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**Letters from Osaka: problematizing the narratives of
Japanese immigrants in Davao**

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**Letters from Osaka:
Problematizing the Narratives of Japanese Immigrants Davao
(A draft)**

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Between May 26, 1985 and February 5, 1986, Idoh Yukio, of Ise Boeki Kaisha, Ltd, wrote 12 letters to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, a University of the Philippines architecture alumnus and a would-be Monbusho scholar at the University of Tokyo in Japan. Mr. Idoh belonged to an organization known as Davao Kai: an organization of Japanese immigrants who lived in Davao before World War II. Meanwhile, Mr. Dakudao is the grandson of Dr. Santiago Dakudao, a graduate of Tokyo Medical School and the first director and resident physician of Ohta Development Company Hospital. Idoh's letters bring to light the consolidation of historical, socio-political and economic determinants that enabled Japanese immigrants to take control of the flourishing *abaca* industry during the Pre-World War II Period. Idoh confirms how the extent of Japanese landholdings, as well as the Japanese domination of trade, commerce and industry transformed the Davao Gulf region into one of the richest provinces in the Philippines, a scenario comparable to the role of Chinese in Malaysia and that of the Indian in East Africa. The Philippine experience, however, becomes different mainly because the Japanese were hugely successful in obtaining assistance and cooperation from a number of influential and high ranking Filipinos, which is remarkable considering the fact that Japanese population in Davao probably never exceeded the 21,000 mark and their landholdings were comparatively small in terms of acreage. After the Post-World War I period, they immediately controlled the local hemp industry and diversified into other business ventures as well. By the outbreak of World War II, Japanese immigrants controlled much of Davao's socioeconomic, political and cultural hegemony. Japanese diplomatic representatives exercised care and astuteness in handling the complexities of Japanese emigration in Davao. Moreover, the aims of the Japanese government were openly supported by members of the Philippine intelligentsia. The contract laborers of 1903 and the succeeding years gave way to the professional and skilled workers who filled up the ranks in the agricultural companies. Idoh's remembrances underscore the huge success attained by Ohta Development Company and the establishment of more than sixty agricultural companies in the Davao Gulf region alone.

Davao's Natural and Human Environment

Within the context of *abaca* production, several other determinants emerge in Japanese emigration to Davao. Davao was originally a "sleepy politico-military district under the army major" which became a province under the American colonials in 1914.ⁱ While the area remained underdeveloped during the period of Spanish colonization,ⁱⁱ the Americans had anticipated Davao's economic potentials, which was often described among the most fertile to be found in the lowlands of the Pacific tropics. The soil was kept moist by a consistent and well-distributed rainfall draining into a watershed sloping from Mt. Apo, the Philippines' highest peak at 9,610 feet, to the sea coast. Davao's plains gradually sloping from Apo to the sea were easily drained. Warm days followed by cool nights was the rule. Moreover, the relatively mild and typhoon-free climate, with its continuous growing season, made life in Davao not dissimilar to life in Okinawa or in Kyushu or Western Honshu, from which places most of the Japanese emigrants came. Sato reported that there was no marked difference in humidity and wind velocity factors between Japan and the Philippines.ⁱⁱⁱ The tropical climate, however, was deemed unbearable. Many Davao-based immigrants "open their windows whenever they sleep at night."^{iv} A number of Japanese immigrants were subjected to tropical disease and infection, notably malaria, intestinal, and lung-related diseases. A great number of Japanese laborers suffered from pneumonia because of poor ventilation. Hygiene and sanitation were always of prime importance to the Japanese. As a precaution, the Japanese painted their houses with bright colors (mosquitoes are known to thrive in dark spaces). "*Kaya*" (mosquito nets), "*senko*" (mosquito coil), "*ami*" (screen for windows), chemicals, rat traps, pistols, and the keeping of natural rat killers like cats and snakes were rendered necessary for tropical living.^v

Still, a *Mainichi Shimbun* (August 1916) article encouraged more young men from Shinshu prefecture (now Nagano Prefecture) to establish settlements in the Philippines,^{vi} south of Taiwan – our new territory. An added attraction is the Philippines' massive land area – as big as Honshu and Hokkaido combined. The *Mainichi* article, furthermore, openly encouraged the cultivation of *abaca*, the raw fiber for Manila hemp, often used as rope in ships, especially during World War I. The choice of *abaca* is primarily due to the fact that *abaca*, unlike rice and sugar, is not seasonal. It is not vulnerable to water and fire damages and pests. Harvest is certain; work is simple. Risk is small. Unlike coconut, you do not have to wait for a long time to recover your investment.^{vii}

Upon arrival in Davao, however, the Japanese found conditions extremely punishing. While the prospect of hiring groups of unemployed Japanese proved to be attractive, the laborers were dispersed in groups ranging in size from several to as many as fifty on the plantations shops were few, and

communication difficult. Equipment everywhere was poor and scarce. Living accommodation for laborers was poor and primitive.^{viii} Moreover, the Japanese felt strongly that Davao planters and officials ridiculed them for their poverty and strangeness. Discontent was somewhat diminished after recommendations for the improvement of facilities were exhorting by Dr. Hashimoto Onji who accompanied those who arrived in January 1905.^{ix} As a result of successes gained by Ohta and the establishment of other plantation companies around Davao, Japanese immigrants began to "look happy, with agricultural industrialization in mind... People had money with them."^x

Indeed, ecological conditions were not the only determinants for the limitations, as well as the considerable growth and expansion, achieved by the Japanese in Davao. While the concept of "*nan'yo*" (South Seas) encouraged the migration of Japanese settlers to the "boundless treasure house... as wide as a million square miles even if confined only to Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, the Malay peninsula and the Philippines,"^{xi} the recruitment of the first large group of Japanese laborers to the Philippines was done through the initiative of the American colonial administration.^{xii} Many veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) originally attempted to cultivate Davao, married native Filipinos, had Japanese tenants in the east and west coast: Lais, Lawayon, Culaman, Lamitan, Bututal, East Lupon, Sigaboy, and Surup.^{xiii} Eventually, Japanese leaders, notably Prime Minister Tanaka Giichii (1927-29) realized the Philippines' strategic location and its significance as a source of raw materials for Japan, "especially for the growing industries of Taiwan."^{xiv} The early decades of the 20th century transformed Davao into a center of Japanese emigration and investment, relocalized largely in the production and marketing of Manila hemp. Burgeoning prosperity, especially during the hemp boom of the World War I years, led the Japanese to expand their landholdings.^{xv} In the process of doing so, the Japanese became more adept at discovering extralegal devices. The Philippine answer to this problem came in the form of Public Land Act No. 2874 of 1919 which provided that no individual or corporation could purchase or lease land unless 61 percent of the capital stock was owned by US or Philippine citizens.^{xvi} As will be shown later, however, the Japanese found various ways and means to circumvent the law and escape prosecution.

In effect, while statistical information reflected a decline in the number of Japanese-owned properties and a corresponding increase in Philippine-owned companies, Davao was, at one point, "a deeply-rooted, tightly-knit, well-organized, capably-led and economically thriving Japanese community."^{xvii}

From the early 1900s to 1920, Japan had purely economic interests in the Philippines: trade, commerce, land for her citizens who preferred the comfortable climate of the tropics to the cold climate of Hokkaido, and raw materials for her industrialization. Japanese settlers were originally a closely-knit community.^{xviii} Social contact with Filipinos and Americans remained limited. For as long as her laborers and investors could enter the Philippines,

settle there, and exploit the country's natural resources, issues and problems concerning the Philippines, for the Japanese government and for many immigrants, were domestic problems to be addressed by the United States government. By the 1920s and the 1930s, however, the Japanese experienced difficulty in expanding their economic interests further as a result of "nationalistic" (though predominantly pro-American) policies of the American colonials and eventually, the Philippine Commonwealth (1935-1941). In 1926, Bureau of Lands officials investigated dealings and management of all Japanese corporations in Davao, searching for alleged land-law violations. After two months, the committee decided that charges were made without foundation and that, contrary to what had been suggested, the Japanese, with their spirit and initiative, acted wholly within the law and had made great contributions to Davao's agricultural development.^{xix} The lack of serious obstacles to Japanese relocalization in Davao during this period can be attributed to the diligent and well-planned diplomatic reactions of Japanese consular representatives in Manila and Davao; the tolerant encouragement of introducing foreign capital into the Philippines by the governors-general appointed by the Republican administration in Washington; the successful lobbying among Filipino supporters of the Davao Japanese, mostly legislators and provincial officials; a desire by Filipino lawyers, dummy corporations and "*pakiaw*" landlords to leave undisturbed what was for them satisfactory arrangements; the generally favorable attitude of Bagobo tribesmen towards the Japanese whom they preferred to Christianized Filipinos;^{xx} and the US-Japan "honeymoon" era in international politics, reflected in several Washington Treaties of 1922 and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.^{xxi}

Philippine Trade Commissioner Howard declared: "Davao is fast becoming the greatest hemp producing province of the Philippines, due largely to the very progressive methods and splendid organization of the Japanese planters there."^{xxii}

Eventually, economics and politics could no longer be separated. The Japanese organized cultural exchange missions between students, academics and political leaders. These were attempts to push forward a greater understanding of Japan in Davao and in other places where there were Japanese interests. In the long-run, however, this proved to be a one-sided approach.^{xxiii} While Japan wanted the Philippines to appreciate her culture, she was interested only in the Philippine Constitution, the Congressional debates, and in cultivating friendships with members of the Philippine political and cultural elite^{xxiv} – areas that affected her economic and political expansion in the Asia-Pacific region.

Land, Labor and Capital

By the mid-nineteenth century, *abaca* was an important cordage fiber utilized as a strategic war material by powerful countries. Before the 1920s, the

Bicol region^{xxv} had enjoyed dominance as the main *abaca*-producing center in the Philippines. However, Bicol-based planters could not maintain a level of production sufficient enough to meet the demands of local, regional, and global markets. On the other hand, the *abaca* industry in Davao, which was started by Spanish and American planters shortly after the American occupation, progressed steadily in Japanese hands during and after World War I. The Davao Gulf region replaced Bicol as the leading *abaca* producing center in the Philippines.^{xxvi}

Before the arrival of the Americans in 1899, Davao was populated largely by about 40,000 tribal people living as semi-nomadic, slash-and-burn agriculturists. The Bagobo, for instance, had an almost self-sufficient economy. Occasionally, Chinese and Muslim traders brought in some tradeware in exchange for a variety of items. Their economy operated on the principles of barter and reciprocity. The Bagobo was ignorant of the real cash value of their goods and of a monetary system of exchange. Traditional trade and exchange among the Bagobo fulfilled an important social, as well as economic function in their lives.^{xxvii} When the Americans established the Moro Province in 1903, nearly 5,000 men stationed in the province had the opportunity to see for themselves the uncultivated fertile land of Mindanao and Sulu.^{xxviii} Between 1903 and 1913, Provincial Governors Leonard Wood, Tasker Bliss and John Pershing encouraged their soldiers to settle and farm in the province. During this period, *abaca* was the chief export of the Philippines to the US, and many Americans became involved with the *abaca* industry. By 1911, the number of American plantations had grown to 42.^{xxix} The American plantation owners originally employed tribal peoples until it was necessary for them to import labor.^{xxx} Although it was initially difficult for the Americans to communicate with the workers, the planters combined skill and patience to ensure that the workers are trained properly as *abaca* farmers.^{xxxi}

To change tribal customs and beliefs, the colonials established a political system patterned after American ideas and ideals. Those who refused to find work were sentenced by magistrate courts to labor on public works.^{xxxii} The introduction of taxation in Mindanao created inequality, a need for money and luxury commodities that pushed "uncivilized" peoples to seek employment.^{xxxiii} Furthermore, tribal courts were created in 1905 to eradicate the customary laws of non-Christian tribes that ran contrary to the aims of the colonial government.^{xxxiv} American colonization created a revolutionary change on the part of the natives, especially the Bagobos. The American *abaca* and coconut planters quickly established trading stations on their plantations, and began to barter western trade stuffs for Bagobo *abaca*, coconuts and handicraft items, and at prices set by them at the storefront. The Bagobos were compelled to live on plantations, clear their land, plant *abaca* and build permanent homes right in the center of the cultivated patch.^{xxxv} By 1907, 4,000 natives of the Guianga tribal ward were living on American plantations. They worked for a daily wage,

planted hemp on their own account, and eventually moved towards becoming a class of peasant proprietors. "1,200 of these men have families and are owning a total of 89,000 hills of hemp."^{xxxvi} The colonial policy of transforming the natives within a structural class providing support to the newly-established towns proved to be very successful. As wage-earners,^{xxxvii} the Bagobos spent their money on goods made available at the American stores. The Japanese immigrants, on the other hand, were responsible for introducing the practice of credit and debt to the Bagobos within the framework of an alien monetary system.^{xxxviii}

Meanwhile, the *abaca* industry developed by the Americans in the Davao Gulf region made slow but steady progress with the support of the colonial government. From an initial cultivated area of 2,499 hectares in 1902, it rose to 16,410 hectares in 1910, and production rose from 302 to 8,592 tons. The *abaca* industry coordinated by Europeans and Americans peaked during these years. However, the industry declined after a chronic shortage of labor and capital. The Japanese overcame these problems and eventually replaced the American and European planters. More Japanese plantation companies were founded and, by 1918, the Japanese became the leading planters in the Davao Gulf region.^{xxxix}

The Japanese increased the areas under cultivation from 34,280 hectares in 1921 to 75,070 in 1930.^{xl} Land expansion meant that the Japanese made incursions into tribal lands. There were a variety of methods used by the Japanese to gain possession of tribal lands. They were classified by the Department of Forestry as follows:

1. By means of the Public Land and Corporate Acts (mentioned in the previous section);
2. Subleasing lands previously leased by individuals or American and Philippine corporations;
3. Leasing lands claimed as private property and paying the owner a certain percent of the product, or other agreements;
4. Inducing a native to apply for or occupy a certain tract of land. The Japanese would pay the entry fee (homestead, purchase, lease, or land tax), besides the ten percent 10%, to the applicant, of one hundred pesos (P100) per hectare, as soon as the land began to produce;
5. Marrying a non-Christian woman, especially of a chieftain's family, thus gaining a more intimate relation with the woman's tribe and relatives. In this way, the Japanese succeeded in handling the lands of non-Christians;
6. Inducing the non-Christians and other natives who were land owners to buy on credit in the Japanese stores scattered throughout the plantations; and when they were unable to pay such credits in money, they were required to pay with their lands;

7. Buying the rights of a leasee (*sic*) and paying him for all the improvements, who would then request the cancellation of his application, and the buyer submit a new one;

8. Organizing several corporations financed and maintained by a single capitalist. Among Davao's political, cultural and financial elite, it is a well-known fact that most, if not all, of the Japanese corporations were capitalized by Ohta, Furukawa, Fujitagumi, Nampy, and the other "development companies." Investigating these companies would reveal that they were not complying with requirements of the Corporation Law. ^{xli}

Due to Japanese immigrants' initial cordial relations with the Bagobos, many of these settlers became "*datu*."^{xlii} The period after World War I, however, changed this scenario completely because a number of mainland Japanese with capital began pushing towards the middle and upland regions (*i.e.* tribal lands). The tribal people lost their land and traditional way of life and murdered many Japanese settlers. In the most aggressive period of Japanese land expansion between 1918 and 1921, it is estimated that no fewer than 100 Japanese settlers were killed. ^{xliii}

Both the Japanese and the Americans refused to recognize the vastness of Bagobo landholdings, and their temporarily abandoned "*kaingin*," which Sahlins described as the utilization of the "slash-and-burn" technique of agricultural production. ^{xliiv} With the assistance of Filipino lawyers, the Japanese settlers occupied the "public lands," cultivated *abaca* and ignored the vast improvements made by the Bagobos. ^{xliv} During the period of the first *abaca* boom, many Bagobos died as a result of successive smallpox epidemics in 1917-18, and an outbreak of influenza in 1918 in the Guianga District. ^{xlvi} To prevent themselves from getting further afflicted with the disease, the Bagobos temporarily abandoned their lands. When the Bagobos returned, they were told that their lands were "legally" occupied by the Japanese. During this very difficult period, the Bagobos were driven away from the lands that they were actually occupying and cultivating. These actions finally incurred the wrath of the Bagobo. ^{xlvii}

The Japanese believed that the immediate problem of the Bagobos was the loss of their landholdings. More seriously, however, there was the problem of displacement caused by the loss of traditional hunting and gathering grounds as well as the temporarily abandoned *kaingins*. ^{xlviii} "The Japanese ruthlessly cut down large numbers of trees upon which the Bagobo were dependent for their livelihood. With deforestation, streams dried up and the rest were befouled by the debris cast into them to make way for more *abaca*. The charred felled trees were dumped into the streams wherever possible to make more room for planting *abaca*." ^{xlix} Walkup describes the consequence of what is apparently an ecological disaster: "...The Bagobo now seldom eats flesh, fish, or fowl except what he buys in tins, salmon, sardines, etc. from the... Jap stores who fleece him unmercifully..."¹

Trees were believed to be inhabited by spirits in the Bagobo world view; and because the loss of their ancestral lands coincided with the smallpox epidemic and influenza spread, the Bagobos began killing the Japanese in retribution. Captured Bagobos were found guilty of murder in the law courts despite having sought retribution in accordance with the traditional custom.^{li}

Around this time, several more Japanese "companies" were being established as a result of Ohta Development Company's successful operations in Davao.^{lii} The Furukawa Development Company, for instance, was officially registered on 28 December 1914.^{liii} On 1 April 1915, Furukawa obtained his first holding in Davao with the purchase of 100 hectares and improvements from Captain Burchfield for twenty thousand pesos (P20,000). Thereafter, Furukawa bought more land and, by March 1918, the company owned 1,010 hectares of land.^{liv} Davao Mercantile Company purchased Burchfield's remaining properties in October 1917, and invested a million pesos to develop the newly-acquired properties. Laborers were enlisted by the syndicate's emigration division in Japan.^{lv} Davao was also connected to the other Japanese overseas development corporations and individuals. Subsidized shipping companies calling at Davao served numerous Southeast Asian and Latin American ports. Many Japanese administrators were originally recruited as recent graduates from universities in their home country.^{lvi}

By the outbreak of World War II, Japanese immigrants controlled Davao's economic and political hegemony. Without question, Davao's stature as one of the richest Philippine provinces can be attributed largely to Japanese labor and capital. A number of prominent Filipino families supported the creation of these phenomena. While Goodman said that "*Davaokuo*" is an exaggeration, there is sufficient truth in utilizing the term symbolically to recognize the communal aggressiveness of Japanese immigrants in Davao, which persistently prevented any semblance of their integration into the Philippines. Numerically, the "hard core" of Davao-based Japanese never exceeded 18,000.^{lvii} From the small group organized by Awad in 1903, however, Japanese settlers expanded by 7,000, with 16,000 taking up residence from 1914-1919.^{lviii} After World War I, the Japanese population in the Philippines increased steadily, except for the years from 1921 to 1923. The fluctuations in the Japanese population followed the fluctuations in the market price of *abaca*.^{lix} From 1923 to 1931, however, there was a steady upward trend in the Davao-based Japanese population, in spite of the downward trend in the price of *abaca*. This has been explained in terms of improved production, resulting in a better and stable livelihood, and an increase in the number of dependents (wives and children).^{lx}

After the US mainland government implemented the 1924 Immigration Law,^{lxi} the trend of the Japanese population in the Philippines can no longer be explained in terms of the price of *abaca* in the global market. The size of the Japanese population in the Philippines remained stable from 1931 to 1933, while the price of *abaca* fluctuated until 1932 — when it began to recover. In spite of

the fact that there were more Japanese departures than arrivals between 1931 and 1935, there was no considerable decrease in the size of Japanese population in the Davao Gulf region.^{lxii}

The contract laborers gave way to the professional and skilled workers who staffed the intermediate ranks in the agricultural companies, and took advantage of opportunities in the flourishing town. Clearly, the major enterprise of Japanese relocation was the cultivation of *abaca* for the making of Manila hemp. From a single corporation (ODC), more than 60 agricultural companies had been established by the Japanese in Pre-World War II Davao. In 1932 alone, figures of the provincial assessor of the Davao Province revealed that there were 25 Japanese-controlled firms with holdings in excess of 1,000 acres.^{lxiii} The assessed value for 1932 of taxable property owned by Japanese was said to be 7,317,090 pesos.^{lxiv}

From their humble beginnings as penniless laborers, Japanese immigrants had achieved considerable influence and economic well-being.^{lxv} By 1934, 80% of the *abaca* production was derived from the Japanese companies, producing 500,000 bales of hemp.^{lxvi} The methods of cultivation employed by the Japanese were also efficient. For an amount of land equivalent to that utilized by the Japanese, 80% was required to grow the remaining 20% of the provincial *abaca* production. In addition to exporting to Japan more than 95% of the total hemp produced in Davao, the Japanese immigrants also brought back to Japan *abaca* scrap (usually discarded or used in the making of door mats, collectively known as "Grade W") which the mainland Japanese utilized for industrial purposes: paper pulp, coarse rope, etc. Furthermore, the immigrants' control of the hemp industry did not depend on a protected market (as in the case of sugar or coconut oil). The impending termination of the free trade with the United States in 1946 (proposed date of Philippine Independence) would not affect hemp production and marketing.^{lxvii}

In 1934, the Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA) reported that there were at least 202,026 people living in Davao.^{lxviii} Of these, 13,857 were Japanese.^{lxix} However, figures concerning the realty holdings of foreigners reveal the following:

	Area in Hectares	Assessed Value
Japanese	38,774.0366	9569930 pesos
Chinese	6,846.0905	2096910 pesos
Spaniards	6,558.8840	815400 pesos

The "Detail of Realty Holdings of the Japanese" from the same report contained a list of the large amounts of purchases and leases from the Philippine Government or from individuals.^{lxx} Furthermore, the same BIA report revealed Japanese Percentage of Participation in Davao Province Industries as well as the total volume of business transacted in Davao from 1930-34 *vis-à-vis* transactions conducted by Japanese corporations and individuals.^{lxxi}

However, the cultural isolation and economic wealth of the immigrants eventually created repercussions at the highest levels of Philippine-American, Philippine-Japan and American-Japan relations. From the beginning of 1934 until the outbreak of World War II, the upward trend in the size of Japanese population in the Philippines was never reversed. This reinforced the notion among Filipino and American observers that Japan was preparing to invade the Philippines. After extensive government surveys (to investigate reported cases of illegal land holdings of the Japanese), aborted plans to close the port of Davao, and the growing pressure from the Philippine government to limit Japanese immigration to the Philippines, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs limited the number of emigrants to the Philippines to fifty per month. In the long run, however, Japan exceeded its quota and the situation remained unnoticed by the Philippine and American authorities. In Davao alone, there were 15,000 residents in 1937, 16,000 in 1938, and 17,888 in 1939.^{lxxii}

Without question, these circumstances underscored "the success of the Japanese in maintaining their position at Davao" which remained unhindered despite extensive criticism within the Islands and in the United States.^{lxxiii} The stories behind these migrations exemplify the maturity of Japanese diplomacy in general and the astuteness of the Japanese representatives in the Philippines in particular. Japan's desire for regional and, eventually, global expansion led to World War II in the Pacific. After the war, Japan became a prosperous nation and emigration had become unnecessary. Japan's phenomenal postwar economic recovery enabled many Japanese to believe that "*Nihon no hou ga ii desu ne!*"^{lxxiv}

Conclusion

By the outbreak of World War II, Japanese immigrants controlled much of Davao's socioeconomic, political and cultural hegemony. Japanese diplomatic representatives exercised care and astuteness in handling the complexities of Japanese emigration in Davao. Moreover, the aims of the Japanese government were openly supported by members of the Philippine intelligentsia. The contract laborers of 1903 and the succeeding years gave way to the professional and skilled workers who filled up the ranks in the agricultural companies. The huge success attained by Ohta Development Company led to the establishment of more than sixty agricultural companies in the Davao Gulf region alone. The Japanese immigrant was no longer the penniless laborer who rode wayward ships, no longer the Baguio road construction worker who landed in Davao to escape unemployment, poverty, and the lack of opportunities in the home country. He had achieved a position of considerable influence and economic well-being. Although a great majority^{lxxv} of these immigrants returned to Japan during the repatriation of World War II,^{lxxvi} many of them and their descendants continue to hold deep affection for the Philippines and the Filipino people. Idoh,

for instance, imported coconut shell charcoals from the Philippines with the coordination of Jose Quimpo, a Davao-based Filipino.^{lxxvii} Tanaka Yoshio, historian of the Yokohama-based "Davao Kai,"^{lxxviii} collects autobiographical narratives written by former immigrants and their descendants; and organizes trips to the Philippines yearly, along with the other surviving members of the Pre-World War II Davao Japanese community.^{lxxix} A number of them were also converted to Christianity.^{lxxx} Aoe and Kenji Migitaka, whose parents belonged to an earlier batch of settlers, maintain a profitable restaurant in Ueno, a bustling district right in the center of Tokyo. The restaurant, established from capital borrowed from Dr. Santiago Dakudao, Sr. (the first director and resident physician of Ohta Development Company Hospital), continues to attract regular customers from Tokyo's diverse consumer market. The Migitaka family organizes regular parties and home-stay programs for Filipino students who are studying under the Japanese Government (*Monbusho*) program. Moreover, they lavish time and attention on these students in mitigating the hazards of living in a foreign country. In this way, the Migitakas believe that they are not merely giving away huge profits from their business. Together with their children Kazuko and Toshiaki, they foster a genuine desire to help the Philippines get rid of its poor image in the global community.^{lxxxi} Furthermore, the "Davao Kai" immigrants who returned to Japan before, during, and after World War II, have organized at least two other associations: The Philippine Society in Japan (Tokyo) and the Mindanao Friendship Society (Kyoto).^{lxxxii}

A consolidation of historical, socio-political and economic determinants enabled Japanese immigrants to take control of the flourishing *abaca* industry during the Pre-World War II Period. As seen through the preceding sections, circumstances surrounding the development of Japanese-controlled companies in Davao exemplify a parallel with Gudeman and Rivera's Colombian model when the latter discussed the features of the corporation *vis-à-vis* the house.

The extent of Japanese landholdings, as well as the Japanese domination of trade, commerce and industry transformed the Davao Gulf region into one of the richest provinces in the Philippines,^{lxxxiii} a scenario comparable to the role of Chinese in Malaysia and that of the Indian in East Africa. The Philippine experience, however, becomes different mainly because the Japanese were hugely successful in obtaining assistance and cooperation from a number of influential and high ranking Filipinos, which is remarkable considering the fact that Japanese population in Davao probably never exceeded the 21,000 mark and their landholdings were comparatively small in terms of acreage. After the Post-World War I period, they immediately controlled the local hemp industry and diversified into other business as well.

ⁱ *Supra* note 47, p. 25.

ⁱⁱ Interview with Michaelangelo Dakudao, November 1993. Aside from the Bagobo natives, several other ethno-linguistic groups live in Davao. They include: the Bilaan, Mandaya,

Manobo, Mansaka and Tiboli. Etymologically, Davao was derived from the word "daba-daba"--images that represent fire rituals and mythical creatures that breathe fire during the Pre-Spanish Colonial Period. Christian settlers arrived in Davao led by a certain Captain Uyangeren. The first Spanish settlement in Davao was called Nueva Vergara. The Americans settled in 1899 and the first Japanese arrived in 1903 -1904. Davao became a chartered city in 1939, mainly because of Japanese labor and capital.

- iii Kan Sato, "Hikiage Hojin no Nampo Kyoju no Heimen Keikaku ni Tsuite" in *KENCHIKU ZASHI* (1943), 106-115.
- iv Sato in Dakudao, *supra* note 9, p 129.
- v *Supra* note 9, p. 130.
- vi The article described the Philippines as "a country of coconuts, a city of tobacco, a warehouse of rice and sugar, the hometown of Manila hemp."
- vii Kuniho Nakamura, "Shinshu mura o tsukuritai: Hiripin gunto e sono ichi (Let us Build a Shinsho Village in the Philippines), Mainichi Shimbun (August 1916)" in *NANYO HIRIPIN NO SHINANO MURA* (A Shinano Village in the Philippines) (Tokyo: Fuken Shokumin Kenkyu Kai, 1917),5-12.
- viii Dakudao, *supra* note 9, p. 130. While few cases of dysentery and amoeba infection had been reported, rainwater was collected for human consumption. Well water was seldom relied on as there was no sewage system. The toilet was the pit type where excrements were allowed to be absorbed by the soil.
- ix *Supra* note 47, p. 26; *supra* note 85, pp. 356-357.
- x Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 14 October 1985.
- xi Nanyo Kyokai in Yu-Jose, 1992: 39-46.
- xii *Ibid.* at 17.
- xiii Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 6 November 1985.
- xiv *Supra* note 19, pp. 73-74.
- xv Idoh, 26 November, 1985. Men residing in the plantation used to wear pure cotton white suits. Women also wore suits made from silk, cotton and other fabrics. The Japanese also imported Japanese merchandise: clothing, canned sardines, salmon, bay clams, glutinous rice cakes, canned eels, hashed fish in can, canned bamboo sprouts, canned burdock and canned fruits. They also distributed fresh salted salmon, salmon eggs and sea weeds from Japan. Rice was imported from Manila and California. California also provided a variety of Japanese wine ("sake"). Other products imported from other countries include wheat flour from Australia, soy beans from Manchuria (which the Davao-based immigrants utilized for processing soy sauce and tanjuri in their factories).
- xvi *Supra* note 5, p.2. Theoretically, there remained two legal ways of land acquisition for the Japanese settlers after 1919. These are:
- a. The formation of dummy corporations where Filipino incorporators (lawyers, their wives and families were rewarded with a usual fee of ten percent of the yearly yield;
 - b. The "pakiao" system which is very complex contractual agreement "to which lawyers were privy and which made it appear that the Filipino landowner or leaseholder was hiring the personal services of the Japanese."
- xvii *Id.*, at 3; *supra* note 7, p. 21. On 5 March 1932 Acting Governor General George Butte sent cablegram to General F. Le J. Parker, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs concerning the "undesirable concentration of Japanese immigration and influence in Davao.." After inspecting Davao, it was discovered in that there were at least 12,507 Japanese living in Davao Province (1932), living mostly in Davao City. (Total population of Davao Province: at least 139,000; Total Population of Davao City: at least 21,500). Furthermore, the Japanese immigrants controlled all of Davao's timber production, 80% of its, hemp production and 50% of its copra production. During 1931, of the ships entering Davao port, 12 were American, 16 were British, 1 was Dutch, 1 was Norwegian and 65 were Japanese. These facts reveal the

extent of Japanese influence among the newly elected officials of Davao, all of whom were Filipinos. Butte suggested that with Davao with its "large Japanese population, as Japanese controlled harbor and Japanese-owned docks, and some 325 kilometers of Japanese-built private roads" is a "potential military base" and any measures taken to impede its rapid development were warranted.

xviii Itoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 18 September 1985. Itoh's family for instance had a "botica" (pharmacy) selling Japanese medicine. To comply with Philippine laws, the Japanese registered the firm using the license of a certain Dr. Tiongko. Tiongko, in turn, received a monthly sum for his services. The Japanese also built hospitals, among these are: Oriental Hospital (ran by Yoshioka with the participation of Drs. Belisario and Santos); Sun Hospital (ran by Takizawa Kazuo with a certain Chagoma as resident physician) and Ohta Development Company Hospital (with Tokyo Medical School-educated Filipino Santiago Dakudao Sr. as resident physician and first director).

xix *Tribune* (19 September 1929); GOODMAN, *supra* note 7, pp. 9-10.

xx Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1.6.2.1-6, Vol. 4, 16 February 1924, in GOODMAN, *supra* note 7, p. 108, Secret. A dispatch from the Chief, Consular Annex, Davao to the Consul General, Manila noted: "I spoke intimately with several leaders of the Bagobo, and I explained the position of the Japanese and thanked them for their long standing good will towards the Japanese."

xxi GOODMAN, *supra* note 7, p.10.

xxii *Tribune* (19 September 1929).

xxiii Itoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 10 June 1985. The Japanese were very meticulous about their houses. They created Japanese designs and utilized the services of Japanese services exclusively for the execution and construction of the houses. Japanese children were educated in schools financed and supervised by the Ohta, Furukawa and the other companies. A sister company of Ohta Development Company built schools in Mintal, Calinan and Digos, Furukawa, on the other hand, established schools in Daliao and Manmblan.

xxiv *Supra* note 19, pp. 56-59.

xxv Southeastern part of Luzon island.

xxvi Hayaze, *supra* note 7, p.139.

xxvii *Id.* at 148.

xxviii Wayne Wray Thompson, *Governors of Moro Province: Wood, Bliss and Perishing in the Southern Philippines 1910-1913* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California-San Diego, 1975), 100.

xxix Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province, 1911:7.

xxx These Americans employed Bagobos, Mandayas, Mansacas, Tagacaolos, Bilaans, Islamic Filipinos, Visayans, Kapampangans and Japanese workers (originally with the Baguio Road construction).

xxxi Hayaze, *supra* note 7, p. 140.

xxxii Public Laws Passed by the Legislative Council of the Moro Province during the Period from September 4, 1903 to September 9, 1907, Comprising Acts Nos. Ito 200, 1909: 111-112; Hayase, 1084; 1985: 140-141. The Tribal Wards Act of 1904, for instance, empowered the district governor to appoint his representative in each ward a headman. A principal aim of the organization of tribal wards was to collect taxes-- a symbol of subjugation and the imposition of authority. The act prescribed that registration or capital or head taxes were to be paid by the inhabitants off the tribal wards. Fishing, the use of public markets, dogs, firearms, establishing and maintaining ferries, slaughter houses and cockpits were also to be taxed on top of the head tax: "an annual person tax of ten pesos upon each able-bodied male resident of the tribal ward between the ages of eighteen and fifty years,"

xxxiii Hayaze, *supra* note 7, pp. 140-141.

- xxxiv Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1907: 393. This action completed the organizational structure for the administration of the non-Christian tribes. The 1907 Report also explains: "So far, as the pagan is concerned, the matter is comparatively simple. He has only to get rid of certain vague, ill-defined notions out of which his practices grow in order to accept our system in its entirety. With him, it is only a question of civilization.
- xxxv Hayaze, *supra* note 7, p. 148.
- xxxvi Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1907: 387.
- xxxvii Either as plantation laborers or small planters.
- xxxviii Shinzo Hayaze, "Tribes on the Davao Frontier, 1899-1941," 33 (2) *Philippine Studies* 148-49 (1985). The common currency of the Bagobos was not acceptable in these shops. Cash currency from wages or the lure of abaca itself provided the means of compelling them to stay longer on the plantations to transplant the abaca without extra expense to the planters. Those who were temporarily separated from their traditional way of life by money and wage work introduced the value of cash and a cash economy to the Bagobo in the midland and upland regions. Chinese and Japanese merchants established stores further inland as Davao developed and these reinforced the pattern of selling modern goods and rising prices.
- xxxix *Id.* at 144-45.
- xl USNA Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1898-1935, 1910-1930: "Abaca and Maguey Production, by Provinces.
- xli USNA Records of the Military Intelligence Division War Department General Staff, 1917-41, 2065-261-4, Report of Rafaci Medina, 1919 (August 19): 1-2.
- xlii Honorary chieftains.
- xliii Furukawa, 1956: 370; Hayase, 1985: 145-146.
- xliv MARSHALL SAHLINS, *STONE AGE ECONOMICS* (London: Routledge, 1972), 42. In these circumstances, usually practiced in tropical forests, "the standing growth is first cleared by ax or machete and after a period of drying out, the accumulated debris is burned-off-thus the inelegant name, slash-and-burn. A cleared plot is cultivated for one or two seasons, rarely more, then abandoned for years, usually with a view toward restoration of fertility through reversion to forest. The area may then be opened again for another cycle of cultivation and fallow, although Sahlins cited that there may be certain "inescapable Uncertainties."
- xlv Hayaze, *supra* note 7, p. 146. The following trees grew during the Bagobos' temporary absence: lanzones (fruit), coconut, betel nut, durian (another fruit) and other fruit trees.
- xlvi Walkup, 1919: 3.
- xlvii *Supra* note 126, p. 146.
- xlviii *Manila Bulletin* 1(26 December 1919).
- xlix *Supra* note 126, p. 147.
- l Walkup, 1919: 10-11.
- li *Supra* note 126, p. 147.
- lii Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 10 June 1985. Ohta was also responsible for the construction of Mintal Dam, which provided electricity to the Mintal area.
- liii *Supra* note 85, p. 145, 149-52; *supra* note 47, p.33. The Furukawa Development Company was established by Furukawa Yoshizo. Furukawa's elder brother was prominent in the Itoh syndicate, became interested in Manila hemp and opened a branch in Manila in 1913. The same year, Furukawa completed his degree in agriculture and forestry at the Tokyo Imperial University (The old name of the University of Tokyo), talked with Ohta, was betrothed to Itoh Shigeko, before arriving in Manila on 26 November 1913 for an orientation tour. After inspecting abaca holdings in Davao, Furukawa made arrangements with another syndicate in Japan. Wright, an American lawyer retained by the Itoh Syndicate (Manila branch) did much of the preparatory legal work. Company officers included Furukawa Yoshizo, president, four Japanese immigrants as directors, and a Filipino, Leopoldo Aguinaldo, as secretary.

- liv *Supra* note 85, p. 145. The land extended from a seashore at Daliao. Burchfield's manager on the ranch, a Russian, continued on for Furukawa.
- lv Manila Times (29 October 1917); *supra* note 47, pp. 33-34. These include: the Davao Ice and Cold Storage Company, an electric-light plant, nine hectares in the town on which stood the largest store and the finest dwellings, and the Piso Coconut and Cattle Ranch. Burchfield's son, David, continued as manager of the ranch.
- lvi *Supra* note 85, p. 203. Tadao Kamiya, for instance, made four trips to Brazil for the Oriental Emigration Company before receiving his appointment as manager of properties owned by Birchfield in Davao.
- lvii *Supra* note 5, p. 10; Yoko Yoshikawa, "Bei-ryo ka Manira no shoki Nihonjin shogyo, 1898-1920 - Tagawa Moritaro no nan'po kan'yo," 18 (3) *Tonan ajia kenkyu* 411 (December 1980) estimates a total number of 18,600 Japanese in Davao in 1940. Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 1 July 1985: 2, on the other hand, claims that "there were over 20,000 Japanese living in Davao, many living in the old city." Even signboards of Filipino lawyers were written in two languages: Japanese and English. Many Japanese tenants lived in Mintal, Tugbok, Calinan, Digos, Padada. Most of the carpenters lived in Magallanes and San Pedro. There are discrepancies between the Yoshikawa and Idoh data (see table on Japanese population in Davao). Idoh's estimates were taken from the records of the Japanese Association in Davao ("Davao Kai"). It is presumed that Yoshikawa collected his materials from the official Japanese government sources.
- lviii *Supra* note 85, 354.
- lix Hashiya Hiroshi, in Yu-Jose, *supra* note 33, p. 15.
- lx *Supra* note 33, p. 15. The laborers who had families did not recklessly leave their jobs when the price of abaca dropped. They stayed on and persevered.
- lxi The 1924 Immigration Law prevented Japanese nationals from entering America as laborers or immigrants.
- lxii *Supra* note 33, p. 25.
- lxiii Bureau of Insular Affairs 28876, 1935 (January 1): 7. Total Japanese landholdings included:
- | | |
|--|--------------|
| Purchased from the government with titles..... | 2,986 acres |
| Purchased from individuals..... | 10,516 acres |
| Purchased from government..... | 53,401 acres |
| Leased from individuals..... | 13,259 acres |
- lxiv In a secret report to the ministry of Foreign Affairs (dated June 1932), Acting Consul Kaneko Toyoji listed Japanese investments in the province of Davao Bureau of Insular Affairs 28876, 1935 (1 January): 7. Land value only since improvements were not assessed in the provinces.
- lxv *Supra* note 47, pp. 35-36.
- lxvi Bureau of Insular. Affairs 288876, 1935 (January 1): 11.
- lxvii GOODMAN, *supra* note 7, pp. 31-32.
- lxviii Bureau of Insular Affairs 26712/11. The 1934 Report showed the following:
- | | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Christian Filipinos..... | 105,071 |
| Non-Christian Filipinos..... | 80,125 |
| Americans..... | 150 |
| Chinese..... | 2,481 |
| Japanese..... | 13,857 |
-
- Total.....202,026
- lix GOODMAN, *supra* note 7, p. 110. Just half of these figures were women and children.
- lxx Bureau of Insular Affairs 26712/11. Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 10 June 1985:2. Under the heading Detail of Realty Holdings of the Japanese, the following can be derived:
- (a) Purchases from Government or from individuals

Land area-36613.044482 hectares

Value ----- 890,690 pesos

(b) Leases from Government or from individuals

Land area-32,613.0482 hectares

Value ----- 588,290 pesos

(improvements in abaca, coconut and fruit tree cultivation, and in plants, machinery, and buildings substantially increased these values).

^{lxxi} Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 24 June 1985. Bureau of Insular Affairs 26712/11. Several Japanese were also working as carpenters. Japanese businessmen also manufactured spare parts for the abaca stripping machine. Interestingly, Idoh claimed that most Japanese immigrants "never plant rice, corn and/or vegetables." They were mostly engaged in the plantation and development of abaca and copra. The Japanese immigrants ordered rice from Manila. "One ganta (1.6 kgs.) of rice costs only 20 to 30 centavos, one kilo costs only 14 centavos... we used to sell rice by bag of 58 kgs., delivered to Calinan... our margin (profit) was ten centavos per sack." During the pre-World War II period, US\$ 1.00 = 2 Philippine pesos; 2 Japanese yen.

Meanwhile, The BIA Report revealed the percentage of Japanese participation in the Davao Gulf

Region:

25% of farming	15% of tailoring
5% of copra drying	75% of carpentry
60% of fishing	70% of furniture and cabinet making
5% of cattle raising	60% of tin smithing
40% of hemp stripping	50% of photographic studios
60% of tajore making	80% of refreshment parlors
100% of soft drinks	50% of ice plants
60% of odong manufacturing	100% of saw mills
60% of taoyee	50% of the firewood industry
60% of lumbering	5% of trucking
67% of blacksmithing	23% of merchants
50% of gold and silverworks	25% of retail tobacco dealers
74% of bicycle repair shops	32% of retail liquor dealers

Total Volume of Business Transacted in Davao Province, 1930-34.....59,179,321.97 pesos

Total Volume of Business Transacted by Japanese Individuals, 1930-34.... 12,793,966.38 pesos

Total Volume of Business Transacted by Japanese Corporations, 1930-34..10,162,916.93 pesos

^{lxxii} *Supra* note 33, pp. 14-32.

^{lxxiii} *Supra* note 5, p. 11.

^{lxxiv} *Supra* note 33, pp. 33-34. "Japan is indeed better than any other country."

^{lxxv} As exemplified in the preceding chapters, there were at least 139,000 Davao Gulf region residents in 1932. Approximately 21,500 lived in the city proper. Around 12,507 Japanese lived in the entire Davao province.

Meanwhile, Davao had approximately 202,025 residents in 1934. The breakdown is as follows:

Christian Filipinos	105,071
Non-Christian Filipinos.....	80,125
Americans	150
Chinese.....	2,481
Japanese.....	13,857

Chapters 4 and 5 raised issues involving some of these figures.

^{lxxvi} Migitaka Aoe, Personal Interview, July 1994; *The Japanese in the Construction of Kennon Road*, 1983:61, 70; Yoshikawa (1980) had estimated that there were at least 18,600 Japanese immigrants who settled in Davao in 1940. 99% were repatriated back to Japan by the end of World War II. Those who descended from Filipino mothers represented themselves as Filipino citizens, "bore the brunt of opprobrium immediately after the war..." A certain Marcela Rodriguez (Yamauchi Aiko) and her eight children experienced difficulties during and after the war because of their Japanese ancestry. On the other hand, less than 400 survivors from the repatriated group are still living in Japan today.

^{lxxvii} Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 12 December 1985.

^{lxxviii} Migitaka, Aoe, Personal Interview, September 1994. "Davao kai" is a loose association of early 20th century Davao-based Japanese immigrants who were repatriated back to Japan after World War II. They may also include children of immigrants and their immediate descendants.

^{lxxix} Tanaka, Yoshio, Personal Interview, December 1993.

^{lxxx} Yamaguchi, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, June-July (?) 1985. Yamaguchi also reported about the presence of Tenrinkyo Church (a Shinto sect) in Mintal. There were at least two Buddhist temples in Davao: one along Magallanes Street and another in Dalion, near the Furukawa plantation.

^{lxxxi} Migitaka Aoe, Kenji, Kazuko and Toshiaki, Personal Interviews, October 1993-May 1995.

^{lxxxii} Idoh, Letter to Michaelangelo Ebro Dakudao, 5 February 1986. Mindanao Friendship Society, however, is an association of ex-Japanese Imperial Army, Navy and Air Force soldiers who fought during World War II. They were known to have built a peace monument in Catalunan Grande, Davao.

^{lxxxiii} GRANT GOODMAN, *DAVAO: A CASE STUDY IN JAPANESE-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS* (Kansas: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1967).