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An Exercise in Good Government: Fukuzawa Yukichi on Emigration and Nation-Building

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An Exercise in Good Government: Fukuzawa Yukichi on Emigration and Nation-Building

This research focuses on a series of articles penned by Fukuzawa Yukichi from 1884 to 1896 on why the Japanese must emigrate and settle abroad. Most striking is Fukuzawa's opposition to any legislation preventing the movement of Japanese subjects abroad, including rural women who migrated with the purpose of engaging in prostitution abroad. According to Fukuzawa, the challenge facing government policy makers was not up to what point do you say no to poor rural women migrating abroad, but the opposite, at what point should you say yes.

Keywords: Fukuzawa Yukichi, Enomoto Takeaki, colonization, emigration, Japanese overseas prostitution

An Exercise in Good Government: Fukuzawa Yukichi on Emigration and Nation- Building

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The year 1885 was a watershed in Japanese emigration policy. In that year, the Japanese government began sending cheap Japanese labor abroad as one response to Minister of Finance Matsukata Masayoshi's (1835–1924) policy to tackle inflation and mounting government deficits. Matsukata's policy of stabilizing the economy by issuing less paper money led to rural distress as silk, rice, and cotton prices fell sharply. Tenancy rates rose from 29 percent in 1872 to 40 percent in 1887 (Fukutake, 1967, p. 10). An estimated 367,000 landholding farmers lost their property during this period, unable to pay land tax (Ike, 1947, p. 175). The rural recession also seriously impeded the Meiji government's ability to raise finances, as land tax was the biggest source of government revenue (Rosovsky, 1961, p. 85). From its inception, government mediated Japanese emigration was agro-centrist in nature. Overseas labor migration was seen as a means by which to secure the well-being of landholding peasants. Emigrant remittances coupled with skills brought back by returning émigré were linked with regional economic growth and productivity and government objectives to increase economic competitiveness both domestically and globally (Fujita 1931, pp. 1-2).

By 1890 however, Japanese consuls and legislators were identifying a causal relationship between the out-migration of poor rural Japanese men and women and anti-Asian legislation aimed at curtailing the movement of Japanese laborers. Successive consuls in the ports and cities along the major trade routes in Asia and the North American west coast were dismayed to report that Japanese male vagabonds and women working as prostitutes were the major Japanese presence in their jurisdiction. By 1890, every consul east of Bombay had reported Japanese women working as prostitutes in their territorial jurisdiction.¹ Japanese consuls were not the only ones anxious about the increasing numbers of Japanese women engaged in “unsightly behavior abroad.” Between 1888 and 1890, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received over fifteen petitions via consuls from Japanese associations in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States calling for action against the large numbers of Japanese women undermining Japanese trade, commerce, and labor migration.² Japanese merchants in Singapore and Hong Kong frequently complained that this undesirable class of Japanese emigrants were a slur to the good name of Japan; most of the women alighting in the two ports were “barefoot” and “dishevelled,” and had nothing in their name “except the tattered clothes on their back,” and were “led from the harbor to a nearby Japanese inn,” shadowed “by large numbers of Chinese ridiculing them.”³

The rise of anti-Japanese sentiment particularly on the North American west-coast and in the Australian colonies split government and public opinion over the benefits of Japanese labor emigration. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs advocated overseas labor migration as a necessary condition for the development of human intellect and

¹ Aoki Shūzō to Yamagata Aritomo, Dispatch No. 434, July 15, 1890. *HFTKHZ*, Vol. 1.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs internal memo, “Bai-in fujo no kaigai tokō ni kansuru hōritsu no seitei wo yōsuru riyū,” February 20, 1891. *HFTKHZ*, Vol. 1.

³ Saitō Miki to Aoki Shūzō, February 20, 1891. *HFTKHZ*, Vol. 1.

civilization, and that the freedom of Japanese subjects to travel abroad was a critical yardstick of Japanese equality with Western powers. Other legislators, however, favored a policy of prudence and called for strict laws to prevent the Japanese poor, especially women, from going abroad and “making do” as itinerates and prostitutes.⁴ Public opinion over Japanese emigration policy also divided into two camps. One camp advocated the need for government to secure the “free” movement of Japanese laborers to places of work abroad in the face of possible race restrictions placed on colored laborers in North America and colonial Australia. The other camp favored draconian laws to prevent Japanese subjects pursuing unacceptable occupations and vagrancy abroad.

Against this backdrop of conflicting opinion over emigration policy, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) penned a series of articles from 1884 to 1896 on why the Japanese must emigrate and settle abroad. The articles aimed to disturb the terrain of the debates. Focusing on a novel distinction between the historical and the current, Fukuzawa wrote on Japanese emigration to reveal how elements of the past were preventing the Japanese people from meeting the dictates of material and mental progress. He identified emigration as a means of overcoming the existing customs and mindset of the Japanese people shaped by a feudal system that prized obedience and deference to authority at the expense of individual enterprise and autonomy. The lack of individual boldness left Japan unable to compete in a world order based on competition and rivalry.

Fukuzawa was keenly aware that Western governments made competition into a virtue; for profit in commerce and for victory in warfare. Survival in such an international setting meant success in both trade and war (Fukuzawa, 1980b, p. 227). Fukuzawa also recognized that the global market was based on inequality rather than equality of

⁴ Aoki Shūzō to Yamagata Aritomo, Dispatch No. 57, January 31, 1891. *HFTKHZ*, Vol. 1.

exchange. Trade always favored industrialized countries at the expense of less developed countries such as Japan. In his *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmeiron no gaiyaku*, 1875), Fukuzawa pointed to manufacturing nations such as Holland, which produced scarcely any agricultural products but were rich because they “make use of their unlimited manpower,” through trade and colonial enterprises that held monopolies in agricultural commodities via the creation of large-scale plantations abroad. On the other hand, peoples that lacked ambition and the mental wherewithal to develop industry became the muscle and sinew of foreign traders (Fukuzawa, 1980b, pp. 231-232). Fukuzawa pinpointed Japan’s diplomatic and military vulnerability to the monopolistic advantages Western commerce enjoyed in global markets (Fukuzawa, 1976a, pp. 319-24).

Fukuzawa’s articles dealing with emigration also surprise. They reveal that Fukuzawa’s social vision was hierarchical, and not egalitarian. He did not see autonomy as a universal quality, but as a graded faculty determined by status and social function. Men of the former samurai class required autonomy to go abroad to cultivate their talents in trade and finance, and to serve their country by competing in global markets. The freedom Fukuzawa advocated to the laboring poor however was based on their utility, not on the cultivation of their talents. He further differentiated the utility of the poor according to gender. Men were to furnish the labor for Japanese enterprises and settlements abroad. Women too should be free to travel abroad, even if there was a danger they would turn to prostitution for their livelihood, for they provided “comfort” to the male émigré who did not have the wherewithal to take a wife abroad.

Emigration and Nation-Building

The year 1881 marked a change in economic development policy by the Meiji oligarchy. Inflation and increasing dependency on foreign loans provoked policy change. In 1880 the government was divided by

Minister of Finance Ōkuma Shigenobu's call for large-scale foreign borrowing to continue financing loans to Japanese enterprises important to trade and national security. Ōkuma was ousted by the Minister of the Right Iwakura Tomomi, and replaced by Matsukata Masayoshi. Matsukata quickly introduced a policy of fiscal restraint. He drastically reduced government loans for industry promotion, effectively curbing inflation and stabilizing currency. The new economic policy also led to severe deflation, which resulted in an economic depression that lasted until 1885. During this cycle of depression, unemployment was prominent and many banks and companies became insolvent.

During the recession, Fukuzawa encouraged young men of talent to show “independent spirit” and seek work abroad. It is important to note that Fukuzawa's intended audience was second, third, and fourth sons of landowners and former samurai families who could not inherit property and status and had to forge their own path to success and prestige.⁵ This was not the first time Fukuzawa had targeted the strata of young men whose path to status and esteem were blocked by the custom of primogeniture. In section five of *AN Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*, 1872-1876), a transcript of a speech delivered at Keiō Gijiku in January 1874, Fukuzawa informed his male student audience that the great inventors of the industrial revolution—Watt and Stevenson—belonged “neither to the government administrators nor the laboring masses.” They came from the middle position of society, which “leads the world by power of intellect” (Fukuzawa, 1969, p. 32; Fukuzawa, 1980b, p. 89). Fukuzawa then proceeded to illuminate how the freedom to pursue one's calling and competition between private individuals would lead to the material well-being of all Japanese and the creation of a strong, dynamic nation-state (Fukuzawa, 1969, p. 32;

⁵ The general custom for landowning and samurai families was that the eldest son inherited property and status.

Fukuzawa, 1980b, pp. 89-90)

Through public speeches and newspaper editorials Fukuzawa advocated emigration as a solution to underemployment among ambitious young men. In his writings and speeches, Fukuzawa admonished the “weak-spirited nature” of the Japanese who “crowd in the land of their forefathers and complain bitterly” about the lack of work. He urged underemployed young men to be bold and to serve their country by securing a life for themselves abroad. Fukuzawa identified the United States as the most suitable country for emigration, as the success of Chinese emigrants returning home with “large amounts of saved gold” testified. He especially encouraged men of talent—young educated men of ambition from the upper strata of society—to emigrate, as wealth and status waited for them abroad as entrepreneurs once they became established in their new surroundings (Oxford, 1973, pp. 216-218).

Fukuzawa’s vision of Japanese entrepreneurial migration was that “middle class” Japanese emigrants would form mercantile networks in the major United States trading ports and provide a link for Japanese commerce. Fukuzawa saw “middle class” emigration as the means for Japan to emulate Great Britain and become a major mercantile power. In an article entitled “Venture to Leave Your Homeland,” Fukuzawa waxed:

The wealth garnered by individual English traders abroad has become part of England’s national assets. The land the English claimed has turned into regional centers of trade, if not formal colonies. This is how Great Britain became what it is today. In a similar fashion, ... [Japanese emigrants] engaging in various enterprises abroad is an indirect show of patriotism (Fukuzawa 1960, 9:525-526; Azuma 2005, p. 21).

However, it is significant to note that in the mid-to-late 1880s Fukuzawa limited emigration to educated males from the “middle position of society.” He did not advocate for the laboring class to emigrate as they lacked the talent and intellect to adapt to a life abroad. This should not

surprise us however. As Earl Kinmonth has brilliantly noted, in *An Encouragement of Learning* Fukuzawa drew on the correlation between education and talent to align the division of labor to social utility and political order:

The man who performs difficult work is called a man of important rank; the man who performs easy work is said to be a man of insignificant rank. All work that requires use of the heart and demands concern is difficult work. Work done with the power of the hands and feet is easy work. Therefore doctors, scholars, government officials, merchants who buy and sell on a large scale, and farmers who use many servants—men such as these are important in rank and are honored.” (Kinmonth, p. 685; Fukuzawa, 1980a, p. 57)

In *Jiji shogen* (Commentary on Current Problems), an essay written in 1881, Fukuzawa further elaborated on this theme by stating that the natural endowments of men come from the bloodline of parents and ancestors, the product of hundreds of years of education handed down in the family (Yasukawa, 1989, pp. 29-30). Significantly, Fukuzawa blamed the poor for their impoverishment because they were ignorant of the “principle of things.” There were “no men more pitiable and despicable than the ignorant and illiterate. And the height of ignorance is to be shameless.” That is to say, the poor were unaware of the distinction between social and anti-social behavior and thus required the benevolent hand of the educated elite to guide them to industry and decorum. Ignorance was also the source of resentment and political danger. “When people through their own ignorance have fallen into poverty and are hard pressed by hunger and cold, they recklessly hate the rich around them instead of blaming their own stupidity” (Fukuzawa, 1969, p. 5; Fukuzawa, 1980a, pp. 59-60). Clearly, Fukuzawa had no love for the poor, whom he considered to be the flotsam and jetsam of society.

Fukuzawa envisaged separate strands of socialization by which to

embed individuals of different rank and status into the fabric of society. Men of talent – the educated, who had the ability to organize, manage, and invent – were to be encouraged to develop and optimize their abilities for the good of the nation. The poor, who lacked “wisdom,” were to be socialized to the virtue of obedience and the duty to carry out the plans of those endowed with mental ability. Issues of social equality and justice did not concern Fukuzawa.

By 1890, however, the economic and social utility of large-scale overseas emigration became a topic of much public debate in government and opposition circles as it became inserted into wider issues of economic development and national security. The newly established constitution gave the House of Representatives, controlled by political parties that emerged out of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, power to attack the Meiji administration and obstruct policy goals. The main discontent for the political parties was taxation. As a strategy to overcome calls by the political parties to reduce budget expenditure, the first Matsukata cabinet submitted a budget leaning heavily toward military expansion. The government heavily funded the construction of a blue-water navy with a battle fleet in the interest of national security and protecting Japanese maritime trade routes (Banno, 1992, pp. 39-51).

Labor emigration to Hawaii ensured the fledgling Japanese shipping companies remained in the black. For example, the *Nippon yūen kaisha* (Japan Mail Shipping Line) managed to establish a profitable trans-Pacific route aided by heavy subsidies and a government-sanctioned monopoly in transporting labor emigrants to Hawaii (Wray, 1984, pp. 263-4). Due to the relative success of Japanese labor migration to Hawaii, Japanese entrepreneurs, who advocated commodity export trade as the best policy for Japan to achieve commercial competitiveness in the global market, started to form societies to encourage emigration as a means to increase the volume of trade on Japanese sea lanes. Associations such as the *Tōkyō keizaigaku kyōkai* (Tokyo Economic Society, formed 1887), *Tōhō kyōkai* (East Asian Society, formed 1890),

Kaigai ijū dōshikai (Friends of Overseas Emigration, formed 1892), and *Shokumin kyōkai* (Colonization Society, established 1893) were created with the purpose of raising public support and capital for ventures for overseas emigration and settlements (Tsunoyama, 1986, pp. 57-67; Irie 1942, 1: p. 104).

The gauntlet for fusing Japanese emigration with nation-building was picked up by Enomoto Takeaki (1836-1908), who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in May 1891. From the start of his term as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enomoto followed a two-pronged foreign policy: to promote economic development via overseas Japanese agricultural settlements and to stop Japanese rural women from going abroad. On August 5, 1891, Enomoto established an Emigration Department (*Iminka*) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶ The Emigration Department had two functions. One was to promote long-term Japanese settlements overseas, rather than the dispatch of contracted migrant laborers who returned to Japan upon the expiration of their labor contracts. The other task was to draw up administrative controls to stop “the increasing number of Japanese women going abroad to work as prostitutes, whose presence undermines the credibility of the Japanese, and who evoke the slander of foreigners.”⁷

Enomoto firmly believed that Japanese agricultural settlements abroad would solve Japan’s most pressing external and internal problems. Externally, Japanese agricultural colonies would “improve the quality of Japanese residing abroad,” and internally, “better the livelihood of those residing in Japan.”⁸ Enomoto acknowledged that government–sponsored labor migration to Hawaii (*teiyaku imin*, or sojourner migrant laborer) has been a “favorable opening” for Japan.

⁶ “Viscount Enomoto and Colonization,” *The Japan Weekly Mail*, August 15, 1890.

⁷ “Gaimushō no kaikakuan,” *Jiji shinpō*, July 10, 1891.

⁸ “Iminka sechi iken,” *Yūbin hōchi*, August 5, 1891; “Iminka sechi noriyū,” *Jiji shinpō*, August 6, 1891.

Since the opening of labor emigration to Hawaii, Japanese laborers had remitted around \$1,300,000 to Japan, with an average of around \$100,000 of the remitted monies finding its way to Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, and Kumamoto (the prefectures of origin for large numbers of labor emigrants). The volume of “sojourn emigration” to Hawaii was limited by the labor agreements between Hawaii and Japan, however.

Because of labor agreement restrictions, many laborers ended up “traveling to British Columbia, California and Washington” seeking work. Unfortunately however, “most of these emigrants” failed “to find steady work.” Enomoto identified these “sojourn emigrants” – “uncertain in plans and without purpose” and who fell “into bad habits, becoming gamblers” or drifting menial workers wandering from job to job “in groups of threes-and-fives” – along with “Japanese women in unsightly occupations abroad” (*zaigai shūgyōfu*) as objects of “contempt among foreigners.” Enomoto believed that the presence of Japanese vagrants and prostitutes along the North American west-coast led the United States government to issue “regulations to restrict the passage of Japanese emigrants,” to appease “the call by the lower strata of the white race” (*katō hakujinshu*) for the expulsion for unskilled Asian workers.⁹ Enomoto also lamented the fact that the Japanese now shared the same status and circumstances as the Chinese in the United States, which had potentially dangerous internal implications for the Japanese nation. Enomoto projected how increases in Japanese population would make domestic “employment scarce” in the not so distant future and the laboring poor would lack access to work abroad as the doors of countries would be shut to them.

For Enomoto, the solution to these unfolding circumstances was the promotion of overseas colonies (*shokumin*) or “settler emigration” (*teijū imin*). Enomoto took great pains to explain that “settler emigration” did

⁹ Enomoto is referring to the United States Immigration Act (1891).

not denote appropriating another country and subordinating its territory as a branch of the aggressor country, but meant establishing Japanese settlements in “underdeveloped regions with the objective of opening up the land and increasing its productivity.” Enomoto believed that unlike the short-term migration of menial laborers, where the work was limited to simple, unskilled tasks, settler emigrants would “lease or purchase overseas land and invest Japanese capital and labor to cultivate it.” He had no doubt that the settlements would give emigrant settlers from the lower strata of Japanese society focus and “fixed objectives.” Moreover, if the settlements made work available for women, with the “right encouragement and guidance,” the number of unsightly (Japanese) women would be, if not eradicated, drastically reduced. Land ownership by Japanese abroad would also alleviate anti-Japanese sentiments. Enomoto stressed that the primary reason for the exclusion of Chinese from the United States was because “they did not become landowners,” and not the widely attributed reason of “differences in manners, religion and politics.”¹⁰

Enomoto’s policy linked overseas agricultural investment and peasant well-being with national security and Japan’s ability to compete in the world market. Politically, large-scale agricultural settlements gave Japanese emigrants a greater independence and respect. Property ownership also defused the antagonism between the Japanese émigré and the Caucasian laboring classes who saw Asian labor as undermining their ability to earn a satisfactory living. Large-scale Japanese agricultural settlements abroad offered the rural poor, both men and women, the means to make a befitting livelihood while, at the same time, bestowing upon them a real purpose in life.

A primary task of the Emigration Department was to mediate with private investors to raise funds for overseas Japanese agricultural

¹⁰ “Iminka sechi iken.”

settlements. Here, Enomoto and the Emigration Department faced a lack of public consensus over the national usefulness of overseas agricultural settlements. These sentiments found expression in the newspaper editorials ridiculing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' plan for overseas settlements as lacking any economic and political practicality.¹¹ Editorial ill will was a political danger signal in mid-Meiji Japan. The press, more or less, acted as a mouthpiece for the different political parties made up by the propertied class, merchants, and small-scale industrialists targeted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to invest in overseas colonization schemes.¹²

The *Jiji shimpō* (Current Events), the newspaper owned by Fukuzawa, ran a series of editorials supporting Enomoto's vision of Japanese emigration and overseas expansion via large-scale agricultural settlements in 1891. We can assume that the argument of the *Jiji shimpō* was endorsed by Fukuzawa himself by his prerogative of editorial authority. The editorials supported Enomoto's vision of the economic utility of Japanese emigration abroad as a means of nation-building. The editorials encouraged Japanese merchants, "who were likely to succeed in the struggle with competitors," and "whose conduct would reflect the honour of Japan," to try their talents abroad. Their success would bring profit and trade to Japan. The editorial advocated that the underemployed—especially educated youth without fixed occupation—be given financial aid to emigrate overseas. This would have the advantage of saving the youth from joining the *sōshi* class (the politically dissatisfied), and like the laboring poor, give them the means to find meaningful work.¹³

¹¹ "Viscount Enomoto and Colonization"

¹² During the 1870s and 1880s the same landed social strata participated in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, which called for the establishment of representative institutions, reduction in centralized tax, and treaty revision for Japanese industries and commerce to achieve economic and political equity with foreign merchants trading in Japan.

¹³ "The 'Jiji Shimpō' on Emigration," May 12, 1891, *Japan Weekly Mail*. Other articles by the *Jiji shimpō* in favor of overseas emigration covered by the *Japan Weekly Mail* during this period are

The *Jiji shimpō* however distanced itself from the endeavors of Enomoto and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to introduce legislation to prevent Japanese women from going abroad.¹⁴ The *Jiji shimpō* position was that “good and evil” was “mixed in the world and the best thing” for the government was “to recognize” that this was a “fact” of human nature and not try to over-regulate. Because “restriction on foreign travel is...productive of more evil than results from the importation of bad characters into foreign lands.”¹⁵ The *Jiji shimpō* was warning policy makers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that that too much government thwarted the very ends of government. Namely, any state action leading to restrictions on the ability of Japanese subjects to travel overseas freely frustrated the objectives of turning Japan into a strong maritime trading power via trade, commerce, and overseas settlements.

An Exercise of Good Government: Emigration, Overseas Prostitution and Nation-Building

The decisive changes which created favorable conditions for investing in mass Japanese emigration abroad came between the years 1894 and 1896. In 1894, Japan signed its first equal treaty: the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. Article 1 of the treaty granted the Japanese the unrestricted reciprocal right to travel, reside, and buy property on a most-favored-nation footing (Gaimushō, 1955, 1: pp. 143-144; Bennett, 1993, pp. 68-69). The treaty was buoyed by pro-mercantile

found in the following editions; April 18, 1891; September 19, 1891; March 12, 1892; May 21, 1892.

¹⁴ In March 1891 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attempted to pass the Law for the Protection of Japanese Women in Foreign Countries. The legislation was to prevent Japanese women from “conducting themselves shamelessly abroad.” Aoki Shūzō to Yamagata Aritomo, Dispatch No. 23, December 1, 1890. *HFTKHZ*, Vol. 1. A translation of the bill before it was submitted to the House of Peers for discussion appeared in the *Japan Weekly Mail*, March 7, 1891.

¹⁵ “Japanese Reputation Abroad,” *Japan Weekly Mail*, October 3, 1891.

legislation subsidizing merchant shipping and ship-building in 1896. Japanese companies also overcame their dependency on Western financing for industrialization. The Ministry of Finance channelled the savings of the laboring classes to the Yokohama Specie Bank, which converted the funds to competitive credit for Japanese commerce and industry (Allen, 1981, pp. 54-55).

The government connected labor emigration abroad to a cluster of policies designed to buttress maritime trade in 1894, when the government handed the recruitment and transport of Japanese labor emigrants to the private sector, namely the *imingaisha* (migration companies). The government promulgated the Emigration Protection Ordinance (*Imin hogo kisoku*) in 1894, which, with minor adjustments, was ratified as the Emigration Protection Law (*Imin hogohō*) in 1896 (Naikaku kampōkyoku, [1894] 1974, pp. 112-115; Naikaku kampōkyoku, [1896] 1974, pp. 116-120). On the surface, the new legislation seemingly protected the rights, life, and property of Japanese emigrants traveling abroad. However, the underlying administrative objective was to establish cumbersome screening procedures at the prefecture level to sift the solid and honest emigrant from the undesirable vagabond and prostitute (Sawada, 1991, pp. 345-347; Moriyama, 1985, pp. 33-42).

In January 1896, Fukuzawa penned a series of articles on the eve of the passing of the Emigrant Protection Law. These articles, published over the month of January, presented a sustained argument as to why Japanese migration abroad were necessary for the future of Japan, and the necessity of keeping administrative measures to a minimum in order to materialize national objectives. What made Fukuzawa's articles about Japanese emigration unique was that he did not take view that Japanese overseas prostitution must be prohibited. Instead, he preferred to stand back and try to understand the movement of Japanese prostitutes abroad as a social index by which to identify the stage of development Japan was entering according to universal laws of progress.

Fukuzawa linked Japan's evolution into a modern nation state as

following the historical trajectory of Great Britain; increases in population would lead to migration and overseas settlement. In his first article, published January 3, Fukuzawa introduced the idea that governments needed to adjust the means of subsistence to accommodate population growth. Calling upon statistics, which disclose the natural laws of life, labor, and production, Fukuzawa revealed that the Japanese population had increased at an annual rate of 400,000 people over the last ten years. Improvements in diet, industry, and science had decreased mortality rates. Fukuzawa warned that for the sake of the middle-to-long-term stability of the economy, it was necessary for the Meiji government to take immediate pre-emptive measures to prevent demographic pressures bringing distress and misery to Japan in the near future (Fukuzawa, 1980, 7: pp. 274-277).

In his next article, written January 4, Fukuzawa answered his own call for prudence and planning by identifying overseas emigration as a solution to inescapable demographic pressure. Fukuzawa saw a general law of causality between national strength and population. In countries past and present, he argued, population increases and the fostering of national strength were interrelated. Logically, if Japan was to continue in its efforts to increase national wealth and strength for the overall prosperity of its people, then the Japanese should follow the example of the Anglo-Saxon race and migrate. Fukuzawa identified the newly acquired Japanese colony of Formosa, the neighboring countries of China, Joseon, Siam, the islands scattered in the Pacific, and South America as locations promising success to Japanese subjects enterprising enough to emigrate and establish large scale agricultural settlements. He, like Enomoto, did not envisage overseas Japanese settlements through piecemeal territorial acquisitions, but via the purchase or procurement of territories free of European colonial settlement.¹⁶ Establishing Japanese

¹⁶ Fukuzawa seems to be loosely following the principles of British colonization policies and land

settlements abroad via the acquisition of land would result in the promotion of commercial relations between those settlements and Japan, as was the case with Great Britain and her colonies (Fukuzawa 1980, 7: pp. 277-280).

His next article, published January 7, dealt with the question of whether the Japanese were suited to life abroad. Fukuzawa answered in the affirmative. The Japanese, parallel to the British, argued Fukuzawa, appreciate the comforts of their own home and therefore were comparatively indifferent where they lived as long as they had the companionship of their families and a hearth to call their own. His nominated proof was that Japanese migration to Hawaii was an unmitigated success (Fukuzawa, 1980, 7: p. 282).

The next article appeared on January 18. The topic was Japanese prostitutes working abroad. Fukuzawa began “The migration of [Japanese] subjects and prostitutes working abroad” (*Jinmin no ijū to shōfū no deka-segi*) by marvelling at the commotion surrounding the issue of Japanese prostitutes abroad. He argued that just as alcohol and tobacco were ceaselessly condemned for reasons of health, prostitution, too, no matter how loudly denounced on ethical or moral grounds, would never disappear as long as human society (*ningen shakai*) existed. Fukuzawa openly rejected the idea that Japanese prostitutes abroad discredited Japan in the eyes of the world. He likewise mocked the thought that efforts to keep prostitutes at home could delude the world into believing prostitution did not exist in Japan.

In the past Fukuzawa had made his views on what he considered the proper arrangement between men and women clear. From the late

laws framed on the understanding that the colony was being acquired by the settlement of a *terra nullius* (land without owners). British colonial practice acknowledged the presence of Indigenous people but justified land acquisition on the grounds that local inhabitants were too primitive to be actual owners and lacked sovereignty because there was no recognized hierarchy or political order with which the Crown could negotiate.

1860s Fukuzawa advocated a nation founded on a household composed of one husband and one wife. In “The Equal Numbers of Men and Women” composed in March 1875, Fukuzawa further defined his views on the importance of monogamous marriage to the natural and universal laws of progress. In this article, he posited monogamous domestic relations were a natural universal law; a “simple point” embedded in the truth of the “mathematical computation of the *soroban* (abacus or counting tray).” Men and women were equal in number because the natural harmonious law of association between them was for one husband to marry one wife (Fukuzawa, 1976b, pp. 385-386). Following this logic, Fukuzawa, recognizing overseas emigration was initially a predominately male enterprise, believed that a gender imbalance in Japanese communities abroad would undermine permanent settlement as it was contrary to the natural laws of domesticity and civilization based on the equal number of men and women. Japanese women travelling abroad to engage in sex work, contended Fukuzawa, served a necessary purpose which was in harmony with the evolution of the Japanese state.

There is only one reason that I deal with this question (overseas prostitution) in particular. It is because I recognize that, for the encouragement of overseas settlements by our people, it is necessary for prostitutes to go abroad. The best scenario would be to try and have migrants move overseas as much as possible with their wives, taking with them the pleasures of a happy family home; by having the reassurance of their family it would be the same as if they were in their native homeland. But, migrants are not just married men. Indeed, one has recourse to appeal that in the beginning, aspirants who want to migrate to the so-called unknown lands abroad, are mostly single men without dependants. Moreover, in the case of married men, they initially migrate alone with the purpose of calling for their wife after they are settled. Accordingly, the proportion of women to men in [Japanese] settlements abroad is meager. As there are many people who

recognize the necessity of domestic prostitution because of our country's increasing population, I cannot help feeling more and more keenly the need for [Japanese overseas] prostitutes given the circumstances found in newly opened lands (Fukuzawa, 1960, 15: p. 364).

To support his argument that tolerating Japanese prostitution abroad was a necessary and inevitable stage in the process of nation-building, Fukuzawa turned to history by giving examples of other countries that had already experienced this phase of development. Fukuzawa noted that during the twilight of Tokugawa rule, British authorities in Hong Kong requested the Tokugawa authorities to permit Japanese prostitutes to travel to Hong Kong to “comfort” British troops stationed in the colony. Russian authorities in Vladivostok too made numerous requests for Japanese prostitutes to consul Russian male émigré settlers transforming the barren lands of Golden Horn Bay into a commercial and military maritime centre. Fukuzawa ends his article with his final word of advice: “the encouragement of migration and the freedom of prostitutes to work abroad are, in the context of the conduct of state affairs, a necessity” (Ibid).

It is important to note that Fukuzawa did not believe that Japanese prostitutes were superior to prostitutes of other ethnicities. His position was far more interesting and subtle. He was arguing that the role of proper government in this instance was to not impede the migration of women abroad. The mechanisms to stop women going abroad were not government prohibitions but the progressive self-cancellation of the phenomena by the phenomena itself. That is to say, overseas prostitutes were effectively ringing the death knell of their occupation when they ensured the “comfort” of male émigrés. As overseas Japanese settlements developed and prospered over time, more and more women would arrive to start families with the émigré men, rendering the need for prostitution obsolete. For Fukuzawa, overseas prostitutes was one alongside many other organizational structures necessary to secure overseas migration

and settlement, such as wealthy merchants guaranteeing a fully-subsidized passage for migrants, the improvement of overseas communications, the expansion of Japanese maritime resources, and government investment in overseas settlements for future profit and security (Fukuzawa, 1960, 15: pp. 371-375).

Conclusion

The motivation behind Fukuzawa's writings on emigration was to encourage his reading audience to seize the moment, and support Japanese efforts to expand overseas commerce by establishing Japanese communities and settlements abroad. Embedded in his concept of the necessity of Japanese subjects having the autonomy to migrate abroad was also a social hierarchy based on what he considered was a natural division of labor. The exercise of individual autonomy differed according to rank and status. The educated men of talent from "middle-class" households were to exercise their autonomy for the good of the country by becoming innovators and leaders in overseas settlements, commerce, industry, and finance. The men who comprised the laboring poor were to show industry and courage by emigrating and populating Japanese colonies abroad. The role of the rural women was to provide solace to Japanese émigrés by supplying them with sex and the domestic comforts only a woman can give. Fukuzawa's argument that prostitution was acceptable among emigrant communities recognized women as embellishments to the exclusively male domain of nation-building. For Fukuzawa, lower class women were simply tools in the service of national (male) progress.¹⁷

Fukuzawa's articles on emigration are novel as they identify an impersonal process of natural law inherent in social and economic

¹⁷ I am indebted to Elyssa Faison for clarifying this point to me.

behavior, coeval with natural processes of self-regulation that must be left alone and protected. He advocated that the right kind of government leaves room for the natural mechanisms of adjustment and balance inherent in demographic change to operate properly. He firmly believed that any element of compulsion implemented by even the most well-meaning government weakened rather than optimized the ability of Japanese people to establish settlements abroad, and undermined the government's objective of transforming Japan into a world maritime trading power. According to Fukuzawa, the challenge facing government policy makers was not up to what point do they say no to poor rural women migrating abroad, but the opposite, at what point do they say yes. Fukuzawa believed that the natural forces of progress would cancel out any inherent dangers found in overseas prostitution. This process of self-cancellation would occur when Japanese settlements became well established, attracting a more refined type of Japanese emigrant, who would relocate abroad with his wife and family. At that historical moment, the settlers will realize that prostitution was harmful to their society and put a stop to it. Because demographic growth and migration were "natural" physical processes with their own internal logic, policy makers needed to resist the urge to take draconian measures. Over regulation would impede rather than enhance nation-building by forestalling the necessary conditions of association between men and women, the foundation of labor and production, vital to the long-term success of Japanese overseas settlements.

There is another level where Fukuzawa's views on emigration are intriguing. He conceived Japanese survival in a hostile world of competition as a bio-economic problem. He connected economic growth with the social conditions of reproduction. His journalist writings on emigration were an attempt to change the economic, social, and political behavior of the Japanese public by manipulating public opinion. Fukuzawa's article advocating the need for Japanese women to engage in sex work abroad was consistent with his belief in the necessity of new

mental habits among the Japanese people to transmute outdated custom; he identified the nurturing of new mental habits as the qualifying moment that herald Japan's initial steps towards achieving equity with the West. For him, the presence of Japanese women abroad engaged in prostitution was a transient but necessary stage in Japan's development; the first buds of a vital and necessary enterprising spirit that the Japanese people required if they were to achieve equity with the West.

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