Huang, Qianqing

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The Search for Freedom: Suiheisha's Transpacific Journey and Afro-Asian Intersection

Qianqing Huang https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4484-3984
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, USA

Introduction

The legacies of the Suiheisha movements by burakumin, Japan's Tokugawa outcast groups, have been studied by many scholars worldwide. With an attempt to look beyond the imperial borders of Japan in the 1920s, this article explores how the Suiheisha activists looked at Black America to develop an internationalist framework to critique the domestic discrimination and identify with African American movements, allowing many buraku leaders to craft a different vision to imagine a "new world" grounded in what Fred Ho calls "the common and often overlapping diasporic experience" (Ho and Mullen 3). Just as the Jim Crow regime followed the formal abolition of African slavery in the United States, the formal abolition of the social status system in Japan gave way to a new set of discriminatory policies and continuous segregation. Seeking economic opportunities and struggling for equal rights in the era of Japanese empire-building, the buraku communities coped with the changing narratives of the imperialist agenda to find their paths to freedom. Focusing on how the buraku intellectuals in the United States responded to, interacted with, and engaged in the minority struggle issues to make buraku problem not limited to the locality of Japan, this essay examines the writings of Tahara Haruji, one buraku emigrant to the US who travelled back to Japan and devoted himself to establishing migrant schools to train potential emigrants for settling into the destinations.

The narratives of buraku emigration are deeply intertwined with the expansion of the Japanese empire. The possession of land is a key term that comes up almost always in the narration of the dream of the deprived, displaced, and discriminated. Found in many narratives on buraku emigration, both buraku leaders and government officials used the idea of

having one's own land to persuade and convince potential buraku emigrants that emigration offers a free ticket to this dream. Those propaganda efforts often had a very explicit focus on land and material comfort to suggest emigration as a means for creating buraku's 'new heaven' or 'new homeland'. In a similar light, Tahara Haruji's interaction with and fascination with Garveyism's possibility of a new homeland through participation in the imperial project is worth highlighting. Though Tahara never explicitly confirmed that his later devotion to emigration schools was directly related to Garvey, those schools aimed toward this idea of a new homeland – desires to conquer and settle down in foreign lands – within and beyond the Japanese Empire proper, and ultimately becoming agents of imperialism. The Tokugawa social status system, via differentiation and classification based on occupation, had placed burakumin at the bottom of the social structure, while the early Meiji abolition of the system also did not lead to the true emancipation of burakumin. Buraku emigration to Hokkaido and Manchuria, both self-mobilised and state-promoted, was in accordance with the empire's effort to expand its territories while differentiating its subjects (See Tanaka; Barclay; Fujitani). The so-called *buraku mondai* (the buraku question) usually phrased as a national issue, can only be elucidated in the context of migrations, the global wave of self-determination movements, and racial capitalism. As Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley point out in their discussions on the African diaspora: "shifting the discussion from an African-centric approach to questions of black consciousness to the globality of the diaspora-in-making allows for a rethinking of how we view Africa and the world and opens up new avenues for writing a world history from below" (26-27). By looking at the diasporic bodies of buraku emigrant groups and trans-pacific/international dialogues they have facilitated, it is evident that their ideas of liberation were closely connected to other international movements; it is not a strictly Japanese problem, nor is Japan the only locus of the struggles.

Tahara Haruji's Journey to the United States

Tahara Haruji's journey to the United States started in 1923, shortly after graduating from Waseda University. Tahara crossed the sea on the coattails of his elder sister, who had emigrated to the US earlier. Tahara

studied journalism at Missouri State University while helping his sister with farming. Upon completing his degree, he worked for the Colorado Shimbun company for several years as a contributor to the local Japanese newspaper. Immigrating to the United States from a buraku community in Fukuoka Prefecture, he witnessed the economic plight and the discrimination Japanese immigrant communities had to confront in post-World War I America. After his return to Japan in 1928, Haruji was later elected to the National Diet of Japan and involved in unique activities straddling the anti-discrimination activism of Suiheisha and providing support for buraku emigrants. In the 1930s, he ran two emigration preparation schools in Tokyo and Fukuoka, intending to set up a systematic program to equip those intending to travel with the necessary farming skills and knowledge about the local place for future success. Tahara's blueprint for buraku immigration included most continents, ranging from North and South America all the way to the Philippines, though he had always considered South America and the newly established Manchukuo as the most feasible destinations due to the available government subsidies. Portrayed mainly as a pioneer in buraku activism and fervent supporter of immigration within and beyond the Empire proper, Haruji's earlier experiences in the United States and writings on the African-American movements remain less known to the public. The then-popular discourse of American-style "frontier development" inspired many Japanese to engage in overseas migration and agricultural settler colonialism inside and outside the formal empire under the slogan of kaigai hatten, translated as overseas development (Eiichiro 6). However, different from most promoters of frontier development, Tahara and his buraku-targeting emigration schools present a narrative in which overseas development is idealised as a practical method to achieve liberation for the discriminated buraku communities, finding a path corresponding to Japan's imperialist ambitions.

Living through the 1920s United States, during which anti-Asian sentiments heightened and discriminatory immigration laws introduced, Tahara wrote about the African American movements in the US and made efforts to connect them to his own struggles as a buraku in this foreign land. His various political commitments led him to visit Harlem to meet with the fellows of Marcus Garvey, who promoted a vision of global black freedom based on the redemption and reconstruction of a New Africa that

embraced certain Western ideas and technologies but transformed them to suit black people's needs. The UNIA, founded in 1914, transformed from a benevolent association into "a mass-based, global, black nationalist movement intent on redeeming Africa and establishing a homeland for the black world" (Kelley 24). At the time, Japan was also on the radar of many black activists, including Garvey; its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 allowed them to see Japan's potential in ending white supremacy. As early as 1918, Garvey had expressed his interest in allying with Japan for a possible war against the white: "The next war will be between the Negros and the whites unless our demands for justice are recognized . . . With Japan to fight with us, we can win such a war" (Doan 12). Something Garvey would never know himself is that the idea of New Africa also sparked interest among the Suiheisha members, such as Tahara, who later pushed for similar emigration for the former outcasts of Japan. Shortly before his trip to Brazil to explore South America in the winter of 1926, Tahara headed to Harlem, hoping to meet Garvey. He later described the similarities he saw in the experiences of the two historically oppressed groups:

> It had been one hundred and fifty years [since chattel slavery first appeared in America.] During this period, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* went into publication. In gratitude of Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington had been chanting for freedom from religious perspective. A black-only school was founded in Tuskegee of Alabama. After Lincoln's victory in the Civil War, the legal emancipation of the former slaves was achieved, [but] the arrogant Americans [failed] awaken [to the injustices] within [their society]. They practiced lynching [and] social segregation to continue their discriminatory abuse. This led to the rise of many African American movements, including the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) under the leadership of Marcus Garvey, the National Urban League led by Charles S. Johnson, and the Crisis founded by W.E.B Du Bois, as well as the socialist newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*. (Tahara, "Harlem No Nanokakan: Amerika Kokujin Undō No Chūshinchi Inshōki")

His take on the failure of the Emancipation Proclamation offers striking parallels to burakumin's historical plight. For buraku communities, liberation appeared on the horizon when the new Meiji government, three years after it seized power in 1868, issued an official promulgation of *Kaihōrei* (often translated as "Emancipation Edict,") to abolish the abject

names of Tokugawa outcastes and elevate them to the same status as commoners. However, this legal abolition of state-assigned abject social status failed in fully emancipating these groups despite its claim of equality and promotion of individualism (McKnight 17). On the one hand, the contours of burakumin have grown increasingly blurry over time for various reasons, including the now restricted access to the *koseki* (house registration) system. Meanwhile, scholars have argued that while these abject classes were 'liberated' from clothing restrictions and prohibited the use of certain public spaces, they were deprived of their tax-exempt status and economic security, which came with the strict occupation designation during the Tokugawa Era. In this sense, this promotion of formal equality and abolition of the distinctions between them and the commoners was traded by an attendant loss of economic security (See Kurokawa; Shiomi). This edict of liberation, in other words, transformed the geographically and occupationally locked subjects into landless free labourers who would soon be drawn into Japan's rapid industrialisation in the decades to come. The broad historical background of Japan's enclosure movement resulted in the ultimate proletarianization of these buraku tenant farmers and transformed the possession of one's own land into an ultimate symbol of self-sufficiency and economic freedom. This dream runs through both the state's propaganda for settler colonialism, the advertisements of emigration schools, and the testimonies of buraku emigrants, suggesting weaponry more powerful and attractive than the floating idea of national pride for those subjected to centuries of discrimination.

The parallels Tahara identified in the same destinies shared by burakumin in Japan and African Americans in the United States allowed him to share the aspirations of these black leaders. Tahara's participation in Suiheisha in the 1930s and his promotion of settler colonialism contradicts what many imagined to be the fundamental beliefs of buraku activism, but in fact, Japanese and American imperialism alike always possessed a liberating aspect. Since the 1920s, imperial authorities started encouraging buraku residents and colonial subjects in Korea to participate in its war machine to make a multi-ethnic Japan (See Morris-Suzuki; Oguma; Gluck; Ching). In this liberating aspect, these despised and stigmatised populations, including war-supporting burakumin and Korean soldiers, saw the possibility of the full membership of and recognition

from the empire, a change to be welcomed into its national community that had kept its door shut. Another piece Tahara wrote during his stay in America, in which he explains the two layers of discrimination burakumin encountered as overseas Japanese immigrants, addressed the correlation between the two empires and the two subjugated groups more directly. The Japanese empire did not emerge in a geographical vacuum detached from other parts of the world; the trans-imperialist perspective is paramount in understanding how it was always entangled with other imperialisms. As Azuma notes, by doing so, we might rescue the study of colonialism and migration from the conventional single-empire perspective that looks only at the relations between the imperial metropole and its colonies. As a buraku immigrant in the United States, Tahara describes his experience as follows:

> I am considered a new commoner in Japan.
> Once I get to America, I am both a Jap and a new commoner.
> I am a person subjected to two layers of exclusion.
> . . . . . .
> Here I tell the story of myself, a twofold victim rather than a dual citizen.
> (Tahara, "Nijū Ni Haiseki Sareru Mure Yori")

The limited studies on discrimination toward burakumin within Japanese-American communities have suggested that many buraku immigrants chose to hide their identities. Some even went further to avoid the occupations historically linked to buraku identity after migration. The earliest documentation on the existence of burakumin within Japanese-American communities could be traced to George DeVos and Hiroshi Wagamatsu's book published in 1966, *Japan's Invisible Race*, in which one person discussed the phenomenon under the pseudonym Hiroshi Ito (Ito 200-221). In recent years, Sekiguchi Hiroshi has taken up the clues left in Hiroshi Ito's writing to conduct oral history research and collect data on the burakumin who lived in Florin, Sacramento, California (Sekiguchi 55-84). In addition, Koji Lau-Ozawa's findings point to prevalent discrimination against burakumin in the Japanese-American internment camps; based on the short stories published in newspapers, personal letters, and anecdotes, Lau-Ozawa concludes that burakumin arises in contexts discussing marriage and intergenerational relationship, which points to

"generational anxieties around nisei losing an awareness of their identities, and crucially the identities of people they will marry" among issei (Lau-Ozawa, workshop, April 21st, 2023). Those works highlight the presence and continuation of buraku discrimination within Japanese-American communities and illustrate the difficulty many, especially issei groups, faced in grappling with their community identity. Unlike the many burakumins who sought to hide their identities, Tahara did not shy away from publicly disclosing his family origin. The duality of discrimination he faced, as a burakumin within Japanese-American communities and a racial minority in American society, enabled him to see through the hypocrisy of a multiethnic Japan and the Japanese public's anger at the Immigration Act of 1924.

The Immigration Act passed in 1924 (which is called the Japanese Exclusion Act in Japan) effectively ended almost all Japanese immigration until the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952. Naturalisation laws only allowed 'free white persons' and those of African descent to become naturalised citizens, and state-level alien land laws prohibited those ineligible to become naturalised citizens from owning land. Moreover, numerous states also passed anti-miscegenation laws. As Marc Gallicchio notes, this Immigration Act should be understood as "the apotheosis of scientific racism in American life" as it resulted from the booming popularity of scientific racism theories among scientists and academics to provide intellectual justification for imperialism and racist practices (35). Starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Adam McKeown argues that such immigration laws developed "an array of categories to define admissible immigrants and methods to those migrants" (McKeown). On the other hand, among American proponents of such immigration laws, it is worth singling out Theodore Lothrop Stoddard. His book, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* (1920), pushed for the idea that global proportions could threaten Western civilisations if no action were taken. For him, restrictions on immigration could be a national solution. Assessing the Versailles settlements, Stoddard says: "Earth's worst war closed with an unconstructive peace which left old sores unhealed and even dealt fresh wounds. The white world today lies debilitated and uncured; the colored world views conditions which are a standing incitement to rash dreams and violent action" (16). The danger of gigantic race wars,

he argues, could only be avoided if "we whites will have to abandon our tacit assumption of permanent domination over Asia, while Asiatics will have to forego their dreams of migration to white lands and penetration of Africa and Latin America" (308). At the time when African-Americans and buraku activists, among many groups, sensed the urgency to form solidarity among coloured peoples, Stoddard warned his fellows about the danger of such formation: he called the 1919 Pan-African Conference held in Paris "a growing sense of negro race-solidarity" and argued that the one thing that could stop Japan's expansionism into Latin America is "our veto" (99 and 132).

While people like Stoddard saw the Immigration Act of 1924 as a solution to the threats posed by the rising Japan and its threats on the Anglo-Saxon civilisation, the passage of this law was met with considerable anger from the Japanese public across the Pacific. Amidst the waves of protests that took place in Japan, both the Japanese ambassador to the U.S., Hanihara Masanao, and the American ambassador to Japan, Cyrus E. Woods, were forced to resign. In a letter Hanihara wrote to the U.S. secretary of labour, he argued that the passage of such discriminatory law would render the Japanese "unworthy and undesirable" and worried about the conditions of the Japanese in the United States (Gordon 177). In a news commentary titled "The Senate's Declaration of War," published on April 19th, 1924, *Japan Times and Mail* argued that such a law constitutes an "insult" to the Japanese people:

> The impression is not unnatural; therefore, on the Japanese side, that the American Senators took advantage of the adverse plight of Japan in developing and carrying into effect their scheme of making Japan and the Japanese victims of their political manoeuvring. This is extremely unfortunate . . . We are most deeply aggrieved that the American Senate has made itself an object of distrust and suspicion in the Japanese mind through an act which is characterized as unnecessary and ill-judged by the American organs of public opinions themselves. (Anonymous, "The Senate's Declaration of War")

Tahara could not quite share this sentiment with his fellow countryman. As a newly arrived foreign student in the United States, he soon realised

this country was not the land of freedom as pictured. Disappointed, he wrote, "It is shallow and shameful to see America as a Christian country or a land of freedom. Marx definitely did not think of Japanese workers in the US or black workers when he said, 'Workers of the world. Unite!' His theory was all about the white man and limited to white people" (Sekiguchi 72). In addition to exposing the hypocrisy of America's freedom dream, Tahara also found the anger from the Japanese side as double-standard and self-righteous. Reminding people back home about the centuries-long discrimination toward burakumin, he writes,

> The Immigration Act of 1924 has seemed to arouse much turmoil among people from the mainland. It appears to be meaningful, but it is indeed meaningless. Only the ignorant would naively believe in the existence of some ethics and morals in international politics. Sweeping those they don't like into the corner, isn't America doing the exact same thing they did? Isn't this something the powerful always do unconsciously or intentionally? (Tahara, "Nijū Ni Haiseki Sareru Mure Yori")

Calling the Japanese anger toward the immigration law meaningless, Tahara refers to the treatment burakumin are subjected to in Japan to argue that it is not much different from America's racism toward the Japanese. He rejects the existence of any ethics or morals in what he calls 'international politics': a power hierarchy that pushes the other into continuous liminality and unfair treatment. Simultaneously a burakumin and a Japanese immigrant, he was not moved by protests against a discriminatory law the people of Japan are subjected to, as the same people have been subjecting burakumin like himself to discrimination. However, he was sympathetic to the overseas Japanese communities; as a former temporary emigrant, Tahar wanted to support those living in isolation overseas (Yamamoto 39-44, quoted in Sekiguci 72). As Yamamoto Saeri notes, even after Tahara's return to Japan, he brought the proposal many times to convince the government to fund Japanese language education for second-generation and third-generation Japanese overseas. It could be easily imagined that Tahara's empathy stemmed from a sense of solidarity united through similar experiences of discrimination and homelessness. Despite its internal discrimination against burakumin, the Japanese expatriate communities themselves also constituted minority groups that were looked down upon as ignorant and uncivilised outsiders by white-

centric American society. Thus, he connected the anti-discrimination social movements with the support for emigrants for a global framework of solidarity and found many similarities in the plight shared by African-Americans and burakumin as both groups cope with the everyday violence from the majority society in their native countries.

Many African-American leaders saw hope in Japan's rise after the Russo-Japanese War. During his invited visit to Tokyo by Japanese officials in 1937, W.E.B Du Bois revisited the importance for African-Americans to join the protests against the immigration act, an understanding based on the shared oppression in a white supremacist world. At an event at the Pan-Pacific Club, he said: "Negro prejudice in the United States was one cause of the anti-Japanese feeling" (Kearny 204). The trip also included Manchuria in the designated route, which allowed Du Bois to see first-hand Japanese imperialist operations. In his later reflection on the tour, he praised the smooth operation and management of the Southern Manchuria Railway Company, a state-established company that was instrumental in the economic exploitation of Manchuria. Failing to see how Japanese imperialism was structured around the exploitation of the land of other ethnicities, Du Bois identified with and praised the imperialist control of the region alongside its modern infrastructures in Manchuria, which he surmised showed the benevolent characters of the Japanese. For him, the absence of white masters in colonised Manchuria felt like a breeze of fresh air as the Japanese he shared conversations with could identify with his struggles against the white world. He imagined Japan to be the leader of a world revolution.

What Reginald Kearney calls the "pro-Japan utterances of Du Bois" won many Japanese hearts but certainly deviated from the living experiences of many burakumins, including Tahara's (7). Du Bois's support for Pan-Asianism, informed by his belief in collective action and solidarity among all people of colour, enabled him to see a race-less and caste-less Asia. However, as Yuichiro Onishi rightfully points out, Du Bois's Pan-Asianist theory was not too different from the Pan-Asianism used by Japan's imperial leadership to justify colonial subjugation and expansion through racial construction (Onishi 57). With a sarcastic touch, Tahara classifies the mentality of pro-Japan foreigners into two groups. The first

group referred to the calculated politicians, those he deemed to have personal political interests and ambitions in supporting Japan. The other group consisted of those he identified as the hypocritical and superior ones yearning for self-satisfaction. He argued that one could only discern this mentality after arrival in America (Tahara, "Nijū Ni Haiseki Sareru Mure Yori"). He was certainly critical of the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. Still, he was never convinced by the mounting critics of the law from the Japanese public and even the pro-Japan Americans, even when they took his side. While the Japanese felt humiliated and irritated by passing an immigration law that targeted them, it worked squarely with the Japanese ultra-nationalists' commitment to make Japan the liberator of Asia's non-white peoples. Pan-Asianism, the idea that Japan, as a modern and powerful nation, would take the lead in promoting unity and cooperation among the peoples of Asia to counter the influence of Western powers, played hand in hand with Black-Japan solidarity. As Du Bois envisioned a world revolution led by Japan against the white world, Japanese leaders also believed they had a moral obligation to help uplift fellow Asians and protect them from Western domination.

The comradeship Tahara desired to form with the African-American movements was essentially different from the one those in Tokyo looked for. As mentioned above, he dismissed his fellow countryman's anger toward the immigration law and urged them to reflect on their treatment of minority groups within the Japanese. About the conditions of Japanese-Americans, he continues:

> Let's try to reflect on Japan's own situation. Now we are granted citizens' rights in form even without the Suiheisha activism. However, what about the real effect of that? How about the actual society-wide situation? How about the daily encounters with others? Aren't they clearly divided into abominations? It's the same thing happening here. Whether you have American citizenship or don't have it, you are always subjected to discrimination and humiliation in daily encounters. (Tahara, "Nijū Ni Haiseki Sareru Mure Yori")

As a burakumin who had moved elsewhere and been subjected to two different racial structures, Tahara remained critical of both nations for the hypocrisy embedded in the liberal and progressive narratives. Alluding to

the historical experience of freed burakumin alongside freed African-Americans, Tahara had reached the conclusion that Japanese-Americans, as racialised subjects in White America, would have fallen into the same situation even if the restrictions on citizenship were lifted. In short, he did not believe granting citizenship would impose any meaningful change to the status quo of the racial structure, nor did he see it as a defining feature of the liberties and rights burakumin and African-Americans struggled for. Despite his sarcastic tone toward the angry Japanese public, Tahara also called for Black-Japanese solidarity. Before his departure to South America, he travelled to Harlem hoping to meet Marcus Garvey in person. The conversation never took place, as Garvey was arrested for mail fraud in connection to the sale of stock in the Black Star Line. Although there were irregularities connected to the business, the prosecution, believed by Gerald Horne, was politically motivated as Garvey's activists had attracted considerable government attention. Garvey's engagement in undergrounded pro-Japanese movements, along with movements such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, among other Black-Japan movements, had a combined membership of about 15,000 people at the peak (Horne 12). Despite Garvey's detention, Tahara was hosted by the UNIA members and invited to talk to the editors of the *Negro World*. The most interesting part of the Tahara's connection to Marcus Garvey is how the idea of emigration played a huge role in the two's activism and envision for freedom. While Garvey saw Africa as this lost hometown to redeem for the children of the diaspora, Tahara advocated buraku immigration to different places worldwide and ran two emigration schools better to prepare buraku emigrants upon his return to Japan.

It is worth noting that his imagination of Black-Japan solidarity was radically different from both the Japanese leaders and the American liberals, which explains his criticism and frustration over the latter groups. Further reflecting on the liminality of buraku emigrants overseas, his deeply entrenched disbelief in the liberal tradition let him conclude that only superficial ones would regard America as the country of liberty. He writes, "Although Marx called for the solidarity of working-class laborers all over the world, the Japanese and black laborers in America formed no unity. This is due to the existence of white supremacy" (Tahara, "Nijū Ni

Haiseki Sareru Mure Yori"). The failure of any formed solidarity among minorities, an obstacle many generations of activists face, is due to structure; its core can be traced back to white supremacy. In addition to the pervasiveness of racial oppression for coloured workers, Tahara pointed to the rigid nexus of power that protected and enforced the structure. This system, reserving the best for wealthy white Americans, engendered resentment and zero-sum thinking among everyone else of whatever was left. What Tahara wanted to form with Garvey was a shared goal to dismantle white supremacy by fuelling the Black-Japan solidarity, drastically different from what the Japanese government sought in their alliance with African-Americans. Japan's proposal to include a clause on racial equity at the Paris Conference had gained it many black allies. However, it has regarded white supremacy as the model of development and modernity, and the competitor of power and territories. On the other hand, when he addressed Garvey's fellow colleagues, Tahara was concerned that racism and white supremacy have created longstanding rifts between communities of colour and stroked interracial conflicts (Tahara, "Harlem No Nanokakan: Amerika Kokujin Undō No Chūshinchi Inshōki").

Emigration as Liberation

Emigration, as both an idea and practice, offered Tahara and his fellow burakumin a way to imagine a self-ruled territory without discrimination and white supremacy. Tahara's time in the Americas significantly shaped his political identity and ideas for reform. In a 1935 issue of Fukuoka Kenji, he penned a brief article titled "*Mianmi no ni senpai,*" in which he recounted how a brief visit to South America during his study abroad years introduced him to the appeal of colonial education. Soon after his return to Japan in the late 1920s, Tahara started to allocate funds for his emigration school projects. By 1932, he was already in charge of three Suiheisha-related schools across the archipelago, including the Asakusa Proletarian Political School (*asakusa puroretaria seiji gakko*) in Tokyo, the Sakai Toshihiko Farmers' Work School (*nōmin rodō gakko*) in Fukuoka and the Yokohama Foreign Language School, a school closely related to colonisation and settlement projects (Koshōji 102). At all three schools, he took up the operation post and, more importantly, conducted curriculum reforms. Not until 1934 did Tahara acquire the resources and opportunity

to remodel the schools solely based on his political ambitions; the first place of the experiment was at the Sakai Toshihiko Farmers' Work School on Kyushu Island. Shortly after he ascended to the head of the school in 1934, he held lectures on the theme of continental colonisation in May of the same year. This lecture series was unsuccessful; despite the initial goal of attracting an audience of about one hundred, only eight people showed up to express support and interest (Koshōji 103). Whereas the specific content of Tahara's lecture is no longer accessible, the main theme declared at the lecture was clear: continental colonialism is the best way to break through the ongoing economic crisis in Japan's rural areas, which is in line with Japan's ambitious plan to send one million households to Manchuria in the 1930s. Tahara deemed this the goal to accomplish through his reorganisation of the academy. Two months after this initial failed attempt, the original proposal for establishing Kyushu Colonisation School was submitted in July, with the goal of creating the only permanent foreign migration institution in Kyushu. The founding committee leaders, represented by Tahara's signature on the proposal, pledged to establish a school that would provide short-term training to equip prospective migrants to Manchuria, South America, and Southeast Asia with the necessary skills. The initial matriculation offered two courses, each accommodating twenty students, for those intending to migrate to Brazil and Manchuria. The four-month programmes required enrolment qualifications that included being an adventurous Japanese male (above 18 years old) with a specific level of academic and physical aptitude (equivalent to second-year junior high education) and most importantly, a strong determination to relocate overseas (Koshōji 103). The committee aimed to train "intrepid and pioneering young men with intellectual acumen and experience" through a curriculum comprising foreign language, colonisation studies, history, overseas knowledge, agriculture, crafts, business, hygiene, and martial arts" (Koshōji 103). Examining the curriculum closely, one can infer that Tahara's vision of an exemplary coloniser embodied traits akin to Western modernity, especially the emphasis on hygiene.

Regarding Tahara's post-America experience, an inquiry arises in relation to his involvement in Japan's colonial expansion and his perception of it as a possible source of liberation for the burakumin and other Japanese. This notion, coupled with his affiliation with African-American

movements, particularly Garvey's ideologies, brings forth the unsettling reality that Tahara placed his hopes for liberation in the colonisation of other lands and peoples. Given Tahara's extensive writings on racism in the United States and his cognisance of discrimination in Japan, his reform of emigration schools suggests his conviction that emigration offers a liberating outlook for those seeking freedom. Regardless of the chosen emigration site, be it Manchuria or any other destination, for buraku leaders and the rank-and-file members that moved, it represented a new prospect: the prospect of embarking on a life of self-sufficiency and collectivism.

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