for the defeated Japan. Thus, Takeuchi could be seen as representative of Japanese thinkers of the post-war period, because Japanese have positively abstained from keeping in touch with Asian countries. As a matter of fact, post-war Japan could be said to take a decidedly Ex-Asia direction among intellectuals, merely assuming the appearance of “Co-Asia” with surface politeness of words. Takeuchi’s assertion clearly belies this intellectual allegiance, despite his sincere reflection on the war.

Ueno Ryo was a man of juvenile literature who felt sympathy with *Harp of Burma*. His discussion shows another trait characteristic of post-war Japanese minds. Ueno praised part (B) of the story, saying that by his statement, the soldier Mizushima could avoid forcing someone to do as he did, which was unique and different from the other leading intellectuals who upheld “justice” and “goodness” as a kind of post-war enlightenment dogma. Ueno did not believe in the words or social theories of the post-war days, as some Japanese people did.⁽⁵⁾ For Ueno, moreover, Takeyama wanted to be a sincere participant of the war-period by regarding himself not as part of a damaged people but as an assailant. He didn’t think of defeat in the war as liberation from something evil. Takeyama’s own “responsibility for the war” was embodied in this part of Mizushima’s behavior, although it was not compulsory for other Japanese.⁽⁶⁾

(5) Some of them, even the more extreme, agreed with Niche, who insisted that the role of religion should urge the weak and fragile people to obey a social system in exchange for the authorized status that the system could offer. In fact Takeyama in his closing years insisted that the greatest tragedy in the 20th century was the emergence of state socialism and communism, which were descendents of the Bible according to him.

Takeyama's (B) includes expatriation in Myanmar, i.e. (B)-2. It is odd that hardly any post-war intellectuals make much of this decision on the part of a Japanese soldier. They treat (B)-2 as if it were a trivial corollary of (B)-1. Living in Myanmar was thought to be living as if a hermit. Why could not those intellectuals conceive of life in Myanmar as more significant or productive?

When looking backward, post-war Japan had to make up its mind to retreat from every complex social connection as much as possible and develop its domestic economy, setting problems of geopolitics aside for the USA. This was more easily realised by world trade than by international migration flows, which might involve closer relationship with foreign countries. In this context, Takeyama's story was interpreted as showing that after the war, Japanese people wanted to escape from the trap of the interconnection between theory and war-practice they had recently fallen into. As part of refraining from claiming a direction for the future shape of Japan, they sought to eschew schemes about their fellow Asian countries, although they couldn't force this restraint on other people.

3. Efforts to differentiate Asia and Japan : the Japanese reconstruction

About a decade after *Harp of Burma* appeared, a Japanese researcher engaged in the study of Southeast Asia, Umezao Tadao, considered the relation between Asia and Japan in his *An ecological history of civilization*, which got a

(6) Concerning story (A), he showed the negative sides of the work. Those are as follow: Takeyama evaded the important issue, state power, by posing an oblique question. According to Ueno, state systems have always been despotic in the case of Japan, in which private livings have been inseparably connected with vassalage to the emperor. Takeyama didn't pose this central question but reverted to the dichotomy of militarism vs. Buddhism. He should have criticized the emperor-central state system. Ueno said that the singing troop did not show a real figure of the Japanese army, an Emperor's army, but disguised itself as an army of the people.

wide range of intellectual responses in Japan. Although he did not show any special interest in Takeyama's *Harp of Burma*, his eminent contribution to the study of Southeast Asia in Japan is admitted by most Japanese researchers. Therefore, we must introduce his work and briefly discuss its implications for our topic. His way of looking at Japan was similar to that of certain influential post-war Western intellectuals, for example, Toynbee and Reischauer. They asked why only Japan among Asian countries could be exempted from the inroads of Western colonizers and succeed in making an independent modernized nation, similar to the Western countries, and answered that Japan was different from other Asian countries in its pattern of civilization. Along this line, Umezao insisted that the Eurasia continent should be divided more properly into two geographical areas, a central area and a periphery, rather than dividing it between Europe and Asia. According to him, his idea had an ecological ground. Thus, both England, a country on the west-end, and Japan, on the east-end, belonged to the periphery and hence were similar to each other. Umezao did not believe in a united "Asia" as any kind of real entity.⁽⁷⁾ For him Asian countries were totally different from Japan in terms of their way of life. His implication was to abandon the post-war thought that sought to identify Japan as a part of Asia, or in other words, to deny the main framework of Takeuchi's dichotomy. At the same time, Umezao set aside the role of European pressure in the process of the modernization of Japan by asserting Japan's own inherent capacity for modernization.

Then, what exactly constituted the difference between the two geographical areas of Eurasia in Umezao's work? He tried to define it by indicat-

(7) Japan and Europe were thought to belong to the first area, whereas the remaining countries including most of Asian countries to the second. The first area had feudalistic societies, while the second experienced none, or at best, a false feudalism. The first includes the developed capitalistic countries. Many of the countries in the second area were colonies of the countries in the first area. The second area is in a dry zone. The nomadic people in dry zones were suggested to be destructive and savage. Ancient empires were built in this area. When modern socialist countries appeared in this area, they became the ghosts of the ancient empires. In this area, division between secularism and sacredness is incomplete, resulting in the miserable struggle of religious war. The first area is situated in the periphery of the large second area, making the first area exempt from suffering the violence of the second.

ing the uniqueness of Southeast Asia in his “second area”. (Or, more properly, his grand theory was an extrapolation of his primary theory concerning Southeast Asia). According to Umezao, the countries in this region are unique in the fact that they are comprised of independent races with no dominant race among them. Although it is not necessarily clear whether he thought to compare this fact with modern European countries, Umezao explained the main reasons for this scattered structure of races in the area as a result of large-scale remote migrations and the consequent alteration of residents in this region.⁽⁸⁾ Another of his ideas was that the ideology of an emperor ruling over a large empire was introduced with Buddhism, as in the case of Jayavalman II, a founder of the Ankor Dynasty in 9c.⁽⁹⁾ Thus, setting aside his “ecological” explanation, Umezao’s recognition of the discernable identity of Southeast Asia consists of three key factors: the geographical structure of races, frequent remote migration, and Buddhism.⁽¹⁰⁾ Nevertheless, the theoretical relations between these factors remained virtually unexamined in his work.

In the meantime, Umezao confessed that he felt more at home in South-

(8) According to him, a totally different distribution map of races could be seen a thousand years ago. The Mon people lived in Irrawaddy Plane, Myanmar and Menam Plane, Thailand on the one hand, The Khmer people in Northeast Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Koach-China on the other. The Cham people lived in the south part of Vietnam. Both the Burmese and the Thai people were originally from Southwest China.

(9) According to him, the most powerful engine making nations was the collision between ways of living in dry areas and well-watered areas. Knowledge on how to prevent violent from the dry area was the mother of the existence of the state mechanism.

(10) Umezao saw the history of relations between the first area and Southeast Asia as divided by three stages. The age of Colonialism by Western countries was referred to as the third. Before this stage there were many traders from various European countries who made their residences everywhere. In those days, there were also large Japanese towns everywhere in Southeast Asia; Hoi An in Vietnam, Ayutthaya in Thailand etc. In the third stage, the Western countries expanded the lands of their rule by every trumped-up charge, while Japan disappeared from this area by its own domestic policy of seclusion (17-19c). Thus, Japanese penetration into Southeast Asia cannot be seen solely from militaristic traits after Japanese modernization since mid-19c. We do have only a limited volume of information about remote migration flows relating to Southeast Asia. According to Umezao, even now the southward migration flows within Southeast Asia is continuing. And the Chinese influence is above all important. The move from the innercontinent is ongoing now. A lot of migrants are heading southward one after another along the mountain sides. Southeast Asia has not been stabilized yet. (Umezao, 1960)

east Asia than in some East Asian countries. Sensuously —culturally, or, in terms of climate and vegetation— Southeast Asia is said to be the most similar region to Japan, while, in theory, Southeast Asia allegedly belongs to the second (“central”) area. Thus, the main reason for his dichotomy was the fact that there was no developed capitalistic country in this region, although he praised the Southeast Asian cultures and fully institutionalized governing systems.

His theory stands ambivalently with his instinctive affinity with Southeast Asia. To realize his theory we must know the general tenor of thought during Japan’s reconstruction period (from the mid-1950’s to the end of the 1960’s). In this period, prevalent opinion regarded as most vital to the country’s reconstruction its growth by sheer magnitude of material development, i.e., its GDP. Japan’s leading intellectuals dared not acknowledge other interdependent relations within Asia. Also, they did not want to take into consideration the various kinds of pressures on the country’s economic life. Thus, Takeyama’s problematic had virtually disappeared.

However, by reexamining Japan’s modern development in an Eurasian context, Umezao could ask whether there had been any important economic or social linkages between Japan and Asia so far. Then, the examination of such linkages should not be ignored in his context. Retrospectively speaking, he could suggest but failed to include in his scope the existence of the global linkages of the modern economy including the role of international migration ; neither could he deal with Buddhism in Asia.⁽¹⁾ In spite of Umezao’s incomparably admirable role in developing Southeast Asian studies in Japan, his dichotomy illuminated a concealed prerequisite of the previous theorists, that is, that the Japanese have had little concern with Asia other than in terms of her own materialistic economic performance. Indeed, the Japanese

(1) Concerning Japanese Buddhism, he said in his book as follows : religion for the Japanese is utterly different from that in Buddhist countries in Asia. Many Japanese have not spent any kind of religious life including Buddhism, which to the Japanese is just a form of ancestral ceremonies.

would have preferred not to deal with migratory problems in the modern age.

4. A misty eye concerning neighboring Asian countries

In the period immediately after war, people who were concerned with this dispute were all penitents seeking better Japanese policies in the face of overwhelming global forces. However, it is worth examining whether Takeyama's work reflects themes beyond this context of thought.

One of the most conspicuous political outbreaks after the World War 2 in Japan was the anti Vietnam-War movement during the late sixties. This massive movement was basically against the military alliance between Japan and USA, but at the same time it inevitably entailed a reflection on Japanese policy toward neighboring Asian countries. But after the students' rebellion was over and USA retreated from Vietnam, there remained hardly any after-effects in the Japanese mind. Thus we could say that this development of affairs itself expose the true colors of the Japanese mind concerning this region. Asian countries were still remote countries from Japan.

When we think Theme-(A) of Takeyama's work, the main point of this tale is that human beings possess universal and trans-border traits. Takeyama wanted the Japanese to find their future way through this universality. But unfortunately, the local people in this drama had abandoned the stage. The main players were the Japanese and English soldiers. This reflects the very fact that the modern relation between Asian countries had already become intermediated by global forces. It was difficult to find things immediately in common between Asian countries; similarities were more likely to be introduced through intervening Western cultures. Even favorite songs, as we see in the tale, were introduced from European countries. Japanese have had little interest in Asian "songs" in the globalized and modernizing process of Japan, and vice versa. Thus, it was not important for the critics, nor for the

author, which country should be used as the setting for this story, only so long as it was in Asia. In this regard, however, Japanese intellectuals concerned could have at least drawn readers' attention to the fact that no small number of the English soldiers in Myanmar were, as a matter of fact, from India and Africa : in other words, non-Western people. After returning to their countries, some of them took an important role in initiating fights for the independence of their countries. Thus ensued among the colonized a kind of universal liberation.

On the contrary, Theme-(B) shows the importance of Myanmar as a thematic determinant of this story. It was there that one of the largest tragedies for the Japanese army occurred. Mizushima's decision was inspired by witnessing the massive numbers of lost Japanese. He decided to stay in this country as a monk. It would have been possible but have made much less sense for the author to choose China as the setting in place of Myanmar. The importance of monks in society was thought to be more remarkable in Myanmar than in China. The Japanese had thought only in a vague way that Myanmar was a country of Buddhism. Still, beyond this kind of knowledge Takeyama showed a more detailed description, implying a suggestion about the direction Japan should take.

Where, then, can the linkage between these two themes be found ?

In *Harp of Burma* an old woman enters the scene to hand Mizushima's letter to his commander. She is described as follows :

This old woman was by far the most pious among the religious Burma people. In spite of the fact that she must have earned much money by doing business with the Japanese army, she donated everything to the temple, and herself remained very poor.

With regard to this point, a recent reader made the following remark :

I hear that people in Myanmar are willing to donate every surplus fortune even now. For example, they change all the money they have to sheets of gold and put them on a statue of a temple. This system is thoroughly different from capitalism.

This shows a positive way of spending a noncapitalistic life. It would be difficult for them to become wealthy with this system. Even in this case, nevertheless, it would be difficult to answer the question, which people are happier, the Japanese, who have plenty of material wealth or the Myanmar people, who live in that way.⁽²⁾

This statement may overly simplify the matter. The system may be either completely different from capitalism or may compensate effectively the faults of the market economy. Nonetheless, this character does positively represent a way of seeking a non-capitalistic living. It would be surely difficult for individuals to become wealthy with this system, much less for the whole country to prosper. Such action is not a productive investment in ordinary terms.

If Mizushima's decision is seen in terms of a comparison of economic systems, it becomes clear why the setting must be Myanmar and not China. But, to take his decision affirmatively, we need to know how Myanmar's economy has been managed through Buddhism. Buddhism is seen, here, as a kind of economic distribution system. In this context, the point is not only to learn the economic situation of an individual Asian country but to discover a better economic system for Japan. Mizushima's action, then, might have a kind of practical importance, even at the present moment. As a matter of fact, however, it cannot impact the modern Japanese mind unless some result appears from more detailed research.

By examining some important Japanese writers of the post-war period, the following points were shown. These critics wanted to know which direction Japan should take after its defeat in the war. Meanwhile, *Harb of Burma* impressively suggested that Japan was too greedy for its own good implying a solution that we should live in thoroughly different way, for an example, living a Buddhist life in the global world. The author chose Myanmar as his setting because Myanmar was seen the place where Buddhist lives prevailed.

(2) <http://www6.plala.or.jp/Djehuti/230.htm>.

But he knew only a little about the country. Thus, Southeast Asia became for Japanese, a kind of heaven to escape to in the mind, while in fact it remained a place few paid much attention to. Most Japanese commentators on this story have inevitably taken a position on this issue of the country's relationship to Southeast Asia.

5. Will the tune ever change?

There had been migration flows from Japan to Southeast Asian countries before the war, although Southeast Asia has never been a main area of intellectual concern for ordinary Japanese. Strangely and miserably enough, hundreds of thousands of Japanese people died in a place their country men knew very little about. This intellectual situation was, in a sense, determined by the war strategy by which more than 300,000 of Japanese soldiers invaded Myanmar. Over half of these died.⁽¹³⁾ Nevertheless, it seems important that we think of human interchange within Asian countries apart from military invasion. We should differentiate between ordinary migration movements and military intrusions.

Apart from undue treatment of matters of international migration and the role of the global politics, Japanese intellectuals have failed to know the real features of this region. This indifference to Southeast Asia, Myanmar, and a truer example of Buddhism cannot be solely attributed to the historical effects of the war. One of the main reasons can be found in the way Japanese development proceeded after the war period. Another reason might be in the Japanese indifference to the role of religion. To the people of the post-war period, "A Buddhist country" would mean, if it ever exist, simply a differently organized society. It could be seen as an idealistic existence, given the

(13) One of the main reasons for occupation of Myanmar by the Japanese army was to interfere with the military transporting roots (allegedly 'Burma roads') from the allied force to the Chongqing Chinese government. In this sense, Myanmar's resources themselves were not the primary aim for Japan.

fact that almost no Japanese know the real shape of systems there. Thus, “living in Myanmar” could be seen only as living a totally different life from that point on. Mizushima’s choice has been considered a kind of escape, not necessarily as a matter of emigration or expatriation; this trivialization of his choice may be just a reflection of the general orientation of the post-war Japanese mind. On the contrary, however, Mizushima’s decision can be seen from the present day as seeking an innovative life on a global basis.

As Umezao suggested, Southeast Asia has experienced frequent, wide-range racial migrations. And still they have, on the contrary to Takeyama’s suggestion, refined institutional systems. What role has Buddhism played in this area? Is there a possibility for it to play a different role than the one Christianity has played in the market economy of the Western world? Could it deal well with the other issue of racial migration? According to Umezao, the history of racial migration in Southeast Asia has been coloured by fierce oppression by the conquering tribes of the conquered races, despite the fact that those conquering races were pious Buddhists.

Japan had experienced few remote migrations from 17c to mid-19c due to its closed-door policy. During this period, Christianity was prohibited. Can not Takeyama’s work be seen to imply a need to search for a firmer ethical basis for our future activities, taking religion matters into account, after making wars and performing colonial migration?

Sometimes *Harp of Burma* is criticized by saying that Theme-(A) glorified war. Although this evaluation does not seem to be fair for the story, we must reconsider the actual process of war in Japan.⁽⁴⁾ We must emphasize that Japan’s successive efforts toward the war were closely linked with migra-

(4) War in Myanmar was not an ordinary battle for Japanese soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers progressed to occupy Imphal with only three weeks’ worth of food. They had no logistics. They suffered tropical fevers and died or were killed by colleagues. Every roadside ditch was full of Japanese corpses. They reached Tenasserim district when the war was already finished. About 200,000 were dead, almost all of which were caused not by combat but by famine and disease. Saotome (1996), 31.

tion flows beginning at the end of the 19th century, not only in China but also in the South Pacific islands including the Philippines, Saipan, and the Andaman Islands. Japanese imperialism was linked with its comparably fast waves of migration. When seen in terms of human movements, however, what was the difference between Japanese migration and other flows including the Western flows to Southeast Asia? Moreover, Umezao suggested that the largest migration flows in the age of colonialism were from China. Chinese people rushed to Luzon, Java and Singapore to engage in construction in the Western colonies. They became city traders and gained economic powers in most of the Southeast Asian countries. Was their success due to the fact that they accepted Western colonial rule in a compromising manner or can they be said to have simply pure economic activity?

Harp of Burma may not have shown the real face of the war, but that would be too much to demand of a children's book. What points have been left out, then? Southeast Asia is still posing this question. Will the lovely tune of the *Harp of Burma* ever find its true audience?

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